

# signs



THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA  
VICE-CHANCELLOR'S INTERNATIONAL POETRY PRIZE 2018



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*Edited by Jen Webb  
and Donna Maree Hanson*



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## Vice-Chancellor's foreword

The University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize is now five years old, and continues to attract excellent poets, both as entrants to the Prize, and as judges. It continues, too, to be a truly international initiative: in each year, entries have come from across the globe and from nations whose languages, cultural heritage and literary traditions vary remarkably. This year the poets who submitted work to the Prize are located in 46 different nations, from regions as far-flung as Bulgaria and Barbados, Kazakhstan and South Korea. The judges, too, are both international and multicultural. This brings to the process a heightened awareness of both language and culture, and of how poetry operates in its many different contexts.

For this, the 2018 Prize, some 1,200 entries were received; judges Eileen Chong, Oz Hardwick and Moira Egan took on the task of whittling this group down to a longlist; and Head Judge Wendy Cope then read the 54 longlisted poems to select those she identified as the best six: a winner, a runner-up, and four shortlisted poems. Judging is a very difficult task, particularly when the quality of entries is high, and I thank all four judges for their diligence, attention to the material submitted for their attention, and highly attuned sense of what makes a great poem.

This anthology contains poems that straddle the range of contemporary international poetry. Included are lyric and experimental verse, conceptual, concrete and prose poetry, and poems that deploy traditional forms to offer reflections on very contemporary subjects. Throughout this collection is evidence of what poetry can do to examine the lives we live, to interrogate the truths that shape our culture, and to find ways to meet, as though for the first time, very familiar human experiences – birth and death, love and loss, the natural environment and the domestic.

The University of Canberra is strongly committed to poetry, and to what it can contribute to building knowledge and understandings, bringing pleasure and consolation, and enriching our many communities. Thanks to all involved in making this a reality, and I invite readers to enjoy this new anthology of poetry.

*Professor Deep Saini  
Vice-Chancellor and President  
University of Canberra*

## Judge's report

Over the years I've judged quite a few poetry competitions. Sometimes there are very few good poems and it's easy to choose the best. When there are a lot of strong entries, the reading is more enjoyable and the judging more difficult. The standard of entries for this competition was high. My only disappointment, as a poet who often uses traditional forms, was that there were few poems of this kind, none of them entirely successful.

'The angel in charge of creating the Earth addresses his cohort' became my front-runner as soon as I read it, and maintained that position despite stiff competition. It's a wonderful celebration of our flawed and beautiful world. The runner-up, 'The grip', impressed me with vivid description and (I can't resist saying) a gripping conclusion. I decided it was just a nose in front of the others on the shortlist, but it was close.

*Wendy Cope*

*July 2018*

Winner

## The angel in charge of creating Earth addresses his cohort

Who cares if more important worlds have been  
assigned to those more skillful, who make crusts  
that never crack, or plates too fixed to creep  
or jostle or explode? Ours are the splendours  
of the makeshift, of the good enough,  
of cold May wind, wailing and barbed and riven,  
coastlines ragged as a vulture's wing,  
of maggots and voles, a vast legion of catalysts  
and scavengers the top worlds are deprived of,  
worlds where the joins are tight, with skies  
unyieldingly cloudless, only blue.  
Believe your errors, what they lead you to.  
Those patches we forgot to water?  
Call them deserts, hide there all our  
misbegotten dregs, the scorpions  
and saltbush beds, blind rats, weird toads.  
What's perfect is by definition free  
of difference – but uncountable and great  
are the variations of failure. Take this ostrich,  
my self-portrait: botched and brainless,  
but still capturing my flouncy abandon,  
my leathery grace. Take humans, no two cracked  
the same, some warped or knotted, bent of back,  
some dragging weak-seamed hearts toward stagnation.  
Even the lava spreads its glaze in ways  
that no trained hand could replicate,  
a slow terrible fluency that bleeds and burps  
and teaches those who live nearby to love  
what ends, to build what walls they must,  
to graft their growing hopes to gravity,  
and move more upright through the tilted world.

Don't envy them, those better makers; let them  
envy you, not doomed to mastery,  
still stunned by your mistakes, the broken  
pomp of cow, the fraying homespun jellyfish,  
the accidents of beauty, which, once realised,  
can never be forgotten or undone.

*Michael Lavers*



Runner-up

## The grip

The mud crabs shadowboxed  
when my father prised them from wicker –  
lopsided nips that could sever a finger.

In the trap, they jostled like stones.  
I topped the cooler brimful of ice  
and seawater, morgue-cold.

My father fed them into the slush  
with a sous-chef's precision.  
I watched their sparring slow.

Haymakers blurred to lurches,  
then quarter-inch twitches,  
then nothing. They went under.

Drifting in the polar slurry  
the crabs made a sinister clacking.  
Their sleep was deep, deep.

Sometimes I'd reach in to stroke one –  
a blue-black granite chassis  
underlaid with a fidgetry of limbs.

When it came time to butcher them,  
my father laid each on the jetty  
tenderly stroked the thorax

then drove his crabbing knife  
clean through the brain.  
He said it was humane –

but for a moment they'd come alive again,  
legs unspringing their hinges,  
pincers grappling at air.

In the neurological ward  
I remember this  
as I watch my father wake.

*I won't come back*, he said pre-op  
but he did. He hallucinates,  
lunges at things I can't see.

A sudden twist in the bedsheet –  
he sits, beatific, and takes the invisible  
delicately between two fingers

like a pinch of salt  
or sheet of Belgian linen.  
When I reach to receive it

his hand clamps on my wrist  
and I am stunned by the strength  
of his grip – like the claw

severed from the body  
still grasping closed, like the mind  
exposed under an oval of bone

to a shock of raw breeze  
for the first time, the last time  
he wants to live.

*Sarah Holland-Batt*



# Shortlist



# The only kid who invites everyone

Beside the blackboard, gold stars  
curl like drying starfish.

On my folder, cartoon salamanders eat cake:  
friends forever.

Teddy leans in the reading nook,  
matted face pressed to the wall.

The teacher's fan whirrs and whines.  
There is no metal net to shield its blades.

Recess, everyone gets picked for ball  
except Bobbie, a boy whose clothes are always  
new and smell like pickles.  
He doesn't like ball, and brings his own trucks.

Sometimes the toy's acceleration excites us,  
sometimes it sounds angry, like the driver  
veered off road into a boulder pit  
at 90 miles an hour.

Up from her desk the teacher sways –  
how lucky we are, *Bobbie has a surprise.*

When I see his smile, it feels like the first time  
I found a salamander under a rock.

He lifts the drop top desk, removes a column  
of deep purple, blue, and yellow envelopes  
and places them, like a deranged Easter bunny,  
on every desk.

And nothing happens. We do math.  
The day winds down. Closing bell rings.

Then, one by one, students rise,  
pinching their invitations.

I pick up the eggplant coloured envelope –  
in silver my name looks important;

I walk past Bobbie's desk,  
and toss it in with the others.

They are so clean and soft  
in the shiny black trash

but one yellow edge has already begun  
to grow dark with the juice  
of a rotten apple core.

The invitations float on still waves  
above last week's stars,  
each a rocket ship  
of good intention  
aimless  
in a clumsy cosmos  
that knows no reason.

*Katie Brunero*

## Koko mourns her manx cat *All Ball*

Her room has souvenirs children worship,  
soft toys, story books & a cubbyhouse bed.  
The zoo furnishes it with steel-framed chairs  
& cupboards that can withstand earthquakes.  
After all, she weighs as much as a youngish  
mountain ash & has fifteen times her trainer's  
strength. Penny can't imagine the sheer force  
of will needed to countermand gravity's sucker  
punch when Koko touches her cheek; the  
pounds per square inch of pressure that could  
shatter a human's femur like kindling does  
for firewood. The high windows are from an  
airy apartment or a church & bathe her in light.  
Her living space is somewhere between kindy  
& share house, but lacks the scent of friends.  
All her sprawled stuffed animals; the maned  
lion with its plastic-eyed caricature, bunnies  
trailing floppy ears, don't cut it by nineteen  
eighty-three. Koko's dolls are less than ape  
she realises & asks Penny for something real  
to love, pointing to the diagram of a manx  
kitten. *cat gorilla have visit*. What's been taken  
from the rescue cat, Koko gives back with  
tales of power, uses her new ability to nick-  
name this creature, after the gorilla watches  
the kitten fall asleep on her altar-sized chest.  
A silver buoy caught in the swell of Koko's  
breathy black ocean; a grey snowflake that  
vibrates to the deep notes of her throat's  
tremulous funnel. The great ape's chisel-  
headed finger strokes the cat's head as its  
spine snakes into its own wagon-train circle.  
*all ball* the lowland gorilla decides. *put on head*.

The kitten lasts six months. Fixated on the enclosure door's broken syntax, one day the half-grown cat slips between the crack & disappears into oncoming traffic. Penny chooses not to show Koko *all ball's* body, but grief has its universal signs. *frown cry-frown sad-cry-have sorry-have sorry-koko love all ball*. When asked about where we go when we die Koko squeezes out the words, *comfortable hole-goodbye*. A weight greater than her own mass takes her then for months, her window now letting in too much of the sad human world. Koko shuns visitors, signs for the curtains to be shut as in war; *hurry drapes, hurry drapes*. She understands sorrow is not something to be worn visibly; not an *eye hat* or a *nose fake* some mask a human being might falsely wear.

*BR Dionysius*

# Song

In the beer-stocked basements of clapboard bars,  
in the concrete pipe that passes  
beneath the freeway, in the dregs  
of dirt that settle the base of it  
smelling of summers  
drifted here to die,

is where the women in my family wait:  
my great grandmother and all her mothers,

whispering their ghostly gossip in words  
the living cannot understand.

There are cliques among the dead, too –  
and they have their own terms

for colours,  
for pale roots of corn, the khaki grit of a bypass,  
for the reptilian cross-hatching of skin.

When the world perches

on the brink of rain,  
sometimes you can hear them  
singing,

these women  
sounding their words through the woodwind night,

so for a moment

a tune might come to you  
unbidden,  
and the wind in the cottonwoods is almost  
a familiar face.

*Katie Hale*

## The bolt hole

Only the boys were allowed to swim at the bolt hole. Stripped to their underwear, skin pale against the moss, they would weave bulrushes to make a buoy across their goose bunched chests, launch themselves from the bank and into the river under the spray of the waterfall. This was the place where the salmon

swam upstream to the reddy pits to spawn. Springers till June then the grilse run. They stroked to the centre of the river their bulrush floats itching at their armpits. The salmon brushed past their legs. Standing still as the willow on the bank the boys could catch a salmon, clapping it between their hands as it tried

to jump the dam. The dam is gone now, pulled away to restore the flow of the river. The boys are now rimpled old men battling aches and the 'dying of the light'. The bulrushes are being counted in a study. One of the old boys lies in bed, working out how to roll over without hurting. He thinks of that salmon, swimming,

jumping up but not making it over the dam. Again and again she stabs herself on angled twigs but she makes it over.

She continues through eddies, around rocks, until she finds where she herself was hatched. She swishes her tail in the gravel to dig a pit to lay a thousand eggs. The salmon

always returns home, led by olfactory memory. Not so these old boys, they built bridges and dams in a new world. They returned home once for a funeral but found no rest so left again to live alone in flinders street boarding house rooms, eating soup and tuna from cans. Their olfactory memories are of peat fires, woodbines,

soda bread, maybe the dank smell of sweat and wee when sharing a bed with your little brothers, the blood of the pig drained for the black pudding, the eel eaten when meat was rare. Nights in greying sheets were viscous with silence. Their hands clapping above their faces at old words in the dark: *When it's cold, fish slow and deep.*

*Erin Shiel*

# Longlist



*Cosmos*



# Stray dogs

1.

Mist, mountain, cabin –

everything standing in for  
something else. You know what  
you leave behind is clearer  
    than what you move toward  
the plaque describing nought  
but a striped pelt, the scrape  
    of a chair leg.

    And yet  
here you are. Crouched beside  
a stream, trying not to think:  
    ‘a tiger is never just a tiger’.  
Where the quiet is measured in yawns  
and the scrub speaks in aphorisms.  
Like, ‘if you walk, a path  
    will appear’      or  
‘even myths come down to drink’.

Form a precise thought, turn it over  
in your mouth. The taste of iron, the clouds  
on the rise. The pleasure in  
    letting the sentence  
    trail off.

Which is how it finds you on its  
curl through the hills –

    a lone yowl  
like the Latin for *pouch*, like  
    a question  
                    making a space  
                    for itself  
And yet.

2.

Say blood is tidal.  
Say it surfaces, like a grey emotion.  
Say it slows to a clot, loping through the landscape.  
Say you take it in and feed it.  
Say you give it a name.  
Say a house is neither its walls nor its doors.  
Say you change the locks, clean the bristles.  
Say each word conceals a proposition.  
Say: 'some decisions count more than others'.  
Say: 'each dwells in its why'.  
Say it passes into the dirt, waiting for the flood moon.  
Say a body washes up during the night.  
Say you hold your tongue, let all this play out  
from a distance.

*Aden Rolfe*

# A wilderness

*non plus ultra*

keeps like a question      where no self is said

                 winter is no hand by      moon was set  
some dormant star fell      muted for a first sun webbed      isn't mine

paws under, it was once a world      now edge, passage

let's not go there

\*

it's never everyone sleeping      but here are those you've never met  
         pink of like a rising or set      some lie in wait, you could prime

alight, further than I am      it works up to a silence      that won't last for long

\*

some little wings come out of a picnic      you listen for the gods are in  
all accidents      every other planet's unlike, breathless bare

there isn't a picture I can show      best thing about the place is  
I'm not there

\*

hear trickle towards in a corner (all there is now)      claws that catch

no moral to      they are listening in, they flew      that's where

we won't know      no tune though must imagine

and often hear my footsteps after      as if I had been

\*

the cenotaph lives – won't find you

turn to stone      torn apart      it's all you can do to

sacred this far      now then to light

the unknown about their own

\*

some fell sleeping      ill starred      let willingly alone  
         the way no graph chart could predict



# Company terms

*A list of nouns, designating birds in groups, appears in The Book of Saint Albans of 1486; these are called 'company terms'.*

a wind-map of gulls  
a wounded sea of gannets  
a quell of kingfishers  
a regatta of swans  
an Escher of geese  
a snow globe of egrets  
a sky-robe of starlings  
a candlelit forest of owls  
a bluebelled field of fairy wrens  
a high summer of larks  
a downpour of umbrella birds  
an optimism of robins  
an eisteddfod of blackbirds  
a ventriloquy of lyrebirds  
a seance of woodpeckers  
a wake of stone curlews  
a sound barrier of falcons  
a grand opera of hornbills  
a floescence of rifle birds  
a mermaid-train shimmer of sicklebills  
a sequined monogamy of manucodes  
a synergy of manakins  
a levitation of grebes  
a terpsichore of cranes  
a croquet-set of flamingos  
a Versailles of peacocks  
a *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* of galahs  
a Gauguin of rainbow lorikeets  
a Fabergé of goldfinches  
a masked ball of bee-eaters  
a piracy of ravens  
a dungeon of butcher birds  
a crime scene of condors  
an identity parade of penguins

an interrogation of crested cockatoos  
a judiciary of jackdaws  
a jury of godwits  
a caveat of avocets  
an innocence of albatrosses  
a census of sparrows  
a consensuality of love birds  
a loneliness of shoebills  
a grand hotel of rock pigeons  
a footnote of passenger pigeons  
a limbo of kakapo  
a display case of dodo  
a silence of nightingales

*Diane Fahey*

# Carpus diem

(wrist mnemonics)

Scaphoid, lunate, triquetrum – while I burn  
to learn your body, we have time – we take  
our time, it's a given – so let me focus, let me  
be methodical as a med student late  
at night – cram details of you into my skin's  
memory – then linger like sacrament,  
relish, fetish. Why think

about your wrists? Once so heavy  
with shyness I couldn't lift my eyes, could  
barely speak, watched your hands – proximal, distal  
crease, distal row – thinking: to hold it all – to hold  
this? It was large. Marvellous. We were  
early. Our arms were full like hearts in  
poems – full of patience, pause – is there something

wrong with me? You'd know. I wake at night – dream  
pages of DSM as lines of poems. Let hands  
do what lips do: learn, learn, trace the way  
your smile curves or your – have I said how  
glad I am, you are? Remember, photos  
of pisiform (in gardening glove) trapezium  
(stirring gravy) trapezoid (holding swimming

goggles), don't forget capitate, hamate, don't  
forget a hair, a pore, a breath of what is here  
as it is: Sam Likes To Push The Toy Car Hard  
and Some Lovers Try Positions That They  
Can't Handle. Remember, we are spirits  
caught in fretwork: matrix of hope and bone:  
strong, flexible, holding, pushing, trying.

*Felicity Plunkett*

# Celestial conjunction

(Canberra, 2015)

*'A rare celestial conjunction which made Venus and Jupiter appear side by side in the sky last night wowed astronomy enthusiasts all over the world.'*  
(ABC News, 3 July 2015)

Hooked in an eternal dance of light,  
two planets meet low in the ink-doused sky:  
a tryst whose spark awakes a tranquil night.

Not Jupiter, but Venus who flares bright.  
Their ecliptic union – clear to the bare eye –  
intrigues with its alluring dance of light.

A double star, the appulse of their flight:  
a wonder whose explanation can't defy  
its thrill, their tryst so captivates the night.

But those heart-flung miles dissolve only in sight,  
while Jupiter's fierce storm hurls all awry,  
caught fast between two rival streams of light.

Impelled to replicate apart their plight,  
the evening star and Jupiter yet sigh  
upon a tryst whose pull enthralled those distant nights.

Our coupled stars, from west to east, ignite  
a brief but aching tawdry, earthbound lie.  
Transfixed still by that remembered dance of light,  
our fated tryst makes dream the emptied night.

*Gwendolyn Doumit*



# Glint

The sea swilling in its own brine & foam is on one side –  
coffins & candles on the other. Pass me through the pale blue columns

so I can examine the woodwork or strike a match. My plait is wet on my back  
as I lie delivered face down on the planks. You kept a scrap of fabric around you –

your knees press into my crown. Beneath a yellow sky there are so many hands  
reaching. I hear the slap of the sea, feel its brine in my plait & see the knotty wood

that made this coffin. You light the candle, rip your orange dress –  
the one with orchids rising lithe like snakes – & wipe the stain of the sea

from my back. My long plait is a slender dog tied to my waist. I want to chop it off,  
& stop the pincer machine in my gut. This candle is everything. I would not trade it

for all the lobsters or prayer mats. The sea is a field of flames – we cover our eyes –  
but the reaching & the prone surround us, naked or streaked with once-clothes.

Those that never passed through bring us offerings in vessels of fine china –  
that could also be plastic, but not to our raw flame eyes, our puckered briny skin.

I can see the emperor in the fine china, & all the calligraphic lily pads, but no  
concubines. This is not the weather for concubines. They will live as they choose.

Blankets (or robes) are scrunched around our shoulders concealing my slender dog  
& the lithe orchids rising between us, this one orange tether I will keep –

however singed by salt, however tattered by the floatable sea. The candle splutters –  
throwing meagre light on the reaching, the prone & the shrouded. I imagine them all

cupped in lily pads – but close to the pond's edge – for whatever reason. They are  
rinsed of salt, their hair is brushed, & there is no reaching or excessive floating.

The sun is in my eyes now & everyone is suffused with light & leaving & arrived.  
We have been passed through & we are this glint, our stories this precious.

*Robyn Maree Pickens*

# The hornet

is a trussed up bundle  
of orange yang

surveys the borders  
of the pool with the dedication  
of a drone.

it is on the spectrum  
fixated on edges, liminals  
territory

while it is here, there  
are no transgressions  
no dipping bees, no wandering

gecko, not even the pilgrimed  
ant, the waterhole is claimed  
and charged with threat.

this is no shared well  
in thirsty truce  
this waterhole belongs

to the humming womb from  
where it comes and disappears  
the murmuring secret in

a neighbour's yard.

it is a tight fist of menace  
undercarriage skimming close  
to waterline

fierce, intent & beautiful  
a striped finger of precise  
machinery, engines on

and pulsing –  
the threat of its potential  
sending the living

scattering to the fringes.

we stand – clear of the steps  
flinch as it passes

we are not gods here  
we are dull landscape  
with the thinnest of skins.

*Julie Watts*

# Dogged

Once upon a time, they were shit-eaters,  
    campsite cleaners, lazy descendants of wolves.  
We paid them scant attention.  
But they watched us – from an obsequious distance –  
    the hair on their bellies clotted with dirt, the stink of them  
    almost outfoxing their worth.  
The firelight sheening their eyes made them seem blind,  
    but they had a preternatural understanding of our vanity,  
    of what pleases us.  
They went belly-up; they begged.  
They offered their warmth and bore our lice.  
They surrendered their loyalty to us, forsaking their own kind.  
In honour of our mastery, some (the silent eunuchs)  
    made the ultimate sacrifice.  
Only after generations had passed, did they dare to hold our gaze  
    and lift their heads.  
Suddenly they were modern.  
They sampled the coquette, with arched eyebrows and tilted chin.  
They performed shame so well we named it after them.  
And how we applauded their childishness – after Rousseau  
    redeemed our own secret  
    ambitions for a life of sleep and play.  
Not that they could take credit.  
After all, it was mirror neurons, firing inside their brains,  
    that copy-catted our species' routines.  
Evolution has no advocates per se.  
Nor does it matter who is to blame.  
The *canis lupus* is now *familiaris*; it made it all the way.  
Look at this one: wearing a knitted vest, snoring on the couch,  
    a teddy bear tucked between its paws.  
And here I am: working for its dinner.  
Cuckoos, social climbers, geniuses.  
They can even replicate our smiles.

*Maria Takolander*

## Selfie (with totality)

A breath of wind upon the lake's reflection.  
It's raining tombstones (again), in the hush of never,  
and time will tilt itself in one direction

and sing: *une prison sous la revolution*  
is always underway, it seems, somewhere –  
a breath of wind upon the lake's reflection,

in the wobble of a planetary system, or the song  
of seismographs – the artifacts are everywhere:  
that time will tilt itself in one direction,

and write the history of our attraction  
to moonlit hills around a Roman amphitheatre  
in a breath of wind upon the lake's reflection.

No telling how a landscape, filled with partisans  
(uncaptured, by the handful) in chamomile, lavender,  
and thyme – will tilt itself. In one direction,

one gathers, and by the barge-load of one's inattention  
one supposes caveats and clauses within eternal pauses  
(a breath of wind upon a lake's reflection)

upon the Queen of Kings, the Cup of Situations,  
upon the dated (and now, it seems) fated calendars  
that time will tilt, itself, in one direction,  
a breath of wind upon the lake's reflection.

*Mark Svenvold*

# Thirlmere Lakes: Winter and Spring

## WINTER

AN UNMARKED TRAIL, a slight sandy furrow  
through woodland; open country scarcely  
inclined toward a string of freshwater lakes.  
Rough-barked angophoras – a spare canopy –  
banksia serrata and leggy gee-bungs write  
a well-paced understory, punctured by the  
wide mouths of wombat burrows. The day  
turns suddenly overcast, and feeling the cold  
through a cotton shirt, I'm startled by a nest  
of downy-black feathers stirring, as if a bird  
had up and flown its warm bed. Blood not  
long acquainted with fresh air, and splashed  
thickly on broken stems of bracken, draws  
me down. No other signs of struggle succumb  
to my percipience – but I'm reminded of an  
earlier sighting, the swagger of a panther-like  
feral cat, as I swerved to drive my car at it –  
feathers like a pile of clothes hastily cast off,  
tremble in the baffled atmosphere. And even  
though I'd rather walk to keep the warmth  
in my limbs, I'm stayed, remembering swift  
disappearances – bodies I once held, and all  
those black holes in the fabric of the land –  
those tender, and still constellated remains.

## SPRING

THE FIRE TRAIL is a series of switchbacks,  
descends from a plateau of dry sclerophyll  
forest. I'm half-running—half-sliding in order  
to keep the weight of my body over my feet,  
and don't stop till I reach a lake, a slim tear-  
shaped aperture. Near full it defies a winter  
drought, is fed by ducted waters; an aquifer  
below. Small fry crowd the shallows, and hover  
about patches of leaf litter on the quartzite  
bottom. Tiny, and yet, already conscious of  
white-bellied sea eagles who fish from the  
angophoras, that darken the rim of the lake  
like eye-shadow. Trees who read the mind of  
water, then grow curvaceous, choose the most  
unreasoned twists and turns – are elders past  
pleasing any person, or fashion. Small birds leap  
and stop dead, are cantilevered at quivering  
right-angles mid-way up a sheer flank; plump  
bodies a crash test for the skinniest of high-  
tensile legs. The lake's edge is tall spears; reeds  
parted here by a beach. I slit a hollow stem and  
flatten it to a parchment strap, which gives off  
a warm scent – the sea-grass matting on the floor  
of my teenage bedroom – fibrous lines and silken  
touch forego a story, and work an unmediated  
weaving action on memory, muscle and sheath.

*Steve Armstrong*

## The swim

Expanse of tranquil water gleaming. The dive  
a plunge through light. I let the blessing harden  
in my hair a week, a crackling crown  
of salt and sand and sun. Spun there, too,  
a black torpedo arrowing from spit to shore,  
the sealion's reek, his ravaged pelt, pink maw.

All week the foehn blew. Seedhead grasses  
ran and ran in place beneath a swelling moon.  
I clacked and whooshed the Spanish fan  
to break the sparkling heat and sweep me back  
into that crystal blue immersion. Each footstep  
set loose splinters from my tendril hair

a silver trail by which to trace my passage  
through the house. The inlet fell from me  
in single grains and drifts, on pillows, sheets,  
in teacups, plates and pages – on Chekhov, spine-wide  
on the shaded sofa, shut in tight with Hughes  
in heavy hardback on the unmade bed.

The dark side of the moon rolled overhead.  
Flame and flood beat up against the gate.  
I rinsed the final shards and stood undressed  
yet fully clad, the blessing gone to bone. The swim  
swims on. At point of sleep the darkest jewel  
comes speeding. I've all the richness I resolved to keep.

*Sue Wootton*

# The mouth of the spider

## i) Carapace

*cuticle layers powered by hemolymph hydraulics*

She only noticed it after it had stopped  
that constant clatter of spears  
a shield-like brace worn down,  
until the prettiness had leached out of her

I was alive, I was dead, I said fifteen Hail Marys.

## ii) Exoskeleton

*a stiff support structure outside of the body*

Each part of her body, dressed and  
prepared carefully – with ceremony  
it was the only way she had ever known  
a small-town method of survival

I wore no armour into the night. It grew cold.

## iii) Seta

*sensory hairs that react to low frequency vibrations*

The slam of an orange laminate door  
the chatter of empty wire coat hangers  
vibrational changes in the air, she took  
the first lacerations to her skin.

I mistook the temperature of rage, for hunger.

## iv) Chelicerae

*a pair of appendages in front of the mouth*

She swam inside the walls, the ceiling  
turned inside out: mouthparts moved in.  
Beside her, on the bedside table, the  
unspoken menace of kitchen scissors.

I was not of my body, strung up by an ankle.

v) Catalepsy

*the muscular rigidity of playing dead*

When she became a spinner of silk, the  
feminine swell made a fingerprint down  
low – a softness unmarked by human  
intervention, lighting up the dark night.

I watched a single silhouette drown the room.

vi) Pedipalps

*copulatory organs of an adult male*

There's an art to knowing when one wave  
ends and another begins. Gut-feel and  
rhythm – tiny windows for confession:  
the power inside the swell; a primal blackout.

I marked each battle in bruises, like fallen infantry.

vii) Autotomy

*self-amputation of a damaged or trapped appendage*

When the idea of flight came, she cut her  
hair, touched no object – left the marked  
parts of herself behind. Shrank down to the  
thickness of a shadow, let breath propel her.

I smelled instinct, bleeding outside of my skin.

viii) Molt

*shedding of the old cuticle exoskeleton*

To the naked eye, it was a neat incision.  
The careful cutting and freeing of limbs:  
frocks suspended quietly on hangers,  
a set of keys left screaming on the hook.

I am cold and pale, inside the tomb of his mouth.

*Vanessa Page*

# Space at night

*Think of the sunset from the sun's point of view. —Stephen Wright*

Most of this won't matter long, like who we were visiting, why we had come with enough clothes for a week, why the laughter escaped me, but basically I kept comparing the faces of strangers in photos pinned to the fridge with the tizzy of gypsy moths thrumming the screen. While they were dithering about what to drink, I excused myself, stepped out through the garage, which was no small feat, all cluttered with outgrown dirt bikes (nostalgia, you know, has its drawbacks), and into the sweet dark breeze of the fire road, seasoned the way it was with the cuttings of bluegrass or laundry detergent from neighbouring houses whose dim dens flickered indigo like something worth watching was on. Still, starting is always the hardest for me, but a bark from a barnyard helps, and within a few minutes, the trustworthy pavement of Rte. 3 offered itself like the Great Wall of China, meandering north through cowlicked expanses of ungathered fodder, and over a rise in the distance, where slowly a bit of sky blanched grey till the high beams of some truck cleared and descended, panning a meadow of rotten hay and then turning towards me. Each miniscule pebble and speck of grit on the shoulder, in light of the semi approaching, sprouted its own faint shadow that gradually darkened, fine as an eyelash, all of which lowered together and then, as the lumbering engine rounded the bend and grew rowdier, lifted in unison. Looking into the space where the driver should be, I saw none and soon was left with a burnt-out, purplish numbness and – stumbling – broke stride, wondering whether the edge of the highway was there alongside me or not, so I stopped. Like the rich trail left as a wet sponge sweeps through the dust of a chalkboard's equations, the gleam of my blindness was slow to dissolve, but the first vague shapes to return were dandelion skeletons dotting the fields like anonymous constellations of dented old ping pong balls left in some basement, and then came the actual stars, which were equally real but seemed fake in the sense that they never come closer, like ancestors, always more distant and hushed. I suspect, though, that every handed-down album harbours one photo, at least, of a relative no one can recognise dressed in his shirtsleeves, enjoying a pickle. I wonder if that's what matters the most, how he pivots just slightly away from the camera, to savour alone how the vinegar stings.

*Eric Berlin*

*Community*



## Primate

We who number chimps among our friends  
converse with hands, sign *drink*, and *hug*, and *see*.  
I dress you in a bonnet and pretend  
to mother you: you want to be like me.

And I, like you. It's Eden, I'll be Eve.  
I'll teach you to unteach me, strip me bare  
of every memory I used to cleave  
to like pelts and hides of those now gone. Aware

my mind's eclipsed, you come into your prime,  
curl up in my old chair, survey the view  
now streaked in rain, and spying me, you mime  
*shelter*. But I'm as far from who I was as you

are near. The window's where we touched our palms  
to speak, then something gave and time slid on.

*Amy Bagan*

## Doorknockers

It was the lack of a front door and an unwillingness to be rude that started it, the first time. A nice older lady asking my name, admiring the house, handing me the pamphlet. To be nice I took it, smiled as they left, unaware they'd be back so soon – the second time a pair – the same woman and a younger man each talking and nodding in turn. I mumbled thanks, decided to hide upstairs the next time, keep a lookout for two weeks. They were on to me of course, left a longer gap – a different time and day – so I was stuck up the back at the washing line when they arrived. The woman waved but I stayed put, kept pegging out clothes, watched as she struggled up the rough yard, a minor but necessary cruelty I told myself, something to give her the hint. Her smile held as I cut her short, muttering, '*You know – it's just not my thing*' and stood waiting, the wet socks and undies limp in my hands. I wanted her to shrug her shoulders and say, '*Fair enough*' and be off but her face hardened, she drew in her breath, said, '*There's no doubt ...*' I nodded helplessly, said '*Sorry*' – saw too late what was at stake. I should have pissed her off in the beginning, screamed abuse, kicked her in the shins, *anything* other than sabotage her there in the blazing light of afternoon.

*Alison Thompson*

# Generational curses

my mother's sister is a widow. and all four of her daughters  
are unmarried. what our grandmother speaks of tradition is this:

a woman who is not an *ayeforo*<sup>1</sup> is a woman who does not exist.  
what could be more woman than that. if i ask, my aunt was married

to a man whose mother was wicked. the rumour is, his mother blended  
death into a soup she fed to her children. until the only things the family

remembered were burial and burial. my mother is the second *oyere*.<sup>2</sup>  
in her marriage, she does not exist. today, she will thank God

again and again that the poison by the first wife's hands did not work.  
my mother prayed that she would live to tell me of this running.

tell me.

does a woman exist if all that is left are her feet. my aunt was married  
to a man and they only had daughters. for my unmarried cousins,

children are all they have. a boxful of babbling bronze babies. bless  
their beautiful goodness – they are the only amalgam the rumour left behind.

yet, i fear it will be something my cousins share with me if i touch their hands,  
the curse. i see the longing in their eyes when i speak of love.

i am my mother's second daughter. the last of her three children to marry.  
in my family, tradition is an unforgiving thing.

*Cynthia Amoah*

<sup>1</sup> bride

<sup>2</sup> bride, wife, spouse, to wrangle a thing.

<sup>3</sup> i am not bound by your tradition.

# Handrails

my grandmother's shiny legs  
from atop the stairs  
*na adiyɔ nu yɔ papa*  
skeptically of the handrail  
this morning  
i am visited  
but for me to help her  
of rations  
a cup of honeyed  
and to be  
that is  
wrapped in her entuma  
*osau*  
today  
and do not see her face  
i remember her  
in Ghana  
of her body  
the doctors called it a stroke  
room heard it too  
was bloodletting  
so i rose and yelled  
the nurse laughed  
the heaviness  
hospital  
do you know  
endorphins  
i do not call myself  
because i am  
in the growing night  
i imagine my grandmother  
still here  
not shattered by a loss  
inescapably  
a gracious march

bend slightly  
she asks  
she asks me this  
each morning  
like every morning  
she wants nothing  
and a broody bag  
down the stairs  
lipton tea  
in the space  
living  
she calls for me  
i hear her say  
i hear her voice  
for a while  
spilling  
how the left side  
slumped-over-slow  
the man in the waiting  
they said her heart  
and it confused me  
*do something*  
at my demand  
of asking an African  
to do something  
laughing releases  
that are good for the heart  
inconsolable  
not  
sometimes  
isn't broken  
on the stairs  
her left foot  
gathered by her right  
her one hand

desperately gripping  
the other, me  
and heavens do i know  
this way a thousand times  
down the stairs  
a girl's ribcage expands  
everything

the handrail  
her watery eyes determined  
i have thought about her  
coming  
only after her ascension  
to accommodate  
once alive.

*Cynthia Amoah*

## Columbus evades America

Find a lover you have never loved.  
Regret this.  
Write about it for years.  
Meet him when you are eighteen,  
and still think of him when you are thirty-four.  
Throw a party.  
Plan ahead of time how you will look  
and how he will look at you when you come to the door.  
Don't plan what you will do  
when he presses into you at the top of the stairs  
hours into the party.  
Rely on your good sense to conduct you then.  
Be the kind of person  
who *thinks* about things  
but never *does* them. Always  
think of consequence.  
Phone him,  
and when he asks you to come over,  
to act for once in your life,  
let your body be in charge of changing your clothes  
and putting on your shoes. Do not  
let your head be involved  
or you will find yourself on the floor,  
shoelaces tangled in your hand,  
thinking again,  
imagining yourself there with him  
and all the consequence attached to it  
without ever going.  
You will avoid the idea for hours  
until he calls back and tells you  
he is not surprised.  
He was right about you,  
but this is nothing new.  
He has known you for years.  
And he does not think of it  
as a victory.

*Chrissy Kolaya*

## Aubade, with muezzin

The dreams rise off the roofs,  
See them, over there,  
Climbing like steam into the early air –

*Ayesha, one fresh summer dawn,  
Lying with golden Thammuz  
In fields of corn;*

*Fayez, the keeper at the zoo,  
Proclaiming, with both halves of his brain,  
That Darwin is true, is true!*

*Hiba, in hot debate  
With three friends at a café  
About who and if and how to date;*

*Hani, the chief of police,  
Telling his spies,  
'You are free, fly away now, like geese!'*

*Ahmed, handsome and proud,  
Saying to Abdul, 'I do'  
In front of a cheering crowd;*

*And Khalid, wondering how to choose,  
As he dances with two girls,  
Both lovely, both laughing, both Jews.*

See, so many good dreams,  
All rising up into the cold, dawn air,  
And yet something is wrong ... over there,

In that small room, four young men,  
Asleep, with heavy belts hung on the door,  
No, no, not that again!

But already Mahmoud, the muezzin,  
Is climbing the tower,  
Clearing his throat, to begin.

No, Mahmoud, don't wake them!

Let them dream of love,  
Let them, waking,  
Find this world enough.

Let them miss that plane or that bus.

*James Leader*

## Recital day

When I was young and took ballet  
my braid was French on recital day. A cygnet,  
afraid, I followed my teacher anyway.

Miss Denise ate Gerber's when she felt faint.  
Too dainty, rouged, she had her tricks.  
When I was young and took ballet

dry ice on stage disguised mistakes.  
*Your arms, très jolie! An adieu* kiss.  
Afraid, I followed my teacher anyway,

melted like ice-cream in her gaze.  
But who'd save Denise? Sweet, anorexic.  
When I was young and took ballet

I watched her arabesques, her made-up face,  
and wanted a doll, my own little Denise.  
Afraid, I followed my teacher anyway

for she spun suffering into fame,  
demonstrated how a lake must keep its peace  
when I was young and took ballet.  
Afraid, I followed my teacher anyway.

*Paula Bobince*

# Puberty thickens

forlorn  
furlong

thematic workspace  
writhing in junior weather

where puberty  
can thickly nourish

pride and premises  
private premises

betray pedestrians with  
streamlined peacocks

the aggregates of our  
attending impediments

colour that blinds

heads that ache

wrists that break

and the incorrect hardness

so it sadly must be said

of all conscientious emotion

no tact

tic tac

thumbtack

toe the line

across the attic

and find in a Gladstone bag the proof that

age is most vivid when finance outruns despotism

*Dave Drayton*

# Palmist

there's a stranger around the corner  
with a box ready –

there's another queue  
for kind words

that will return  
to haunt you even as they whisper –

there's a fork on the table  
(I mean in the road)

don't take it  
but do of course if you are lost that way –

your lifeline (I see)  
is almost missing

which suggests you will soon  
come into an inheritance

of unexpected clarity  
but don't expect to choose

anything costly  
from the supermarket –

there's an aberration in your hand  
a line not yet ravelled

I can't quite see where it goes  
maybe nowhere

but it is dark and violet  
unfashionably divergent

look see how it turns  
over the page

as though there is  
no end to the poem –

*Jennifer Harrison*

## Axis

'Is prayer, then, the proper attitude  
for the mind that longs to be freely blown,  
but which gets snagged on the barb  
called *world* ...'  
—*Li-Young Lee, 'The City in Which I Love You'*

i.

My son is four. His small hands grip a sheet  
of paper, following instructions with the quiet  
intensity that accompanies visions of a large  
world folding back on itself. He lines up corners  
with corners, smoothing out edges against our  
wooden table so that every crease is crisp and sharp.  
Somehow he always senses the final forms of things,  
even within early steps. His eyes are brown and  
quick, his head tilted toward the present. There  
are mornings where I sit beside him and try to look  
beyond my own half-reflection in the back window.  
Though autumn skirts the edges of winter the jasmine is

ii.

still unruly. The lemon tree's leaves keep curling like  
newly mapped streets in Boorooma or Tatton. We pray  
for rain, for the farmers who are turning the earth  
and sowing through the silent darkness. Some days  
a Bible stays open on the table, offering passages from  
Corinthians or Romans. *To the saints ... But now*  
(can a volta switch all existence like this? can foolish  
things ever shame the wise?). We glimpse the shadow

of the neighbour's black cat flitting through the bamboo.  
My son's hands keep tugging at small corners of the uni-  
verse, coaxing them out into petal folds. The street's  
maggies are open throated and creedal. I hear their voices

iii.

as gentle expositions of things yet to come. Within our  
house there are other limbs in beds, there are empty

*lai see* that have been discarded and kicked beneath  
the refrigerator. These doxologies charge hidden spaces,

making the world shimmer and glitch. I don't often notice  
them, but when the red kettle clicks my son looks up

as though he is suddenly ancient and able to house  
more than these squares of coloured paper. Outside

the Japanese maple drops its leaves, the dogs next door  
chew through the icy air, growling at phantom intru-

ders. As hours and days pass, my son's creations will  
multiply and fill the rooms: frogs skittering across

iv.

the kitchen table; scores of gliders sailing through  
the living area, coming to rest on ceiling fans;

a mute procession of cranes. In the evenings our  
dreams will be edged by small footsteps bringing

a figure to our bedside. Sometimes we will send him  
away, for there was no call except the cold night.

But he will return again and again with a wordless patience  
until the concertinaed hours draw our embrace. I am

replaying the symmetries of time squared, the seasonal  
breath of this suburb with its slow collapse of fences. All

these houses have beds beneath beds, ready to be drawn  
out at short notice when that visitor finally appears.

*Lachlan Brown*

## How to use Kookaburras

O, where were we before time was,  
and where was death before we breathed?

—*Max Dunn*

Oz, old timeless self  
of invertebrates,  
reptiles, bacterial rocks.

Vast as. Sky country,  
mind-less. Visitors  
like us flying in through  
the pure blue nothing  
leave only fluffy white  
scars quickly disappeared  
by wind, eternity's time-  
sweeper. Sky stays, trace-  
less as original mind,  
full with emptiness.

Here horizons shift  
backwards into fire  
sunsets the blue-haze  
mountains' trees breathe  
out. Ocean always  
there like childhood  
enfolded in sky.

Yet smack bang into this  
Immense, a raucous bird  
with a punk hairdo  
struts & blusters hidden  
mateship, insecurity,  
larrikin laughter at  
toff raptor pretension

or attempted sublimity  
in any thrush, flooding  
funerals, orations,  
solemn commemorations  
with a concussive  
no-brainer  
of white-out sound.

Stunned, displaced,  
perhaps we can use  
the occasion of  
trickster Kookaburra  
laughing  
itself shitless simply  
to remember self,  
selves, the Selfless  
before we are &  
in our human comedy,  
birdlike as a skewered  
worm, birdlike as  
the sky.

*Peter Lach-Newinsky*

## Portrait of distance with frac sand

Another eighteen-wheeler slingshotting the neckline of U.S. 10 has crushed a painted turtle, & stepping past the death-swath (flattened lump of a shell,

skin pinned like a drum to the highway's double-yellow)

I doubt the animal  
could have been farther from either side if it tried when the Wild Hunt  
of tyres found it, cruising fifty in a forty with ten tons  
of frac sand in tow.

\*

On Labor Day, knowing the crew of contractors will have all driven inland,  
a few of us hike out the kiln-like heat of the access road to the worksite,

wondering why they won't at least put up a chain-link if they're so worried  
of locals seeing the belted neck of a sand elevator  
rise Jurassicly  
out of its dig-hole –

why they never bother to obscure, even clumsily, reminders that our dunes  
are in demand: blond grains the ultimate balance

of quartz & geometric  
exactitude, & so much cheaper than synthetics, little beads of bauxite  
or aluminium flushed into a billion hairline  
cracks of Marcellus Shale.

\*

From the top of the danger-yellow superstructure,  
we piss off the edge. Throw stones & bolts & loose shoes

toward the snake-dark banks  
of marshland that circle the open sand like bone around marrow.

There will be fireworks soon at the city beach,

& counting the chorus of trucks set below us  
like a pre-invasion motor pool, the hazed clash of trawlers & pontoons  
in the mouth of the five-mile marina,

I remember field trips we were told the dunes were rare because they *barked*, that if you angled your steps, the grains would click, rub, & sing.

Walking back, we dig our heels. Remind ourselves this sound has always seemed like a lungless cough – a breath coaxed

from the friction of doubt.

*Mason County, MI*

*Connor Yeck*



*Culture*



# The Neil Young Experience

I watch the wildest things tumble  
through the weeping grass

while I'm safe behind glass  
singing along with Neil Young

as the mini apocalypse arrives  
down by the creek – not a river –

we do things differently here  
roads become grey lines of doubt

they shimmer and spread  
until there is no beginning and there is no end

which is not what I was expecting  
after years of apocalyptic endurance

the flood warning arrived by cockatoo  
here you have to make noise if you want to be heard

Neil Young arrived from nowhere  
down by the crooked river which is where I live

he's come all this way to see me  
when I can barely see myself in pools of glassy water

my better self stands at the window  
thrilled that the miserable self is leaving

after reading all the self help books in the world  
getting out of the downward facing corpse

and into the lotus to increase flexibility  
and stop hallucinations but they just won't stop

waves lap at my feet even though I'm on the carpet  
I breathe breathe breathe

Neil Young's on the sofa playing guitar  
Neil Young's leaning over my shoulder

waving to my far away children  
they cannot see me trying to dance like Beyonce

with my gum boots in the swimming pool  
that used to house the cars but now I practise band

with Joni Mitchell and Bob Dylan  
the cows are in the garden swimming laps

and ripping up the boundary lines  
between acceptance and desire

I'm young and old and young again  
down by the creek the rest of my life

is going to be a torrent of experience  
churning through the valley

it's Woodstock in the veggie patch  
Neil Young's playing air guitar

between the leeks and the cabbages  
until the next yellow moon

when I think I'll be all right forever.

*Christine Paice*

## In a sunburnt country

here where men are busily at work  
carving out new  
deserts where wild  
boronia once grew  
rivers running rapidly  
dry, wallum frogs croaking by  
their thousands as sag-skinned cattle  
carcasses graze on empty acres  
fenced against an inland sea  
one more migrant tide  
repelled, kangaroo shot through  
at sunset – their sorry hide  
blanching over bleaching  
bones for  
daring to outrun  
the culling gun  
on  
this new battlefield  
where parched and starving natives  
are run  
aground swarming from  
new deserts carved out  
by men  
busily at work where wild  
boronia once grew  
rivers running rapidly through  
and wallum frogs once croaked  
by their thousands

*Anne Casey*

Note: 'a sunburnt country' is a phrase from Dorothea Mackellar's poem 'My Country'.

# The most beautiful word in the world

A love  
that makes you miserable.  
A causeless feeling of guilt.

*Altabmam:*  
Arabic for a deep sadness.

The arrangement of flowers  
along an axis.

*Isolette*

To speak your native language  
when everyone else is speaking  
Esperanto.

*Chrysalis*  
*Saboteur*  
*Cedilla*  
*Concertina wire.*

*Ilunga:* a person who tolerates abuse  
only twice.

*Saudade:* Portuguese for a type  
of longing.

A word whose definition is: *a time unlikely to ever occur.*

Or a chronically unlucky person.

*Dream dresses?*  
My Korean student struggles,  
searching for the word –  
nightgown.

*Kickpleat*  
*Slipknot*  
*Lumineria.*

*Chrissy Kolaya*

# La Casa Azul

*after Jorie Graham*

In Mexico City,  
aged twenty-five,  
at the Blue House  
where Frida Kahlo lived  
and died.

Now, you can visit  
the tiny bed,  
her wheelchair and easel  
side-by-side –  
unchanged,

the guide tells us,  
since the day she died.  
The façade  
of the woman  
leading us

astray, crumbles  
when I ask her  
about suicide.  
(Just two weeks before  
she died, Frida wrote

in her diary,  
*I hope the exit  
is joyful  
and I hope  
never to return*).

*Pulmonary embolism,*  
the guide insists,  
her hands tumbling  
as if sorting  
the wheat from the chaff.

At the last  
    unfinished portrait  
of Josef Stalin  
    she talks of Trotsky  
and paths of separation.

*No photographs,*  
    she tells us,  
*but you can buy postcards*  
    *at the door.*

I write a message

to my family  
    half a world away  
on the back  
    of Self-Portrait  
with Monkey (1940).

Outside  
    a closed window,  
skeletal trees  
    scratch against glass  
biding their time.

*Christopher Breach*

# Lady with an Ermine

*after Lady with an Ermine by Leonardo da Vinci*

She can only sit for ten minutes more because  
his claws draw scatterings of carnelian  
under the silk,  
prinked chevrons in the material, slipped weft  
and the artist already has his roughs.  
The Duke of Milan's mistress  
is merely the smooth backdrop to  
a study in the muscles of denial.  
She's a presented chattel, soft innocence  
and symbolism, the displayed  
bounty of a powerful man.  
Under one delicate hand,  
a humming untamed heartbeat.  
If you have ever held a wild animal  
you would know  
its stillness is not acceptance:  
all bunched bicep or sheathed bolt,  
its every furred consideration  
is disavowal.  
If you are an artist of renown  
and can place in the picture what he sees,  
you would start with the girl,  
prim in her given clothes, her  
coiffed hair, her  
owned circlet of desire, framed  
captivity within frame, like  
successive prisons of oil.  
Last, the ermine, brushed  
with quick strokes,  
leaning from her cupped hands  
far from intimacy.  
Even trained by a steady hand or eye,  
even hung for display in Venetian halls,  
the ermine may yet escape.

*Damen O'Brien*

## Roger, Rudjar, Ruggero

He left his cousins battling colds and TB,  
Aching joints and monogamy,

And went south, to a land of figs,  
Oranges, unfamiliar beauty,

Where eunuchs sang in mosques  
Of serpentine and porphyry.

Quickly their army gave in, and greeted him,  
Roger, King of Sicily.

Some new gothic, he thought, would impress  
(Austere vaulting, exact symmetry)

But his chapel grew three cupolas, like breasts,  
And squiggles of calligraphy.

'Rudjar, see, it is very fine,' the builders said,  
And he, the Norman, could not disagree.

At night, when he sauntered under the stars,  
With the lovers around him, he

Heard his name on their lips ... Ruggero, Ruggero,  
Sweet as the scent of the lemon tree,

And waking, now, he could not always tell,  
With complete certainty,

If he was Roger, Rudjar, or Ruggero,  
Or some combination of all three.

*James Leader*

## Boy versus Girl

becomes Boy *verses* Girl, how he  
    feeds her a line,  
then she serves it back in couplets,  
    in formal echoes

of a triolet. He longs to be  
    a stand-up guy  
but settles for several short stanzas,  
    comprehends her

as little as he can alliterate, seeks her  
    like a sonnet,  
like an ode to Terza Rima. She relies  
    on poetry

instead of leaving things to fate;  
    & at this rate,  
the boy's chapped lips could align  
    a chapbook, could

decorate her ears with decameter,  
    could caress  
her forearms with metaphors, could  
    seem to be

like similes, might similarly confess  
    his aversion  
to confessional poetry. Boy verses Girl,  
    but Girl verses back,

points measured feet at his efforts  
    at elision, at  
the spaced-out distraction of his  
    broken caesuras.

Girl scans Boy, & the scansion's  
complete: Boy  
gets Girl but is cursed by division,  
is resigned to

the truth he's trochaic, & she's iambic.  
He's sextasyllabic,  
is a bit like a limerick but prone  
to the dirges

while she's avowedly lowbrow, is  
plain speech  
yet simultaneously aspires to be  
a senryū.

*Jonathan Greenhause*

# Goya

Goya was not a man of infinite jest : no one thinks that : but a man of infinite patience : what with being the last : being the first : between the loss : the next loss : before stepping onto society's polished staircase : before scratching the bruised sides of his unspeakable mind : Goya was simply a scion : a student : no theoretician : never a philosopher : no one thinks that :

a schooled copier of stamps : a philately miniaturist : a painter with one hand : one fine brush : addresses always unknown : addressees never sought : backs never dampened : for painstaking years : long before our conception : before the stretch of his invention : before the post office-approved nude : before the familiar nightmares : before our unveiling : before I dampened your back : before I wrote this : Goya

painted us : with India  
as our backdrop.

*Kathryn Hummel*

# Nagasaki deconstructed

*After Yoko Danno.*

Mozart in a cherry  
blossom, Sagami adorns  
her hair with music.

Ukon writes butterfly  
netting villanelles.  
Flautist of the floating world,

Lady Ise kisses chiaroscuro,  
long necked lovers  
with diluted kiss water

colours; then the bomb,  
quaint as a catfish  
hiccougging an earthquake –

a cancer Chanel, a fell  
message. This is how to fold  
an envelope into everyone.

*Linda Ann Strang*

# The spoon

the spoon with which you eat off yourself

powdered diamonds in a paste piped from ankle to thigh  
in a Cape to Cairo line that tells us that all Rhodes  
lead to here ←—

tadpole apostrophes navigate conjunctive saliva-lust  
from the tongue as wave machine

changing mosaics on the roof of the mouth  
feel the jaw move like a bulldozer  
about to rubble the one room  
in the house reserved for speech

grout from tile and teeth elocute clouds  
in the gum-pink of particle rhetoric

snuff deep in airways drilled through the spiritual autism  
of dissolving space

black candles are placed not just in the eye sockets  
but in the sockets of sleep itself

wax pools as two oceans in miniature  
to trap what was seen before it was there

the inherited ratio of what is not believed  
to what is thought to be true  
straightens the ribs to surveyor pegs  
to stake out the new estate on your skin

wooden bones alight under a halfmoon  
force those with the power to decide  
to notice your shipwrecked anatomy

your emigrant fingerprints picked from leaf litter  
by a butcher bird

the prodigal departure of all senses  
to nowhere

i have remembered silence  
in its own words

taught the train to stop over my chest  
so i can get on

inside the carriage you are sat at a balsa table  
the length of another's life

& in the next carriage  
in your livestream audition  
as a TV chef you demonstrate  
how to simmer an eyeball in your hand



how to coach fibre-rich words  
from your mouth to the plate

cut to the first carriage  
where the act of saying grace  
is being injected into your lips  
as a cosmetic prayer

one object registered as missing  
in a metallurgist's mind  
alleges hypnotism in a brunette lasso

the spoon with which you eat yourself

*Nathan Shepherdson*

# *Complexities*



## A happening

And the death, when it came, how did it come?  
Just like this: outside, cars importing divinity  
to snow. A flock of trees rambling out of the  
imagination. Women going into shops, men  
attempting to mistake impatience for grief. A  
small confusion in the parking lot. Inside, the  
furniture expands to account for absence, it licks  
its varnished, perfect teeth. This is what happens  
after. But the death, when it came, how did it  
come? Just like this: He says, *I am tired, but in  
a kind of healthy way, you know?* He says: *Of late  
I've watched many documentaries, especially  
those about mountains.* He says: *When you get  
up in the morning I feel loved, it's nothing but  
the fact that you wake up that makes me feel this.*  
This is what happens before. And the death itself,  
what was its substance? The news will carry this.  
Tonight, the advice is given to keep your doors  
open, turn off the heating, arrange your effects in  
immaculate shapes. The neighbours say, *This is just  
a small town.* The meaning of it falls around them  
like a missile toppling through unbanishable air.  
Gravel relaxes under cars. Snow goes over the  
world. And the death, when it came, was just  
something like this: narrower and narrower, a day  
small enough that the world took it in. In the front  
seat, a child, safe beyond reckoning, asks about the  
weather. The parents, not wishing to talk about death,  
say there are things you can't predict, only just lying.

*Ashish Kumar*

## Et tu, Brute?

*Hamlet: A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.*

*King: What dost thou mean by this?*

*Hamlet: Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.*

—*Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act IV Scene III*

Driving up the Paekakariki Hill  
Road, apropos of nothing, I mention  
that although I don't believe in karma  
or reincarnation, I do believe  
in reincarnation *of a sort*. For instance,  
when they transplant another's heart  
into another's chest, there's evidence  
of cellular memory: the donor's  
traits – fluency in foreign tongues,  
quick temper – donated too. In the dead  
of night months later the new-hearted cold-sweat  
strangers' dreams, their days damned by déjà-vu,  
a vegetarian suddenly craves pork.

Every bit of us is secondhand.  
Is it too far a stretch to believe  
molecules from rat shit, an extinct bat,  
matter from the heart of distant star,  
a flightless bird from our neck  
of the woods, my cremated great-  
grandmother are me – or you, *us*? We take  
a bend a shade too fast, I reach for the handle  
above the door trim. They say that when knifed  
in the back Caesar breathed out his last  
litre of air and that – two thousand years on –  
each of our breaths contains one molecule  
of his. Does that go for anyone who died  
two thousand years ago? Or last year?  
At the summit the road swings right and down  
to the left Kāpiti Island and the sea.  
The part I can't get my head around  
is how primitive it all is: between chests  
they just pack the heart in ice in a chilly bin.

*Ben Egerton*

# Whirring

*The lover circles  
his own heart  
—Rumi*

He  
peers  
through  
the crack  
and sees only  
a dark room but  
hears the whirring.  
He has been warned.  
He bites a wet lip and enters.  
Now he is a voyeur to the dance  
without a dancer. Maybe a solo or maybe  
a pas de deux, he cannot say. He fears the chirring  
in his ears until he wants to become part of this trance,  
this lovers' dance. He feels his heart booming a rhythm that  
melds with the blur and finds his feet following further into the room.  
Circling the skirring silk. Watching for hours, finally he sees it for what it is.  
A chance to escape the bewilderment of the days that remain.

I have never entered this room before. The air is damp and the walls have a crumbly feel, breaking up beneath my fingertips. They told me not to look in here. There is a rushing sound and a sense of desire winging by. I hear the caretaker running down the corridor and he rushes to my side. Flustered he implores me 'Look at the wall beyond. Use your peripheral vision.' The caretaker says it was the instant of the winter solstice when they first fell in love and as time stood still they locked together as a dance not dancers, love not lovers. When time ticked again they moved too fast to be seen but should a poet visit time slows and they can be glimpsed. 'Don't look too close. You might see their eyes.' I want to stay and drink in the coolness of the breeze their dance creates. The world outside continues for a week, a month, a year. The caretaker reminds me daily that the longer I stay the harder it will be to exit. I am unable to leave the room yet I am not part of their dance.

*Erin Shiel*

After Hossein Valamanesh, *The Lover Circles his own Heart*, 1993, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. See image, p 59 and Rumi quote, p. 87, in Mary Knights and Ian North, *Hossein Valamanesh, Out of Nothingness*, Wakefield Press, South Australia, 2011.

## Mrs Proust's madeleine

These autumn days, I'm fonder of this thick  
white wad, held firm between my legs. This old  
shy friend, dependable and wise; controlled  
and kind. She's like a nurse with every trick,  
who doesn't boss, but lets me feel the slick  
of seeped redundant blood, that undersold  
vermillion ooze, the lipstick kiss of folds  
still tugged by earth; a flow both slow and quick.

There's no need now to speak of pain; that's past.  
I sniff the salt of fading pleasures yet;  
(the ferrous tang of fresh placental caul,  
the mid-moon swell that reeks desire, unmasked);  
recall the musk of lust and milk and sweat.  
Give praise to Menses, midwife to us all.

*Helen Thurloe*

## Girls, dogs and depleted uranium

The season is saucy.  
Private arrangements are turned inside out  
like winter gloves so that a soft,  
slightly moist fur of intimacy shows upon the street.  
Only the stray dogs do not canoodle.  
They've been spayed or castrated,  
provided with an electronic chip in their ears.  
So now they lope the boulevards  
uncertain of what it is they've lost  
like poets for whom nothing has rung true for years.

The day is not so much pert as awry  
as though a storm has been about to break  
for much too long in this city  
of unexplained maladies and where the talk  
is of how much radiation needs to be detected  
while I wait in a traffic jam  
three yards from flower girls half undressed  
sitting on the steps of their shop with cigarettes.  
One leans forward and pants out ribbons of smoke  
and I can see the wet sheen between her breasts

until I drowse away  
daydreaming of stairs with bannisters curving  
beneath gilded mirrors that reflect  
elegant disasters, armed bands moving  
across the river in spotless uniforms.  
There is a fizzing volley of rifle fire,  
but not loud enough for me to have to raise my voice.  
I climb the stairs, your right hand on my sleeve,  
a counterpoint to my unease, as your left hand lifts  
the hem of the folds of snow that compose your dress.

The streets are never empty.  
Even at night they're no place for a white dress  
to drift as fragile as cigarette smoke  
though the traffic and the heat are less.  
I lose you where the stairs branch and branch again  
as my eyelids rise and the flower girl dabs  
with a tissue at the sweat between her breasts.  
It's said the road I'm stalled upon leads to woods  
where the stray dogs run seeking a coolness to stop  
the bleeding from their eyes and the burning in their chests.

*James Sutherland-Smith*

# Down

the past is a forest  
and there is no scythe yet  
able to cut such foliage

so you step –  
sometimes without care,  
sometimes with so much  
you barely move

and your feet drown  
the way water  
drowns in a sponge  
the way fire  
drowns in air

and the thickets are thick,  
but thicker than you think

and are those toes  
or snakes?  
And does that crunch  
crack your faith?  
Or are those beetles' backs?

And is that the sun  
breaking across branches,  
or the Devil's lamp,  
because you are upside down?

And don't you wish  
you'd waited  
for that scythe?

*Jay Young*

# Of a thing which could not be put back

*Cormac McCarthy, The Road.*

Souls escape                      the unlocked gate.  
Flocks                              of currawongs  
like wraiths                      in trees – dialectically  
furtive in flight.  
  
                                         Patches of rain  
are abstract                      not quite night or  
orphaned                              as the road  
                                         nascent  
  
                                         before me.  
Zarathustra and the dead                      man  
beside him                              leave a film, an ooze  
locked in lustrous                      marks in the mud patches  
and my mind.  
  
                                         Anxious calls of currawong  
young, hung in snatches of peppercorn branches,  
disturb my descent.                      Once off  
the road a lament begins –  
  
                                         *If I had to forget the path*  
*it would be here.*                              *If weather, in this grass,*  
*draw near.*                                      Fortunately  
foxes have forced wide  
  
                                         an aisle which I  
follow.                                      Like all riversides  
holes relay                                      a hoax. Only those  
whose hands invest in smoke                      smoke hold.  
On old marches I  
  
                                         march on beyond  
locusts and not know                      even arcs of  
mud thrust into                              hooves, cause panicked  
embankments to  
  
                                         congregate at the water  
where milkweed flares                      from the steer.  
Sound is absent. In its eyes                      flies wink  
in and out                                      as rain is revised  
  
in a currawong cry.

*Glenn McPherson*

## Broad Arrow Café

Broad Arrow Café was busy that day,  
the tables were arranged tightly to heel –  
two minutes of terrible shadow play.

A Colt AR-15 Carbine at bay,  
Martin Bryant went in and ate a meal.  
Broad Arrow Café was busy that day.

*That's not funny*, someone heard someone say,  
not realising the shots were too real,  
two minutes of terrible shadow play.

A reenactment, or Port Arthur play?  
Customers trapped, with no place to conceal,  
Broad Arrow Café was busy that day.

Twenty-nine rounds fired in the café,  
ten people wounded and twelve people killed,  
two minutes of terrible shadow play.

Families could not comprehend the affray,  
crouched in corners, they covered and kneeled.  
Broad Arrow Café was busy that day,  
two minutes of terrible shadow play.

*Joe Dolce*

## Cinerary facts\*

Pacemakers and other devices  
must be removed.

The corpse must be contained  
in a coffin with a nameplate.

Cremations must happen  
one body at a time.

The ashes must be placed  
in a metal container  
and given time to cool.  
They must then be loaded  
into a homogeniser  
to reduce the size of the particles.

In their final state  
the ashes must be packed  
into a plastic container  
and the nameplate attached.  
The container must then be stored  
in a locked room.

When the applicant collects the ashes  
they may be buried in a cemetery,  
placed in a columbarium,  
scattered on private land  
or a beach or a river or a public park  
or at sea  
or in a place that holds significance  
for the deceased or loved ones.

They may even be put on a mantelpiece.

The applicant must seek permission  
for taking up some of these options.  
Once scattered, the ashes cannot be retrieved.

Be reassured  
that all microorganisms are destroyed  
in the aforementioned process.

Bear in mind that artificial joints,  
like your prized memories,  
shame and remorse,  
are resistant to combustion.

*Mark Mahemoff*

\*Some of these details were gleaned from the NSW Health website:  
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/cremation-ashes.aspx>

# Immigration algorithm (Application Form D (3) b (1) a)

It's time for the orienting lecture on regret –  
Emotion (so goes the talk) is like a futile ocean,  
like a seascape – grey rollers and frozen rain,  
for instance. The lecturer continues to separate  
the listeners from their longings, like sunlight  
drowned on the horizon by a darkened metaphor.

'So you're a doused wick, excuse the metaphor,'  
says the lecturer. 'So there's nothing but regret.  
Deal with it.' The crowd, silent but for sunlight  
ablaze through squalls above a clobbered ocean,  
sniffles, shuffles its feet. Someone, (separate  
from the rest), enquires about the sudden rain.

'Oh, that,' shouts the guide in sleeting rain.  
'You'll find a way to deal with that in metaphor.'  
The crowd dissolves along a path that separates  
'Then' from 'Now,' 'New Hope' from 'Damp Regret' –  
each like a place name above a sombre ocean –  
each a town in a patch of tragic sunlight

with its own doomed calendar of civic sunlight:  
'Happiness Reinforcement Days', 'Festivals of Rain',  
and 'I'm OK w/Hades' signs along the ocean.  
Communities have banned the use of metaphor.  
On alternating Tuesdays we burn regret.  
Then, guys in haz-mat suits collect & separate

the unburned stuff at a treatment plant kept separate  
from the population: there, would-be sunlight  
gets mixed with unburnt ashen pigments of regret.  
We paint the sky with it. This ensures the rain  
will always fall without the need for metaphor  
(and an unemployment rate at zero by the ocean).

Hell is not a place but a method: boil the ocean,  
it says. Let this application sift and separate  
tenor from vehicle, the trailer hitch of metaphor  
from how (and who) it moved in glinting sunlight.  
Please make an argument in praise of rain,  
it says. In the space below, explain regret.

Include support materials: sunlit ocean,  
rain qua rain, your five-year plan for metaphor,  
and, on a separate sheet, your first inkling of regret.

*Mark Svenvold*

## Love is blind

Ours is a rough love; forged in the fire of adversity.  
You couldn't get your vision back, try as you might,  
so we stumbled 'round in the dark, baby, you and me.

You clung to me, drowning, in your intoxicated sea.  
Your world disappeared: you lost most of your sight.  
Ours is a rough love; forged in the fire of adversity.

The day you got out of gaol you wept in the street:  
how you resented the pearlescence of your light!  
We stumbled around in the dark, baby, you and me.

You tried to hang yourself from the basement beam;  
I admitted you to hospital, then they sent you to psych.  
Ours is a rough love; forged in the fire of adversity.

The depression resolved, after about a year,  
then you got resentful and wanted to fight:  
we stumbled 'round in the dark, baby, you and me.

Sadly, our future no longer looked bright,  
you realised your dreams would never take flight.  
Ours is a rough love; forged in the fire of adversity.  
We stumbled 'round in the dark, baby, you and me.

*Natasha Dennerstein*

## While disassembling cabinets with a crowbar

in a warehouse in a bad part of town, I was shot several times – point blank. I wasn't dead. I un-heaped myself, and left through a side door. My mouth filled with blood and teeth and, for the first time, humid air and sun entered my body. Weeds coming through the sidewalk turned grey and warm, and I used my thumb to dial 911. When they answered, I told them: *frisbee* – the brain useful, even at the last.

It's true we are no more aware of our own mortality than next month's electric, but there is something in us that knows death is hilarious & as comfortable as rolling onto our stomachs as we fall asleep. But the problem is when we do we feel our hearts pound against the mattress and for fear of resistance we roll to our backs. I could tell you I felt the moment of death and it's not like they say. I can't say anything other than what happened was the last thing my body could come up with.

I could tell you this dream was more real than any other. I could tell you that all we do, each of us, is lug around heavy cardboard boxes filled with half sets of encyclopedias until we find someone who carries maybe A thru L, and then both look for a place to set them down, one on top of the other, where no one will trip over them.

*Caren Merz*



# Biographies

# Judges

## Head Judge

WENDY COPE is one of the UK's most popular poets. Her poetry collections include *Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis* (1986), *Serious Concerns* (1992) and *If I Don't Know* (2001), which was shortlisted for the Whitbread Poetry Award. *Two Cures for Love* (2008) is a selection of previous poems with notes, together with new poems. Her latest collection is *Family Values* (2011). She has also written poetry for children and edited a number of comic verse anthologies. She has been television critic for *The Spectator*, and was a judge of the 2007 Man Booker Prize. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was awarded an OBE in 2010.

## Longlist Judges

MOIRA EGAN's seventh collection, *Synæsthesium*, won The New Criterion Poetry Prize and will be published by Criterion Books, New York, in autumn 2017. With her husband, Damiano Abeni, she has published volumes in translation in Italy by authors including Ashbery, Barth, Bender, Ferlinghetti, Hecht, Simic, Strand, and Charles Wright. She lives in Rome.

OZ HARDWICK is a writer, photographer, music journalist, and occasional musician based in York (UK). He has published six poetry collections, most recently *The House of Ghosts and Mirrors* (Valley Press, 2017). Under the pseudonym of Paul Hardwick, he is Professor of English at Leeds Trinity University. [www.ozhardwick.co.uk](http://www.ozhardwick.co.uk)

EILEEN CHONG is a Singapore-born Sydney poet. Her books are *Burning Rice* (2012), *Peony* (2014), and *Painting Red Orchids* (2016) from Pitt Street Poetry. *Another Language* (2017) was published in the Braziller Series of Australian Poets in New York, USA. [www.eileenchong.com.au](http://www.eileenchong.com.au)



## Poets

CYNTHIA AMOAH is a performer and writer originally from Ghana, West Africa. An activist in her own right, her work often highlights the forgotten stories of the world. Cynthia is currently pursuing an MFA in poetry at The New School, NYC, and has been featured on the stages of TEDxDrewUniversity and TEDxOhioStateUniversity.

STEVE ARMSTRONG lives in Newcastle. He won the Bruce Dawe Poetry Prize 2015, Local Award Newcastle Poetry Prize 2014, has shortlisted for the Ron Pretty Poetry Prize, Australian Catholic University Poetry Prizes, and longlisted for University of Canberra VC's prize 2018. His first collection is *Broken Ground* (UWAP, 2018).

AMY BAGAN has worked in publishing and as a teacher at Venice's University, Ca' Foscari. Her poems appear in *Denver Quarterly*, *Northwest Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Measure and Salmagundi* (forthcoming) among other journals and her awards include the Grolier Prize and the Montalvo Prize. She resides in Venice.

ERIC BERLIN lives in New York. His poems have won the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize, Bradford on Avon Poetry Prize, National Poetry Prize and The Ledge Poetry Prize and appear in *The Poetry Review*, *Oberon*, and *The Rialto* among others. He teaches online through The Poetry School.

PAULA BOHINCE is the author of three poetry collections, most recently *Swallows and Waves* (Sarabande, 2016). Her poems have appeared in *The Australian*, *Australian Book Review*, and *2*, as well as magazines in the US and UK. She lives in Pennsylvania.

CHRISTOPHER BREACH won the Lord Mayor's Creative Writing Award in 2011. He has been a finalist for the ACU Prize for Literature (2014), the UC Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize (2015) and the Australian Poetry Slam (2018). In 2016 he participated in *HARDCOPY*, a masterclass and professional development program for emerging writers.

LACHLAN BROWN teaches literature and creative writing at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. His first book, *Limited Cities*, was highly commended for Mary Gilmore Prize. His second book, *Lunar Inheritance*, was published by Giramondo in 2017. Lachlan has published poems in journals including *Antipodes*, *Axon*, *Cordite*, and *Ra*.

KATIE BRUNERO has an MFA in Poetry and MA in fiction and taught poetry at the University of New Hampshire. She received the Young P Dawkins Prize, was shortlisted for the Letheon Prize, and longlisted for the Fish Poetry Prize. She's been nominated for a Pushcart and variously published.

ANNE CASEY is an Irish-Australian writer/literary editor with work widely published internationally. She is author of *where the lost things go* (Salmon Poetry 2017). Her writing/poetry rank in *The Irish Times* Most-Read. She has won or been shortlisted for poetry awards in Australia, the USA, the UK, Ireland and Canada.

NATASHA DENNERSTEIN was born in Melbourne, Australia, and has an MFA from San Francisco State University. She has had poetry published in many journals internationally, three collections published by Norfolk Press in San Francisco and a chapbook 2 (2017) published by Nomadic Press in Oakland. She lives in Oakland, California.

BR DIONYSIUS was born in 1969 in Dalby, Queensland. He has since lived in Melbourne, Brisbane and Ipswich where he is an English teacher. He was founding Director of the Queensland Poetry Festival and in his spare time watches birds.

JOE DOLCE is a composer/poet and winner of 2017 University of Canberra Health Poetry Prize, Best Australian Poems 2015 & 2014, and the 25th Launceston Poetry Cup. He is published in *Meanjin*, *Southerly*, *The Canberra Times*, *Quadrant*, *North of Oxford* (US) and *Antipodes* (US). He is also a recipient of the Advance Australia Award.

GWENDOLYN DOUMIT is a writer and academic from regional Australia who has lived and worked around the world. Her poetry has been published in collections by the Australian Catholic University and Poetica Christi Press. Her favourite novel is *Jane Eyre*.

DAVE DRAYTON was an amateur banjo player, founding member of the Atterton Academy, Kanganoulipian, and the author of *E, UIO, A: a feghoot* (Container), *A pet per ably-faced kid* (Stale Objects dePress), *P(oe)Ms (Rabbit)*, *Haiturograms* (Stale Objects dePress) and *Poetic Pentagons* (Spacecraft Press).

BEN EGGERTON lives in Aotearoa New Zealand. He is currently studying for a creative PhD in poetry and theology at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University of Wellington, where he holds a Claude McCarthy fellowship for 2018. Ben's dog considers Ben a talented thrower of tennis balls.

DIANE FAHEY is the author of thirteen poetry collections, most recently *November Journal* (Whitmore Press). She has won various poetry awards, and received a number of writing fellowships from the Australia Council, and the Victorian and SA governments. She holds a PhD in Creative Writing from UWS. dianefahey.com.

JONATHAN GREENHAUSE won *Aesthetica Magazine's* 2018 Creative Writing Award in Poetry, won the 2017 Ledbury Poetry Competition, and received 3rd Prize in The Plough Poetry Prize 2017. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Believer*, *december*, *EVENT*, *Going Down Swinging*, *The Reader*, *The Rialto*, and *Vallum*.

KATIE HALE's debut pamphlet, *Breaking the Surface*, was published by Flipped Eye in 2017. She recently won the Jane Martin Poetry Prize and the Ware Poetry Prize, and received a grant from Arts Council England to research and write a poetry collection. She is also currently working on her debut novel.

JENNIFER HARRISON has published eight poetry collections, most recently *Air Variations* (University of Canberra 2017) and *Anywhy* (Black Pepper 2018). She manages the Dax Poetry Collection.

SARAH HOLLAND-BATT's most recent book, *The Hazards*, won the 2016 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry. She is the editor of *The Best Australian Poems 2016* and *2017*, and is presently a Sidney Myer Creative Fellow.

DR KATHRYN HUMMEL is a writer and ethnographic researcher, and lives between Australia and South Asia while editing travel writing and non-fiction for *Verity La*. Her (occasionally award-winning) digital media/poetry, creative and scholarly prose has been published and presented worldwide. *Lamentville*, Kathryn's fifth collection of poetry, is forthcoming with Singapore's Math Paper Press.

CHRISTOPHER (KIT) KELEN has a dozen full length collections in English as well as translated books of poetry in Chinese, Portuguese, French, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Swedish and Filipino. His next volume of poetry is *Poor Man's Coat – Hardanger Poems*, to be published by UWAP in 2018.

DR SHARI KOCHER is the author of *The Non-Sequitur of Snow* (Puncher & Wattmann 2015), which was Highly Commended in the 2015 Anne Elder Awards. Recent accolades also include The University of Canberra Health Poetry Prize

(2016) and second and third place in the Newcastle Poetry Prize (2017 & 2015). [www.carapacedreaming.wordpress.com](http://www.carapacedreaming.wordpress.com).

CHRISSEY KOLAYA is a poet and fiction writer, author of *Any Anxious Body*: poems and *Charmed Particles*: a novel about particle physics, gentlemen explorers, Mary Kay ladies, and gifted and talented teenage girls. She teaches creative writing at the University of Central Florida. You can learn more about her work at [www.chrissykolaya.com](http://www.chrissykolaya.com)

ASHISH XIANGYI KUMAR read law at the University of Cambridge, and currently lives and works in Singapore. His poetry has been published in *Cha*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Oxford Poetry*, and *Quarterly West*. He won the 2018 Writers at Work Poetry Contest.

PETER LACH-NEWINSKY's three poetry books are *Cut a Long Story Short* (Puncher & Wattmann 2014), *Requiem* (Picaro Press New Work 2012) and *The Post-Man Letters & Other Poems* (Picaro Press New Work 2010). His awards include the Varuna-Picaro Publishing Prize (2009), the Melbourne Poets Union International Poetry Prize (2009 and 2010) and the Vera Newsom Poetry Prize (2012).

MICHAEL LAVERS' poems have appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *32 Poems*, *The Hudson Review*, *Best New Poets 2015*, *The Georgia Review*, and elsewhere. He is the winner of the 2018 Michigan Quarterly Review Page Davidson Clayton Prize for Emerging Poets. He teaches poetry at Brigham Young University.

JAMES ANTONY LEADER is a poet, novelist and secondary-school English teacher. He was born in England, but has mostly lived and worked in North America, the Middle East and Europe. At Oxford University he won the Newdigate Prize for Poetry. His novel, *The Venus Zone*, won Luxembourg's National Literary Prize.

MARK MAHEMOFF is an Australian poet based in Sydney. He has published four books of poetry, most recently *Urban Gleanings* published by Ginninderra Press. He regularly reviews poetry and psychotherapy books and works full-time as senior couple therapist and clinical supervisor.

GLENN MCPHERSON is a Sydney-based writer. The poem 'Of a thing which could not be put back' is a segment from a broader examination of the work of Carl Jung, manifest in literature. *Meanjin* and *2* have published previous poems and McPherson was longlisted for the 2017 University of Canberra International Poetry Prize.

CAREN MERZ is a technical writer living outside Washington DC, where she completed MFA coursework at George Mason University. She is an amateur radio operator, bike rider, gardener, hobbyist herbalist, and occasional musician. She lives for part of the year on North Carolina barrier islands, the Outer Banks.

DAMEN O'BRIEN is a Queensland poet who has been published in Australian journals, including *Rabbit*, *Cordite*, *Southerly* and *2*. Damen's prizes include the Peter Porter Poetry Prize, the Ipswich Poetry Feast, the WB Yeats Poetry Prize and the Ethel Webb-Bundell poetry prize as well as being shortlisted in many others. See [www.dameno.org](http://www.dameno.org)

VANESSA PAGE is a Cashmere poet who hails from Toowoomba in Queensland. She has published three collections of poetry, including *Confessional Box* (Walleah Press) which was the winner of the 2013 Anne Elder Award. Her fourth collection, *Tourniquet*, will be forthcoming from Walleah Press in 2018. Vanessa blogs at [vanessapage.wordpress.com](http://vanessapage.wordpress.com).

CHRISTINE PAICE is a national award-winning poet and writer. She has published two poetry collections, one children's book and one novel. Her work has been shortlisted, anthologised, performed on the radio and happily recycled by her family. She lives in rural New South Wales, where she is an acclaimed observer of long grass.

ROBYN MAREE PICKENS is a PhD candidate in eco-poetics at the University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand. Her poetry has appeared in *Plumwood Mountain* (2018), *Matador Review* (2017), *Jacket 2* (2017), and *ARTSPACE*, Auckland (2018). She was a finalist of the 2018 Sarah Broom Poetry Prize judged by Eileen Myles.

FELICITY PLUNKETT's *Vanishing Point* (UQP, 2009) won the Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Prize and was shortlisted for several other awards. *Seastrands* (2011) was published in Vagabond Press' Rare Objects series. She edited *Thirty Australian Poets* (UQP, 2011) and her new collection *A Kinder Sea* is forthcoming with Pitt St Poetry.

ADEN ROLFE's debut collection of poetry and essay, *False Nostalgia*, won the 2017 Mary Gilmore Award and Mascara's Best Avant-Garde Poetry Book of the Year Award. He's currently working on his second book, *The Heavenly Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*.

ERIN SHIEL is writing a poetry collection about Australian contemporary art and artists following her research into ekphrasis at the University of Sydney. She has had poems published in *Cordite*, *Meanjin* and *Australian Love Poems*.

NATHAN SHEPHERDSON is the recipient of a number of awards, including the Newcastle Poetry Prize, the Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize, the Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize and the Mary Gilmore Award. He has been a fortunate collaborator with artists including Alun Leach-Jones, Pascalle Burton, Sandra Selig and Arryn Snowball.

LINDA ANN STRANG lives in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and works at the Nelson Mandela University. Her poems have been published in many journals around the world, and *Wedding Underwear for Mermaids*, her collection, is available from Honest Publishing.

JAMES SUTHERLAND-SMITH lives in Slovakia. His most recent collection is *The River and the Black Cat*, in 2018. For his translation work he has received the Slovak Hviezdoslav Prize and the Serbian Zlatko Krasni Prize. Selections of his translations of Mária Ferenčuhová's Slovak and Rajko Dzaković's Serbian poetry were also published this year.

MARK SVENVOLD has published two books of poetry – *Soul Data*, and *Empire Burlesque* – and two books of nonfiction – *Elmer McCurdy: The Misadventures in Life and Afterlife of an American Outlaw*, and *Big Weather: Chasing Tornadoes in the Heart of America*. He teaches creative writing at Seton Hall University.

MARIA TAKOLANDER is an award-winning fiction writer and a widely published and anthologised poet. She is the author of two poetry collections, *The End of the World* (Giramondo, 2014) and *Ghostly Subjects* (Salt, 2009). She is an Associate Professor in Writing and Literature at Deakin University in Geelong, Victoria.

ALISON THOMPSON won the Dangerously Poetic Press Byron Bay Writers Festival Prize in 2011 and the 2016 Poetry d'Amour Contest and has been published in various journals and anthologies. Two chapbooks – *Slow Skipping* (2008) and *In A Day It Changes* (2018) are published with PressPress. She lives near Berry, NSW.

HELEN THURLOE is a Sydney poet and author. Her poems have received awards, including the ACU Literature Prize and the Banjo Paterson Award. Her poetry has been published in various anthologies and journals. Helen's debut novel, *Promising Azra*, was shortlisted for the 2017 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. [www.helenthurloe.com.au](http://www.helenthurloe.com.au)

JULIE WATTS is a Western Australian poet published in leading national and international journals and anthologies. She won The Blake Poetry Prize (2017) and The Dorothy Hewett Award for an Unpublished Manuscript (2018). Her second poetry collection, *Legacy*, will be published by UWA Publishing in October, 2018.

SUE WOOTTON lives in Dunedin, New Zealand. Her most recent publications are her debut novel *Strip*, which was longlisted for the fiction prize in the 2017 Ockham NZ Book Awards and her fifth poetry collection, *The Yield*, a finalist for the poetry prize of the 2018 Ockham NZ Book Awards.

CONNOR YECK's poetry has appeared in *Best New Poets 2017*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Columbia Journal*, and 2. An MFA candidate at Western Michigan University, he currently works for New Issues Press and is Poetry Editor at Third Coast.

JAY YOUNG is a Chemistry graduate whose lifetime passion for writing has brought him back to poetry – an artform that suits his very short and explosive creative fuse.



## 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 globalisation, and its affordances and pressures on cultural producers, whether individuals, communities or organisations.





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