



Red
Room
Poetry

In Your

A poetry collection for isolated times

Hands





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redroompoetry.org

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Poems collectively selected by Red Room Poetry

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Red Room Poetry is located on Gadigal Country of the Eora Nation. We first acknowledge and respect Gadigal Elders and Custodians past, present and emerging. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.



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*Please read and share widely.
Then seek and out and buy
the multitudes of books within,
so their spines may be held beyond the online.*
~ Anon

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FOREWORD

In Your Hands first germinated as a seed of light within Red Room Poetry's founder Johanna Featherstone, 'I wanted to bring the voices of poets and the poetry community into the discussion about what it means to be alive in this surreal time, and to illuminate the work of small press and publishers, and the poets that feature within these.'

We at Red Room Poetry, all active practising poets and arts workers ourselves, took up the bright torch Jo shared with us. Collectively we immediately put the call out to poets to create an interim electronic audience that could still experience the work of poets who had lost their hard-earned live events and other rare public platforms from which to launch newly published work. There is no way to understate how critical feature readings, launches, festivals, and all the other living breathing human parts are to the ecology of poets, publishers and amplifying the artform itself – not only in selling books but in finding fresh audiences and future bookings, elevating emerging voices, and reminding us what it means to be alive as artists.

In Your Hands is a direct response and a way to support poets and publishers. By sharing this anthology with your friends, family and colleagues and by purchasing a copy of the poet's book, you'll be carrying these poems in the world as the poet and publisher intended. This is one small way of tangibly supporting poets and publishers by connecting them with new audiences and offering a small payment to patch lost book sales and gigs.

Our deepest thanks to all our poets who offered up pieces from their most recent, current or forthcoming work. We received a large and diverse range of submissions and collectively attempted to ensure that this anthology was as representative as possible. It is this vast spectrum of voices that shapes Red Room Poetry, even in isolation. As a small practical response from poets, for poets and wider readers in isolated rooms, we hope this free e-anthology shines a much deserved spotlight on all the possibilities our art form contains.

While we don't necessarily subscribe to the idea that poetry will help anyone through this, we hope that *In Your Hands* might just make us all feel a little less alone while finding poets you want to read again and again. As the last words belong to the poets whose work is held here, we asked each to send a 7-word response to how this pandemic has impacted their lives. What follows is a collection of lines that remind us of the spirit of togetherness in these distant days.

*Poets rarely understand popular mechanics but that doesn't mean
we can't be pragmatic:*

No toilet paper but love in abundance.
Let's keep washing our hands, yeah?
We all need a sonic screwdriver
I'm stuck in my house. Send chocolate.
this is the year you will
change the vacuum cleaner bag

There is no denying the direct immediate professional impact on poets:

cancelled events. micro sales. no reviews #sadface #sadface
Lost interaction, lost exposure; could be worse.
residency cut short, book launch unlikely
From WA: hard to spread the word undead.

*Nor the broader interpersonal impact and new forms
of longing:*

Fear of touch, fear of losing smell
Can't wait for hugs to be legal.
Passover Seder cancelled / only 4 eggs needed
Sad as breakfast or an empty train
13,000 miles of closed borders from family.
suddenly the Nullarbor was flooded with check-points
Morning walks are precious; cops still suck.
living the untidy darkness / of restless words
what a disconnected / uneasy awkward glitchy period
ghostly sound of a dial-up modem
Between boredom and devastation. She arrives soon.
Love is the last and final name

*Or that writers often adapt to the circumstances
that surround them:*

My writing group on Zoom is wonderful!
writing in the mornings, watching still things
Today I watched park peewees and currawongs
Routines needing to be thought out again
we burrow, cramped, happy. bees. leaf-mould. abundance.
Being, always dreamlike, unveils itself: says 'notice.'
Trick of scale: the world's smaller, atomized.
our stockpile
of poems
is endless

Nor suppress the poetic call to arms, the call to account:

Quarantine and chill — cabin fever and kill.
Crown venom Armageddon house arrest / spiritual test.
Apocalypse looks very pretty this morning
the white rose / and fell sobbing / strychnine
now more than ever: communism, solidarity, abolition

Yet it is our First Nation poets who hold our home truths first and foremost:

Borders closed
Food rations
Death seems afar
are we a hundred years ago?
in isolation, trees will always receive hugs
No more poems for dinner, my children

Elders say we will survive this too.

**THE URGE TO STARE DEEPLY
INTO ANY BODY OF WATER...**

Michael Aiken

from The Little Book of Sunlight and Maggots
(UWAP, 2019) buy [here](#)

Rain loosens oil stains on a footpath slick with slime,
awash with unclean, sleepless people.
Streetlights and taxis sail through the storm
as one lone, mangy cat, clumsily desexed, yawls...

A low wind blows. Shuddering, a junkie says
You feel that? Mother Earth's turning
in her shallow grave

The water draws eels from crevasses;
bricks soften in the old gaol wall
and mortar falls away.
Ibis circle a drunkard, watch
for his wallet to drop.

This is the kind of rain
– undead
walking down the street,
bent against the water –

the rain that draws great eels out
from beneath concrete and trees,
from rifts and fissures in the footpath
to roll like sea lions, following pedestrians.

Translucent bags sluice through grates,
filter across sunlit currents...

...no river known to me –
no river, no lake,
no great ocean not already desecrated
by petroleum rainbows and degraded chains
of molecular aggregates impersonating cnidae.

A stormwater drain:
the concrete remains of one bold water course,
the other reduced to an entombed sewer
left for rats and explorers to haunt;

the city's beloved swamp drained for a park
and beneath it, the subterranean train station
now a lake filled with white, blind eels –

Lake St. James – awaiting the disaster,
the apocalypse that will send us under,
seeking shelter in its vaulted rooms,
gathered to supplicate in that flooded chamber
And offer our friends to the predatory hunger
of its patient, anguilline angels.



STROKES OF LIGHT

Lucy Alexander

from Strokes of Light (Recent Work Press, forthcoming 2020)
order [here](#)

Here the brushstrokes are all downwards, like rain that
comes in as thick as hard pressed crayon. The old house
certainly a witch's with owls nesting in the cloven roof
beams, their eyes the glimpse of paper beneath the
overworked surface. A slim trespasser lights a match on
her shoe and counts seconds between the warning strokes
of light tearing up sky, before touching it to the paper.
Smoke flies out the chimney - all fear no heat, gone without
even leaving dents in the shading where ink might find a
place to pool. The girl knows she must not lick the sugared
hearth while fire takes up the air. An old woman's memory
is ash in the oven. The sweet she knows would hit the
tongue like magic.



GERANIUMS

After Kenneth Koch's 'The Circus'

Alice Allan

from The Empty Show (Rabbit Poets Series, 2019) buy [here](#)

I want to tell you a story.
It's about a woman beside a church
I overheard talking
while I was walking down Lafayette Avenue.
(I want it to have been Lafayette Avenue
because let's face it, what a great name,
but the truth is I'm not sure
if it was there or some other street in Brooklyn.)
I'd just bought something to eat,
maybe a donut. I was alone, wandering vaguely towards the subway
and I passed a church. It might have been Emmanuel Baptist Church
but again I can't be sure about that, or about whether
the woman was watering geraniums or some other flower.

The sky was white, sending out dots of water
and a man walking towards her
said something about didn't she know there was rain coming.
She looked up and replied in a sort of exhausted way
I've been waiting all day for the rain, Jack.

Being away from the places you usually live in
can make minor things seem more significant.
It's like all the buildings and streets and cars
are full of things they want to say to you—
which of course they are—
and your notebook fills up with scraps about design thinking
or quotes from Say Yes to the Dress Malaysia.
Koch says *It is understandable enough to be nervous with anybody!*
I'm nervous to tell you about this woman, about what she said,
because there's nothing significant about it at all
even though I still remember it. Even though I still want to tell you.
Wanting to tell you doesn't mean it's worth telling.

Last week there was another woman I'd just met—
sometimes when I meet new people
I will force intimacy by saying too much—
and because the topic came up anyway, I told her
that I've finally managed to get my maternal ambivalence
into a neat little box. *I want that box, Alice!* she said.
Even though we'd just met
it seemed unfair to let her think that I had
any real resolution on the topic. I quickly added
Don't worry, it'll blow away in the next wind.
Then we mutually retreated from the conversation.

The woman beside the church not waiting for rain
was over two years ago and honestly
there have been plenty of times I've been so angry
at the inadequacy of my description
that I've given up on this poem completely.

A friend of mine said
her poetry teacher had told her
never to use second person in a poem.
Probably this teacher was sick of reading poems talking to you.
I tried taking out all the second person,
then I stripped out all the first person,
then the whole thing disintegrated.

I read the first draft out to Thom
in the car while we were driving
back to New York from Massachusetts.
Pretty much immediately I knew
it needed a complete rewrite.

The Circus is addressed to Koch's first wife, Janice Elwood.
I thought it was about a lost poem, but reading it again now,
I realise it's a convoluted apology
for spending too much time working
and not enough time tending to his relationship.

FROST HOLLOW

Zoe Anderson

from Under the Skin of the World (Recent Work Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

stand here
and see
the landscape
a bowl
cold air falls
sinks down to pool in
hollow, in mist, in frost
the crisp air amassed. this
is where the snowgums grow.

stand still.
this place
its tip touches
deep time.
this stand
of trees
gave birth to trees
this stand
stood here
since
each tree reaches
back
to the last ice age.

back to the land
here, whole,
cold, crowned
with snowgums.

hear the roar
of cars along
the interchange
the meeting of four
arterial highways
a crossroads.

she comes to the frost hollow
each time
she has to make a choice
in life
to stay, to go
to take the leap of faith.
decisions based on heart
or hope or health.

she takes her question to
the snowgums
to the crossroads
to the traffic's constant stream.
to the everchanging
immutability
of the trees.

she was born in the crisis
she grew up playing in erosion gullies.
never known grasslands
that weren't deflated, overgrazed.
she was born in the middle
or perhaps the end
lived so much of her life in drought
the sound of rain makes her nervous
a tap that's been left to run.

she was born in the crisis
and she cannot choose to leave the crisis
and she doesn't know what to do
unable to form a question
decisions in this crisis seem
futile, thin, unclear

all she can do is
stand here
and see
the landscape
a bowl
cold air falls
sinks down to pool in
hollow, in mist, in frost
the crisp air amassed-

all she can do is
stand still.
this place
its tip touches
deep time.
this stand
of trees
gave birth to trees
this stand
stood here since-
each tree reaches
back to-
an ice age.

all the way back
to the land
here, whole,
cold, crowned
with snowgums.

Footnote: 'born in the crisis' is a line from the play
You're safe till 2024 by David Finnegan, 2019.

HARBOUR

Eunice Andrada

from Flood Damages (Giramondo, 2018) buy [here](#)

Later, the doctor says to Ma
she fractured her arm years ago
without her knowing.
The points of impact sprawl
across the report:

Over the Banzai cliffs of Saipan,
five children and their kites
ensnared in the wind,
hair woven into milkteeth.

Below, soldiers who dove
into a cutting-board sea.
Sons turned shoreline in a crack.
Long gone before flight.

Ma is back in the car, stretching
clothes over broken capillaries.
Pasa sounds like the word
for *soaked*.
Ma's skin is soaked
in potholes.
She hears the ocean through the windows.

Later, two children by the water
in Puerto Azul. Blue Harbour.

We are distracted by the jellyfish
flooding the sand.
We hurl their pale corpses into our targets
dead bodies morphing into ammunition

mid-air and missing,
We wash our hands before dinner-table
grace.

Ma is back in the car, making
sure any material is stretched over
her shadowed limbs.
When he says he is sorry
before telling me to come inside,
his words lay stillborn in my palms.
They know how to play
with dead things.

LEGACY

Cassandra Atherton and Paul Hetherington

from Fugitive Letters (Recent Work Press, forthcoming 2020) order [here](#)

Dear B, [undated, probably 1916]
*I write because there's a break in marching. We passed a picturesque, blue river—the colour
of your waking eyes—and came to a lake with █████ floating in it. I hadn't expected blue
water in this wasteland. Houses are fuming. █████
████████████████████. There was an eight-year-old girl from the local
village. Not much of it left. I spoke to her in my halting █████. She complained of the lack
of birds, pointing to field and forest. I asked her if her parents were nearby, but she asked
again, 'Where are the birds?' I offered paltry consolation. She looked at me as if I was the
world's biggest fool. There was a █████, and we fell down like a
herd of myotonic goats—all of us except the girl. But nothing else happened. Just a weird
silence, so that eventually we stood up again. She crossed the road to a house with a broken
roof. She had a buoyant way of walking, like gravity hardly weighed on her legs.*

✿ ✿ ✿

[Journal, 29 March 1988] Apparently, my father had a tattoo of my name on
one of his arms. I hope it was some kind of medieval lettering with a big,
elaborate 'R'—like an illuminated manuscript. But it was probably just in
block, navy blue letters that bled over time. I wonder if he had it removed, or
if it was there when he was laid on the slab in the morgue. Perhaps he told
people it was the name of his first child, or said it was an old girlfriend. Did
he have the names of his other children tattoood underneath? Maybe some
tattoo artist covered it up with a weeping cherry blossom tree with delicate
petals falling all the way to his elbow.

✿ ✿ ✿

Dear B, [undated, probably 1917]
*I thought of my father after shells killed a man. He knew a few things—how to hoist a
beer glass on the tip of one finger; how to shift my mother from her blacker moods; also the
cobblering his father taught, that he never practiced. We gathered the man from an open
field—████████—crumpled on a stretcher, and his moustache was my father's. Before
he died he lifted his hands and asked me if I'd write to his niece (he had my father's thick
fingers). I asked her name but he was already gone. My father had fought in the first Boer
War and never talked of it. Except to say, jerkily shaking his head, 'look after the women'.
I saw his eyes in pieces of shrapnel—his grey glance that ricocheted.*

OF MEMORY AND FURNITURE

Bron Bateman

from Of Memory and Furniture
(Fremantle Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

I.
The certainty of objects:
the linoleum's blue/grey smudge,
the precise number of flowers on the wallpaper,
curtains in the window,
a wood-stained headboard, fawn
shorts and a bare chest, a
doorknob out of reach.

II.
Wrapped carefully in cotton sheets,
Mummy-still and quiet,
arms wrapped around my belly,
puffs of breath, round lips
like blowing out candles, chest
rattling like the window, the
alphabet, backwards,
singing *Tie me kangaroo down sport*.

III.
Hungry dogs prowl beneath my bed.

IV.
Go and get: the hairbrush,
the wooden spoon,
your father's belt.
The back of his hand.
The front of hers.

Fists
&
Rings.

V.
Eyes closed in front of the bathroom mirror.
16 tiles across
9 tiles down.

Hold on fingertip-white tight
to the curved lip of the basin.
Wrapped in steam and water.

An unlockable door.
Yet: never interrupted.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT FROM MY HUSBAND

for Benjamin Frater

Alise Blayney

from Grief for Hire (Verity La, 2020) buy [here](#)

Come back to me, even in a dream — Euripides

I swallowed the dream of his eyebrow
with the mercy of his fish lips
kiss bombs brain
touch tango soul, tango swoon,
he said poems and ladders
lead to lions and hyenas

and I love that,
love him for that,
love will begin and end
and begin with
swallowed eyebrows, merciful lips, kiss bombs...
and no amount of clozapine
will make the heart less of a gaping wet hole.

He spoke of signs, sigils and talked symbols,
he moved music and with it,
painted speech
and a pink star
fleshed out
of the ocean;
this was his effluvial way;
the way of waves and lap of love
with hips hard against the shove.

His mind leapt over the hobby-horse
and landed on the other side of reason.
His soul boarded the tongue and birthed in my mouth,
I buried the thorns of nostalgia...
I learnt that my husband gave me more than a decade of electroshock;
I learnt that it is hard to wake a dead woman.

WINTER

Kevin Brophy

from In This Part of the World (Melbourne Poets Union, 2020 forthcoming) order [here](#)

Someone has swept the last leaf from the riverbank.
Mist in our hearts comes down over the city
its new grey sky a mystery the trees cannot solve.

We muffle our speech behind scarves
silence our hands with gloves and pockets
and everyone seems to be wearing a bear.

Mist combed from the river's long shining hair
lifts in a slow spray of despair.
Ranks of windows still as cats glow yellow.

Men lie down on these streets with their friends
made of cardboard and dog
to see them through to the unconvincing dawn.

Dancers try stamping like Russians.
Children breathe into raw hands.
Cyclists with big fists cry into the wind.

Mist is the wall we walk through drenched in.
Soldiers (here for our safety) hug cold guns and pace.
The mist in our hearts comes in like a slow boat

balanced on a swelling river impatient to be frozen in place.

COUNTER THEIR SNEAK PLAYS

Melinda Bufton

from Moxie (Vagabond Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

We swing so close to cliché when we invoke the characters of
the halls. The truth is a giant
scallop, in a dream, where the rules are
you must carry it with only two fingers of each hand
you've never seen before dolling out life rules like some makeover
show queen (*you want him to tell you, you can't bear for him to tell you*).
The features of characters sharpen up towards archetypes and you run them
down

with example. Truth: I have never seen a 'mega-bitch' trying to run a
department. Truth: yes people
sometimes believe a copy of *Leaning In* plus the Marie Claire 'career pages'
will bring them to good.

Truth: a dabble in a bounty of professions hard and fast before you're thirty
can leach into strife. For your interlocuters.

Messy brand, messy mind.

She wrote the phrase 'young, tight-knit team' and was hit with something
worrying about the phraseology.

Hit me up, I want your back. To have your back.

I want to meet you so I can care about your career/s progression/s.

best boss eva

OF THE 2,700: ONE VOICE

Anne M Carson

From Massaging Himmler: A Poetic Biography of Dr Felix Kersten (Hybrid Publishers, 2019) buy [here](#)

Swiss border, March 1945

We are crammed onto trains
without food or drink, frozen

beneath our rags. At journey's
end, desperate for release,

we expect death in any guise –
bullet, rope, dog, club, typhus,

starvation, gas. Instead, after
crossing the frontier, when

the cattle-truck train doors
are finally opened, light floods
in, dazing us. It takes our eyes
an aeon to adjust. Then we become

dazzled anew by the pristine
white of the Red Cross uniforms.

How far we are fallen to be
devastated by the nurses' tears.

ALL SOULS

Anne Casey

from out of emptied cups (Salmon Poetry, 2019) buy [here](#)

A citrus swirl of myrtle crosses my path
as three skulking brush turkeys scatter dramatically
into the understory
Crushed sandstone scrapes under flagging sandals
blending with
the tick-tick distant and more insistent chitter and chirrup
perpetual Trisagion against
the far-off clamour of trucks and cars morphing
this second day of November into
the roll and thunder of mist-capped surf on distant shores

And there's the sharp salt catch at the back of the palate
My mother standing
arms thrown out against the Atlantic's roar
embracing the world with a desperate love
like Jesus
after the delivery of her death sentence
and before her crucifixion
Too far away too long ago
but still the piercing and the gush of water
The salt rub of old wounds crossing time and space

The quick chirp
of a message from my father
eleven hours behind but instantaneously dispatching
me to the fiery pits of hell where
starched sisters must surely be burning
Pharaohs in their hooded head-coverings shepherding
the little children and their unmarried mothers
through famishment into lightless catacombs
saving an anointed few borne nameless
in Moses baskets unto the Promised Land

A kookaburra laughing
carries me home through the clearing
where the wattles are bursting
their golden crowns dancing
against a brooding backdrop and
rainbow lorikeets will swoop
in later lifting our hearts
out of emptied cups and
away with them into
the heavens

FARM STUDY

Robbie Coburn

from The Other Flesh (UWAP, 2019) buy [here](#)

Nothing much ever happens.
a muteness that lies down in darkness
cleanly parted before the drive of rain
settling behind the mountains
the sculpted gums have long been fixed to the grasses.
before the breath can transcend the body
the shape of the sun multiplying behind the clouds
what does happen carves into memory
with unparalleled significance.

a horse attempting to break free of its paddock,
and flailing its head madly upon becoming tangled,
skin taut across the wire.

THE BELLY OF THE GNOME

PS Cottier

from Monstrous (Interactive Press, forthcoming 2020) order [here](#)

Round not because of ale,
not because of bratwurst,
but with a growing egg.
Like platypus, like echidna,
all young gnomes hatch.
Dubious, concrete glee
must be maintained,
batch after hatted batch.
The layer is always a he.
His stomach splits like a smile;
egg drops onto merry boots.
Overnight, the wound will heal,
the youngster break the shell
with a handy tool; spade or rake.
Some ask the frogs they ride on
to kick the shell into submission.
Some tunnel out with pipes,
as they are born to tobacco,
or its cuter accoutrements.
Those who see the process
have never lived to tell,
but are found, clutching chests,
as if their hearts were gnomes,
also anxious to explore.
Convenient toadstools provide
solutions for the gnomes,
salves that cause hearts to flutter,
flutter, flop and stop.

I sip my wine so cautiously.
I know the gnomes will come.

BRUNSWICK BATHS

Jocelyn Deane

from *The Second Person (Girls on Key, 2020)* buy [here](#)

Everyone's name is written on soup-hot water
here: everyone strips down and is stripped to
specific choices one's bodies are made into.
There may be progression towards nakedness and
a descending layer of ease
latex-looking trunks and bikinis shudder
toward – a 28-degree chlorine solution
blended for purity
the erasure of a kind
of mutual/sickness, passing to
a porousness of borders like beautiful coral reefs
before...well...you know. We can cap
anything that leaks, smear ourselves with
Nonoxynol 9 – messy, but not unclean
safe and minimally chemical, only as normal
as medicine dictates. Medicine is its own
poetry after all...The saunas fill up with this flesh
you usually spend a life getting used to, the
thought of an endless growth, whose
implications could only make us uncomfortable.

82

PB

LEAD

Tricia Dearborn

from *Autobiochemistry (UWAP, 2019)* buy [here](#)

Inorganic chemistry lab. A rack of test tubes
filled with colourless solutions.

Drops of another transparent liquid added.
In each tube, something new appears:

a precipitate, an insoluble solid,
which may be crystalline, curdy, colloidal;

may float as a flocculent mass, or plummet
brightly coloured to the bottom.

I was blind to my feelings for my friend.
One drunken night recognition bloomed.

Add a drop of lead nitrate to potassium iodide:
a canary bursts forth from a clear sky.

THIS WOMAN’S WORK

Benjamin Dodds
from Airplane Baby Banana Blanket (Recent Work Press, forthcoming 2020)
order [here](#)

*The airplane flight and the act of taking Lucy away from her mother had been
for Jane the symbolic equivalent of the act of giving birth.*
— Maurice Temerlin, *Lucy: Growing Up Human*

In exchange
for a daughter
Jane Temerlin
offered a Coke.

Such sweetness
tickles the tongue
and masks the
phencyclidine

that allowed Bob
and Mae Noell to pull
from fortified arms
something pink

and rare.
Somewhere above Alabama
passengers nod
congratulations

to a mother
tending a covered
bassinet, hushing
gentle reassurance

to a child she calls
Lucy.



A PATTERN LANGUAGE

Oliver Driscoll
from I don't know how that happened (Recent Work Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

A friend who is married to another friend sends me a link
to a photo of a house near trees on an architect’s website.

They have two children chickens I don’t know how many
one or two cats it’s been a while since I’ve seen them they
live in Brisbane in a square house grow flowers food she
was a florist he studied horticulture did drawings in pen she
does laps in a pool.

But here at night pipes bang in the apartment above people
walk push objects around it’s cold it seems so nice there is, I
think, such a distance between seeming and being or being
and continuously being I don’t know if I should worry
about the chickens the cat or the cats the flowers the food.

I reply, it’s just a weathered frame she says, I know, I want
to live in a weathered frame.

I’ve always liked them I think I should worry don’t worry
enough I google paint stripper macbook pro.



IF I SAY

Anne Elvey

from On arrivals of breath (Poetica Christi Press 2019)

buy [here](#)

If I say there is no god
I do not mean there is no

god. There is no
There is

the bound energy
of the melaleuca, light

tossed back from the underside
of a leaf, peeled bark

of the body where
translation

is the impossible –
insistent, necessary.

VENUS WITHOUT FURS

Gabrielle Everall

from Dona Juanita and the love of boys (Buon-Cattivi Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

I want to fall into the pit of his bed
If he was my tutor
it would make a fine
masochistic fantasy
Each cut his lesson
of grammar

He is the main clause
I am a subordinate clause
We are a complex sentence

But I'm not supposed
to like men
My brother ruins
any desire for them

I know he will never
fuck me alive
Instead cruelly fucking me
when I am dead

I want all the women
he knows
to be lesbians pure
So, then he can
never fuck them

He is a Venus
that wears no furs
I am Severin

He is named after
disease
His gaze a machine gun
at my breast
He kisses the girls
and makes me
cry

I, a woman, am really
every man
in every nursery rhyme

I am penniless
a slave
Going to the highest
bidder

I am going to Verona
A romantic city
But like a vampire
He sucks all the romance
from me

They say to bite
the bottom lips
when kissing
is a good kiss
But I say
it is sadism

I am half dead
roadkill
Waiting to be
finished off

APPLE TREE

Michael Farrell

from Family Trees (Giramondo Publishing, 2020) buy [here](#)

It has no idea what beauty is, till its first blossom
time. And each reminder's only a faint slide. This is
the voice of the apple tree, it sorrows as it loses its
leaves, it triumphs when laden with red or green fruit
An apple tree is no brute

but a complex of echo and self-regard. Oh, it does not
understand the agony of seasons: it lives. Its voice has
no sound yet falls pinky white. I want to fall like apple
blossom in the hair of the wrong guy, make a place for
his footsteps. Go on, bruise yourselves

children I will say. Spring looks like a bridal time but
an apple tree has no need of betrothal. Call the fire
brigade, call the ski lift: it's just the weather of the apple
whose leaves make little impress among the detritus of
autumn. Sweep a broom for appearance's sake

AN ARGUMENT FOR THE BEE

Susan Fealy

from The Earthing of Rain (Flying Island Press, 2019)

buy [here](#)

It's true that variety is manifest
in hummingbirds
but who's to tell how flowers
experience the bee?

And who decreed that joy must be
particular?

Besides, that bird steals
design from flowers.

Must a buzz cancel joy?
A galaxy of migrating butterflies
is said to sound like rain,
yet, when a peacock butterfly
flaps its wings,
you could mistake it for a sneeze.

Hummingbirds breathe
two hundred and fifty
times a minute:
their call, a high-pitched staccato:
surely it's too morse for joy?

They say joy is fleeting,
and I admit,
bees are stalwart,
they rev in second-gear,
they make a beeline,
and who feels sparky
as the crow flies?

Joy *scrimaunders*,
and *flinks*: it tumbles butterflies
into contenders.

Yet, consider their biography:
wily as foxes,
they outwitted birds,
reptiles and kittens,
defied the wind and the sun
and the rain.
They climbed mountains,
escaped impalation,
they even spun
their own cocoons.

Yes, joy is floating, buoyant,
but is it self-reliant?

Only the bee
swims inside the flower.

OFTEN I AM PERMUTATED INTO A MERMAID

Toby Fitch
from Where Only the Sky had Hung Before (Vagabond Press, 2019)
buy [here](#)

as if i didn't mind being seen without make-up
a stubbly reminder of the maid's face / that is mine

it is so near to my girls' / their unruly
hair almost frames it / unrolling it as thought waves
into the dark cave that would form in my heart

w/o their bright mess / that is a make-believe sea
traversed by shadows that are unicorns falling

/

wherefore all these litter tours i undertake
gloved-up fussily in the likeness of a mere man
unfurling his inner lady

until the girls invite me to come back as queen under the sea
's disturbance of words on each new wave / enfolded
in worlds exploding / like flowers in time-lapse

/

is it only a dream of glass or were our bodies always water
wherever an ear is an eye is an eau it all comes
streaming in from some other aeon

to sprinkle little stars upon us
then evaporate

/

often i am permutated into a mermaid
as if it weren't a given that my mind's made up
to be uncertain of its preposterous hold against chaos

which first gave me permission to get lost
in whatever the water wants

Note: 'Often I Am Permutated into a Mermaid' gets fluid with Robert
Duncan's 'Often I Am Permitted to Return to a Meadow'.

ON REMOVING A TATTOO

Adrian Flavell
from shadows drag untidy (Ginninderra Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

at the clinic:

as if
by removing the tattoo
she could erase the past

start afresh / again /
with a clean slate

worth a try

even if skin deep

d.i.y.:

he tried
peeling the skin

as his dad
taught him

when fishing for leatherjacket

CONVERSATIONS AT THE MOJAVE PHONE BOOTH

Zenobia Frost

from *After the Demolition* (Cordite Books, 2019) buy [here](#)

Greetings, you've reached the Mojave Desert.
Oh, I've taken maybe a couple of hundred calls
today. I think tonight I'll take it off the hook.
You're lucky last. I have to sleep. It's like a plague
of locusts buzzing in the huge blue of desert.
Each star is a phone call. I feel rude if I don't pick up.
My voice is tumbleweed. A scorpion
picked itself clean over my foot. One day they'll take all this away.
You can call from anywhere
to anywhere, but you can't replace voice,
one that launches the split light of rockets from where
your palm is pressed against the phonebooth perspex.

After the war, my grandfather got into ham
radio and made friends with a Japanese man.
They never met. My grandmother cursed his prisoners
until she died, but Granddad built it better and with better radios
to talk and softly be to the islands he fled from.
It's a very long string and a couple of cups.

Hello, you have reached
the Mojave Desert Phone Booth.
I travelled miles of wild line to speak to you.
Superman's desert getaway; you can change
out here. Is it lonely? Not this desert soaked with voices.
I could be a mirage on the horizon, ringing
and ringing – an oasis of clear tone. What made you call?
Are you lonely? Would you like me to sing? This is but two cups
and a very long string. I'm here, breathing in the end of it all,
ear pressed to the ocean. Oh? You've gotta go?

After the war, my grandfather got into ham
radio and made friends with a Japanese man.
They never met.

Hey, if the phone rings in the Mojave Desert
and no one's camped out to pick up, what ceases to exist:
the desert, or landline cord wound languid round a finger?
Sometimes this booth sustains a tiny village, cars
with shaky hubcaps humping trailers and tents
through miles of quicksand, landscape shifting
with the sonic boom of rocket launches. It's the back door
into B-grade Narnia – through the booth.

After the war, my grandfather got into ham radio.

Hi, you've reached the Mojave Desert.
Wanna hear a story? Once there were twelve princesses
in the narrow tower of the tallest sandcastle, whose king
locked them up safe. Each night they filled the tower with sleep,
yet woke with feet red and bleeding as if with dancing.
The king challenged men from across the land
to discover their secret. Oh, you know this one?
That's right, they dug the passage to the nunnery; the wine,
the dancing, the kisses. No, no suitor ever found them out;
each night they snuck treasure out from glory boxes,
and weighed those boxes down with phone books
until they crushed the sandy floor of their frail tower.
They slipped out lightly, a smooth glissando into habits
of twelve underground accomplices. Yes, that's the story.
Thanks for calling.

HORIZON

Angela Gardner

from Some Sketchy Notes on Matter (Recent Work Press, 2020)
buy [here](#)

The feijoa flowers as if to itself. *All of this* (it seems to say). *All of this*.
Out in the garden the lorikeets are reverent in a chatty way. The light says we are beside the sea a glimpse of water and fuschia.
There's kangaroo paw. In everyone's gardens the horizon. We read the possibility of summer in the sound of insects the wind chilling, showers possible and changeable. The trees wave their raggedy hands in the sky. Every year pink blossom. Pollen drift in the air.

CUANDO FUI CLANDESTINO

Juan Garrido Salgado

from Cuando Fui Clandestino/When I was Clandestine
(Rochford Pres, 2019) buy [here](#)

a Víctor Hugo Romo y a Samuel en la visita que hicieron a Nicanor Parra por allá en 1979.
En la casa de La Reina.
Lo que sí quiero dejar en claro: creo que Nicanor Parra debería haber ganado el Nobel. Es cruel hacerlo esperar tanto tiempo; a sus 103 es toda una hazaña antipoética. Nunca fui devoto de su poesía, pero me deleitan sus versos irreverentes. Mi verso lo engendran las noches de “toque de queda” vengo de la población y nunca pase por la Universidad, si, fui parte del *Taller Literario Andamio*
Cuando fui clandestino me mandaron a estudiar a la Universidad del Komsomol en Moscú
caminamos por la Plaza Roja con la solemnidad del militante saludamos al líder de la Revolución Bolchevique como se saluda a un padre nuestro.
Cuando caí en las manos de la CNI*, yo era clandestino hace ratito; pero mi suerte fue esa ya que nadie sospechó de mis estudios internacionales. O sino salgo hecho carbón en la parrilla, de aquella Casa de la Tortura del Cuartel Borgoño.
Cuando fui clandestino leí poemas de Vladímir Mayakovski traducidos a la lengua de la Violeta*; aunque traté de leer sus poemas a la orilla de su cama, cuando le tire los corridos a la intérprete de la casa museo de Vladimir,
para que durmiéramos una siestecita, sin que ella supiera que yo también era poeta.

Cuando fui clandestino mi papel en esos días de vuelta a la patria, 1984 fue ser un invisible o más bien un ‘hombre sencillo’, como la Oda de Neruda que dramatizamos por allá entre 1978 y 79.
Si, el teatro callejero de esa época fue como un solcito calentando el miedo que caía en nuestras vidas sobre esa larga noche oscura. Cuando fui clandestino.

WHEN I WAS CLANDESTINE

Juan Garrido Salgado

from Cuando Fui Clandestino/When I was Clandestine

(Rochford Pres, 2019) buy [here](#)

*Victor Hugo Romo and Samuel on the visit they made to Nicanor Parra
in 1979 . . . In the house of La Reina.*

What I do want to make clear: I think Nicanor Parra should have won the Nobel.
It is cruel to make him wait so long; to his 103 is an antipoetic feat.
I have never been devoted to his poetry, but his irreverent verses delight me.
My verse is born by the nights of the “curfew.”
I come from the población and never went to University,
Although I was part of the Scaffold Literary Workshop.

When I was clandestine I was sent to study at Komsomol University in Moscow
We walked through Red Square and with the solemnity of the militant saluted the
Leader of the Bolshevik Revolution as one greets a father.
When I fell into the hands of the CNI, I had been clandestine for some time;
but my luck was such that nobody suspected my international studies.
Otherwise I would’ve been charcoal on the grill of the “House of Torture of the
Borgoño.”

When I was clandestine I read poems by Vladimir Mayakovski
translated into the language of Violeta Parra; even if I tried to read his poems on
the edge of his bed in that room, when I whispered something intimate in the ear
of the interpreter at the house of Vladimir, so that we could take a siesta in the
poet’s bed, without her knowing that I too was a poet.
When I was clandestine my role in those days of return to the mother country, 1984
was to be an invisible or rather a ‘simple man’,such as Neruda’s Ode
that we dramatized there between 1978 and 79.
Yes, the Street Theatre of that time was a little sun warming
the fear that fell in our lives on that long dark night.
When I was clandestine.

I WRITE POETRY AND GET PAID IN POETRY

Eloise Grills

from If you’re sexy and you know it slap your hams

(Subbed In, 2019) buy [here](#)

I write death
And get paid in life

I write cold air whistling through snow-capped pines
And get paid in exposure

I write like the seal giving milk to its baby
And get paid like the shark dangling the baby from its jaws

I write like Bah-Humbug
And get paid like Merry Christmas everyone!

I write like a man cumming
And get paid like asking *did you cum*

I write like someone who knows love
And get paid like someone who vitally misunderstands the
concept yet uses it to
Profit off vulnerable people

I write like the golden-state killer at large for forty years
And get paid like a creepy police appropriation of Ancestry.
com

I write like a clear idea where I’m going
And get paid like wandering onto a frozen lake to drown

I write like the past could never hurt me
And get paid like a ghost haunting all her ex’s Facebooks

I write like I could never explain this to you
And get paid like I’ll try and try till I’m blue in the face

I write thrashing in ice-cold lake
Thinking how funny it is
Ice’s low density
That molecular miracle
Which allows the fish around me to keep swimming
Instead of freezing bottom—to—top
Is the thing that is presently killing me

And then I go very very still

MEMORY LESSON 7 |
ARCHIVAL-POETICS MANIFESTO

Natalie Harkin

From *Archival-Poetics* (Vagabond Press, 2019) buy [here](#)

Lean in close. Take this offering as a slow situated-unfolding. Bear witness to the work of mourning; to those official narratives of history that oppress/suppress voices of loved ones that are rarely, if ever, represented as their own. Follow ghosts and paper trails. Bear witness to buried histories that manifest seething, fantasy norms and fixed imaginings maintained as ‘truth’ in the present. Disrupt it all, through and beyond the colonial archive, with rupturing intent. Feed your desire to return to the origin as restless-gathering/ feverish-hoarding. Honour what you conjure and recognise this as everyone’s story: surveillance file-notes / letters/ correspondence files/ inspector reports/ genealogies and photos/ data-cards-artefacts-specimens remains. Soak up the blood. Don’t let the weight of it kill you. Find new ways to negotiate loss imbued with affective-aesthetic concerns for justice. It will come to you in uncanny moments and unanticipated places where blood-memory, haunting and the potency of place collide. Expose state violence. Make visible the humanity of those trapped and lost, now complicit in their vision of refusal to be silent/ silenced you will recognise them as your own. Seek company of others who refuse to accept a culture of amnesia, who refuse to once again be left out of history. This is active reckoning through *recognition/ transformation/ action*: a rememory collision; a fight-flight-guide response; an embodied literary intervention to the ongoing project of colonialism and all its attempts to smooth dying pillows, toward something else gentle and restorative and just. They will take you back there with them. They will host you on beginnings that never end. Don’t stay still for long for their vision is urgent and our descendants need you. Get to work. Repatriate love. Write decolonial poetry. Forever mourn and weave your way out.

THEY WERE LAST SEEN TURNING INLAND

for Nina

LK Holt

from *Birth Plan* (Vagabond Press, 2019) buy [here](#)

The burn-off lies thinly on the earth,
a non-incident the thin gums barely mill around.
Black kites *kerrk* and deaden the updraft
or dive into the shallow flush of mice, lizards.
Left roadside there is one head-height flame,
alone as a rococo fountain in a winter garden
except for a termite mound the same size,
equally alone and seeming weirdly still,
flame’s cumbersome shadow cast
in black plaster. Then a honeyeater, bent over
the unburnt grevillea like sugarworked fire,
and a horizon falcon with its cane-toad crackling:
all of this below the geostationary satellites
that smooth out all bird and flame.
The burn-off lies deeper than the slapped on
bitumen, with edges loose as the crow carcass
they drive over, with false lightness,
two women coming off the escarpment
in a capsule of silence, past more unsupervised and dying fire
and further from the rearing data centres,
which are mythic offspring of a fire and a termite mound
(and do exist formally in some place
shadow-shining; hardwares owned
by an American tech-bro always stealing
complex glances at his chopper pilot
flickering between godlet and servant;
he who works to amass more time through
future life-extensions; who retrofits
an afterthought wing in his doomsday bunker
for his pilot’s wife and children and parents...).
The passenger is rinsed clean by the flowing
black scenery, the driver is an iron rivet through.
Their eyes are tasked with states of mind.
They have no need for words (premeditation)
only talk, its easement over silence;
under consideration is the ilk of guy
from Darwin, maybe Katherine, who rose
beating dawn in his helicopter, armed with
an Aerial Incendiary System . . . *I’m cosmological, bitches!*
In a capsule of laughter they’ve been driving for hours,
through the everywhen, its quiet undertaking:
maintenance is tantamount to creation.
A whistling kite rises beside them; in unrelated
technological advancement, it apexes
and releases its emberstick, looking back
under its wing upon its work.
In fresh flame the waving eucalypts extravasate . . .
reasonable for them is rupture,
resin doors melted open, reasonable is
to barely hold back their seeds for when
the future is wet. And as for the women, no longer laughing—

reasonable is deadliest statistically:
to drive a car or love a man.
They've known since they were twelve
each other—if ever they were defeated
they glowed beneath their pyrrhic victors—
their past is flying outward, stelliform,
yet the old swag smell of mould and dust, wet and dry,
earths and joins up then to now, head to groin,
to Southern Ocean, to Nirvana, to the night intuition
to the morning glossings of teenage girls.
'Should we,' asked the poem, 'be monuments?'
Suppose the two women are just that.
They turn off the highway onto dirt road
and at once are unenthralled and rocked alert
as they drive over the rim of a dried bog
lying there like a deflated chasm,
and they are chastened and over themselves.
(Each stray dead explorer
surrounded by muted
multiformatted water
should've been over himself.)
Inside these great great great great granddaughters,
are faint and long genocidal lines
they draw behind them and around them,
which leave them homeless which is their inheritance.
They are somewhere on the chain of command,
the chain of common decency.
Where are they exactly? A huge flock of black cockatoo
krur-rr then land, left-footed every one,
inedible grits of light between their beaks.
The women turn, not gravely lost, hard inland
onto a fire track, long tumulus of grass
between the two suggested lines their wheels go with.
They have their water and drink it too
and a Personal Locator Beacon.
They went with form and its discontent (the sun
that lowered into smoke) and with other local phenomena
they lowered into mauve.

BALLYFANATIC

Duncan Hose

from The Jewelled Shillelagh (Puncher and Wattmann, 2019)

buy [here](#)

Bliss is shit.
All along the coast Australian colossal towns.
All the fucking scholars in this Possumshoot -voices-
Th'coo coo! Of dozing pidgeonmeat

Darlington thy
Gorgeous slumpalaces
 Too easily chearmed he has
More tartans than the titans of bogroll
Scoatish to the point of riddiccule
M.French is shit but I'm going on a good tilt/
 Of the braggart

Shane Macgowan sings weare bound for botany bay through the ghost of
his real teeth
There is no IRA exservicemen's clubs in sydderney and the jacobites haveall
gone in for the rag trade
Ill see you in chupachup heaven bebe i.e. the arrondisements of hell
 Chip'n'dale Lil' Eppington Waterloo
All the pretty trolls tournout (a tourney!) fi' th' wedding of Whom?
Which Drag King and Queen of our comprador bourgeoisie?

G'bless the nocturnal cabdrivers of New South Wales
Th'old Albanian fella who no longer believes in sex
Th'old Chinese fella whose father died two week ago and whose kids've
split from the cult of family

I get married to every clam'ring generation of flame that licks up the
convict chimney
So many of them hot phantasmagoria of ancestors mine and everyone else's
In these seconds read the deshabillage the strip-tease of matter
Aside from the milch-cow and goat A've got the two pet crows Angie Nag
and Linda Baguette.

I got a Cowboy Crush on the Air Force Officer
 Shopping for antiques shae
Looks like Louise Brooks in High Cinched Navy Slacks
 & medals
My pineals my eyeballs are busting fat!!!
Cue Armed Forces Fairies and Harps where shall I find

PASSING DOWN THE EGG POT

Anna Jacobson

from *Amnesia Findings* (UQP, 2019) buy [here](#)

Nana used the pot once
a year, cooking Passover
eggs for Seder night: enamel
black with lid the colour of Danish
china. Hard-boiled eggs chopped
in salt water – slaves' tears.
Now my mother uses the pot, boiling
eggs I peel over the sink
under running water. Hot
brittle shell giving way to cool
smoothness in my hands.
Some years I peel fifteen
in one go. Some years twenty.
The pot returns
to its shelf to wrestle
dust. Empty,
until another year.

MONOPOLY

Ella Jeffery

from *Dead Bolt* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2020) buy [here](#)

1. Kent Road, Woolloowin

the landlord sold in under a fortnight.
took us by surprise. we packed up
and rented a place on the same street.

stuffed in three rooms, we transplanted the fridge
from kitchen to deck, still full of milk
and ice-fringed packs of weekday meat.

it sat for weeks on the whitening timber,
collecting ants in its chilled coils.
splinters nibbed our bare feet

when we came out each morning
for eggs or jam. it hummed
through umber afternoons when heat

thickened air to wax, until in december
we took a holiday and a circuit snapped
off the power for a week.

on the deck when we came back: masses
of flies and neighbourhood cats; meat
seething in the dark freezer.

2. Vine Street, Clayfield

in this house we liked to doze under breezes
in the hammock-hung yard
while inside kitchen chairs stewed

in bedrooms, cutlery in vases lined the windows
and sent circles of light roaming the walls
like tiny gold animals. our dishwasher, trailing its cords

in the laundry, disgorged a wet plug of gunk
like an afterbirth, which we ignored.
we washed clothes day-to-day

in the kitchen sink, lived
with shirts hanging like colourful ghosts
in windows and doorways

3. Bond Street, West End

we signed the lease, moved everything in,
future tensed through unpacked rooms:
imagine a deck; imagine a pool.

fluorescents cleansed us with astringent light
as we unwound snares of plugless cords. fleets
of old batteries tacked and jibbed under our feet.

light fittings shattered like wineglasses
in our hands, releasing the mild rain of a decade's
dead moths. we nabbed a cheap lounge

and, like mafia bosses, happily snapped its legs off.
we circled the bedroom with its sliding
doors and mirrors to the floor. so much

still to do, but there we saw ourselves for the first time
in a year: you were a thimble and I was a wheelbarrow.
nobody wins on just rent and chance.

DIGGING INTO ETERNITY

Rebecca Jessen

from *Ask Me About the Future* (UQP, 2020) buy [here](#)

Newtown, Sydney

have we ever been alone
like this?
sitting by the bay window
—trains shudder at dusk—
I'm not used to this noise
or this stillness
with you

I'm having a small quiet thought
that will self-destruct in 10 seconds—
here the air is cold enough
to make me remember
what is good
and what I have left

I'm trying to reconcile the grief
of gender
and how I've become the person
who stashes protein bars in their bag
and drinks sav blanc at 2 pm

at the rail underpass
you photograph me next to the other me
but I am larger than myself here,
where the stray cats skulk in the succulents
and planes fly so low I can taste
their metallic underbelly, where we kiss
with tea-soaked tongues, and I am still learning
the gentle ways to wake you

your discarded mandarin skins harden in the half-light
their flesh fluorescent,
the 5:03 pm comes and goes without announcement
floral sheets are drawn up
your mug dries on the rack
louvre windows no longer refract
the smug daze of afternoons
and I remember our lives
led elsewhere

you check train times
your hand idles between my thighs
you are leaving me
with a wedge of half-price brie
and flying south to your other lover
we joke this is your east-coast tour
every time you leave, or he arrives
I revert to my imagined self
who knows better than to want

and I am going home again
west, where the architecture is fixed in time
red-brick houses flatten and tessellate
in slow-motion
we're both looking out windows
into dusk
and desecration

NOSTROMO

Joelistics

from Solid Air: Australian and New Zealand Spoken Word
(UQP, 2019) buy [here](#)

1.
The streets are empty as shit and we just ride em like ghosts
in the place where we live we've got no where to go
push bikes on the road we take flight with the crows
the night sky above and tarmac below us.
The city lights are majestic off in the distance
over the roof tops we float.
Above the dreams of a suburban night
we snuck out while my parents slept to take a ride and we,
We ride our bikes to the bay and take a walk on the wharf
sit on the edge and light a ciggie like a torch.
You turn and you talk to me I'm looking away
I'm listening to every single thing that you say
you say, The future's bright man, tomorrow is ours
and there will come a day soon when we leave this town
the clouds they start to gather so we get up and leave
and we're home before the dawn even touches the trees.

2.
We always said that these suburbs were like a cemetery
you always said you'd escape that's what you said to me.
You got away not in the way that you thought
and now I walk along old tracks and I'm looking for yours.
and in the middle of similar looking scenes
as I step off from the gutter and gather the things I need
midnight's light makes life look life like
the antenna's and tennis courts
this town is menopause.
I know my way around and I could play it down
the streets are like the back of my hand
and memories abound.
But now it's different, I'm different the difference is that I visit
I don't stick around, I don't even miss it.
I get a vision of a version of my high school days
most weekends you would spend at my place
and your face is in these streets, it haunts me now
that's why I struggle when I head homebound.

3.
You always had your own rhythm to keep the comedy coming
you were as close as a brother man I think of you often
how you talked with a passion, how you rationed your cash
you stood six foot tall above the rats.
You had a habit of thinking you were the smartest motherfucker in the room
and it was generally true
on the real you were a hero, a friend of the highest order
a companion when the girls that we chased were all we thought of.
Who ever you are where ever you're from
we all get given time and then it's time to move on
one day you're in the midst of it, the next you are gone
and if you think it's different to that you're wrong.
Life's an addiction we're all on the nod
and it's a beautiful dream so dreamer dream on
breathe in, remember everything from the start
the end is the beginning the beginning is past.

**A FANTASIA OF ODDMENTS, WAGERS
AND ZEROES**

Jill Jones
from A History of What I'll Become (UWAP, 2020) buy [here](#)

In the midst of afternoon an unexpected hubbub above
parrots midair chasing a falcon sun in my eyes I brush
light the radiant-shaking leaves loosed from their crib
my first time free of blame for my ill-feeling my dank
self-pity as a citizen of pain sun's mocking me, its empire
large, ancient while I cope with presence, motes, a fantasia
of being even as small as the life forms on my skin greater
than earth's population do they feel guilty like their host
or are they me mostly empty, waiting for batteries, innards
sounding a sonorous plaint I bless every idea, glance and jot
in my creases as starlight feels its way, seems ever so keen
as I step forward slowly shading my eyes from the luxury
the day's slough taste, plant oil, insect joy of the meld
lifedeathlife nectar planets as gods above it all, the nuzzle
of eternity terrors while I'm heaving my ribs and oddments
looking for nightcusp wineblood's less to blame, let it pour
with the backyard gladness, the universe honey the quick
and freight of littlebig world, its evildoing or pitiless raddle
of my circulation, CO2 emissions, the west's bountiful sophistry
the wasteland of antibiotics, water features, and trolls
oh wait, honeyeaters hustle and drop and I'm so ugh
wondering when all the oil will be gone leaving vitriol
or a spangled release, an unguessed drug or a wager
as if this is my portion I grab at the door nothing x-ray
could determine my mind's not a printout, it's a yammer
of lyric passionate as a forest lost songs, the zeroes

EVERY SLEEPING NIGHT

Kit Kelen (translated by Papa Osmubal)
from wake to play (Five Islands Books, 2019) buy [here](#)

every sleeping night

every sleeping night
shelves of the library
take wing
no telling where
light lands them

and this, my dear
is why I always have trouble
reaching to find
just the right volume

balang benging matudtud

balang bengi ning pamanudtud
dening istanti ning silid-aclatan
micacapacpac la
alang maquibalu nung nu no
daragpa ning aslag

at ini, irug
iang casangcanan o't tutung masulit
neng gugong cu ba iang damputan
ining acmang aclat a buri cung basan

tuwing gabi bago matulog

-
tuwing bago matulog
ang mga istante sa silid-aklatan
ay nagkakaroon ng pakpak
walang nakakaalam kung saan
idinadapo ng liwanag ang mga ito

at ito, aking irog
ang kadahilanan bakit napakahirap
iabot ang mga kamay para kuhanin
ang aklat na maari kung basahin

THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN ARTIST

After Grayson Perry
Andy Kissane
from The Tomb of the Unknown Artist
(Puncher & Wattmann, 2019) buy [here](#)

*Denim, leather, tinsel, ceramic buttons, polypropylene,
polyurethane, glass, Norfolk pine, nails, glue, rope, silk, taffeta,
diamante beads, Swarovski crystals, paper, human carcass.*

When the time finally comes, lay me out
in my painting smock and dungarees,
lace up my Blundstone boots, put
ceramic buttons over my eyes and weave
Christmas tinsel (silver and gold) through my hair.
Pack an esky of provisions—goat masala,
black pudding on sourdough toast for breakfast,
a bottle of sparkling shiraz to wash
it all down. I might not eat during this, my last
journey, but at least I won't have to ring
for takeaway when I arrive

on the other side. Drive this battered sloop
down to Clovelly and carry it over the concrete
sandbars. Tell anyone who happens to be passing
that I selected the tree by the rake of its trunk,
cut the stern plank with my own hands, planed
and shaped the timbers and stitched the sails
from op-shop evening dresses. Gorgeous work,
they'll say, as you lay me out over the thwarts
of the boat and lower it down into the sea.

Take an armful of my exhibition catalogues,
the ones that never attracted a single red dot,
and pile them up in the bow. Strike a match.
When the pyre ignites, push the vessel out
into the currents. As the cormorants bob
on the waves and the silver gulls swoop,
say whatever you couldn't say to my face,
then get on with your own good lives.
Film the whole jaunty wake and offer it
to gallery directors around the country—
the blazing farewell of an unknown artist.

HERPES

Em Konig

from *Breathing Plural* (Cordite Books, 2020) buy [here](#)

My scars taste swell, I've heard. Better even
than nostalgia and I'll never remember
which night was the culprit or the woman
at the clinic whose opinion flexed —
her eyes told me, blinkless —
I should have gone to the place down the street [],
that is where they treat people like me.

Outbreaks cause a headache and fatigue
flu-like indications a small patch of blisters that suckle
my other mouth
so I can't sit or feel loveable
for a week ballooning time to try
and remember who it was that made me
dirty and whether or not
they will appreciate the flowers.

BIOGRAPHIC

Jo Langdon

from *Glass Life* (Five Islands Press, 2018) buy [here](#)

i.
Sparrows: I didn't know. After the girls' home, her sisters' trouble, there was
no school, no returning in the face of it—weight of shame, occlusion. In the
washing house she preferred to press, to smooth out— So Juliana at thirteen
was stubborn, no apologies for the insult. At home, through the war, there
was only bread & jam at best. In the home for girls, the nun would hold
your face under a pillow, press down a cough. Silence even a tickle, so godly
was fear & stillness. I didn't know. To jam on bread her moeder said, What,
you're pregnant as well now? This new shame. How awful, she said later.
What happens to the navel, how it opens out. So pressing linen; so the
sparrows. Oma a child, whistling up to meet them: flicker, voice, flicker.

ii.
An egg, a wish, the war. Later she would marry— His kind face at the dance,
her first. At nineteen she sailed to him with no English & all the florists closed
for Easter. The navel, she said, expecting— isn't it terrible what happens, and
he said, No! (Oh, he must have thought her a fool.) In Holland, the bombs
she saw from the back of a bicycle. That's where I live, shaking, at a distance.
In the cold she was a child. Winters she slept with cattle, carried louse to
the policemen, the kindness of strangers. Across the bridge, the Germans.
Thought: I will be shot, but the soldiers only laughed at her loss, the secret
seams split with hunger; potatoes to earth, irretrievable. At the farmhouse
she had gone to beg with her broeder, had pocketed longing but the lady
said, Where is that egg?—her own basket full.

ZIGZAG

Rozanna Lilley

from Do Oysters Get Bored? A Curious Life (UWAP, 2018)

buy here

She lifts her shirt to show the scar
cleaving a ragged furrow
the heart-hole roughly sutured

We whisper, our breath frosting time
 (making sure the kids can't hear)
 regurgitating sylphen gagging in public loos
 wondering if sex felt like love
 my straight-arrow reflection

Two decades since
she corkscrewed my daughter's hair
while we took the double-laned roundabout
to Queanbeyan

As the rugby-boy staggered across the stage
his muscled arms overflowing with starched tutus
we almost fell from the makeshift pews
helpless with laughter

Today the washing waves like prayer flags
threading a bitter wind
and our aprons are full of stones

‘EX’

for Arvind Rosa

Astrid Lorange

from *Labour and Other Poems* (Cordite Books, 2020) buy [here](#)

Before I leave home I wipe on some pheromones, little sketchy techs.

I'm usually confident I can clutch out some space or dial-up a towelette.

Pheromones are simple, and so have no parts.

One-note code is what can be carried as burden or alarm.

Small, organic or machine-like in its application, my wiping is an exchange of literacies as a chemical debt is a gift of work.

When I wipe on pheromones
I get a sense of what's not my
body but my body's own trilling
bounce-back, the feeling of a
signal feeling itself as a tone.

Sometimes I wipe on pheromones
to issue a call of crisis.

A pheromone is one part of how
a poem implies; the poem, like a
pheromone, is a unit in a broader
system that turns on a concept
or that appears an effect without
origins.

I aim never to write a poem or to
be locatable as a text-based
semiochemical body.

After I wipe on pheromones,
I head out to not write poetry.

I've been an ex before and it feels
like not wearing your own
pheromones but someone or no
one else's.

Or like never reading poems but
enduring the position of a poet.

I wipe some pheromones across
my face because I tend not to
sweat much.

Sweat is to a pheromone what an
ex is to poetry, that is, nothing.

If you've ever been an ex, you've
had to reimagine how to sweat.

When asked if I am a poet I point
to my pheromone wipes and say:

I am not a poet because I cannot
sweat, but I try to hide this fact
and others in case the pleasure of
not-writing becomes a burden.

In lieu of writing, I wipe on my
pheromones left to right.

A poet is a libidinal alarm.

Pheromones are inaudibly
expressed but nevertheless
make noise like the soft-edged
obscurity of thought.

An imprint, or not even.

And much like a poem, a
pheromone is a false confession
of some vague impetus: gestural
propulsion, fake as a vacuum.

Any ex would know that a poem
never merely occurs as in a
glimpse, nor is a pheromone a
precursor to anything but the
fraught trade of symbols tugging
their own weight – sweat or no.



I've never seen a pheromone
before – when I wipe them on I
have to believe that they are
present.

Also, when I write a poem (as an
ex) I have to trust when to break a
line or carry on.

Who can say whether the sex I
have had has been the result of
my wiping-on pheromones or the
result of some other semiotic
exchange or bodily process.

Also, who can say whether the
poems I have written (before I was
an ex) were connected in any way
to sex.



We can think of pheromones or
not, it doesn't change how we
sweat or what our sweat means in
the physical act of writing or trying
not to be seen writing.

Before I was an ex I didn't have to
believe in pheromones or poetry,
I just huffed without any particular
consciousness.

Now I'm an ex so I have to think
about whether or when to wipe on
some pheromones and head out
the door, and I have to work hard
to determine whether what I am
writing is a poem or could be read
as such.

Or worse. I have to figure out
whether I even have a face to
wipe or a body to do the wiping.

Without sweat as an index or a
definite grip on either pheromones
or poetry, a body is pretty obscure.



KALIMANTAN

for Emmanuela Sbinta

Jennifer Mackenzie

from Navigable Ink (Transit Lounge, 2020) buy [here](#)

the lure of diamonds brought them initially
mangroves slink into the peatlands
chainsaw & caterpillar tractor
leaching tannins

a burning smell like no other

*hutan
bukan hanya milik kita
hutan*

canals dug deep
megaphone forest clearance
ironwood logs illegally cut

a tangle of weed & nothingness

palm oil plantations to the horizon
to the azure oceans of

PLASTIC

*

burning burning burning
smoke haze twenty years of
but this is a different smell
I pick the wild fruit and it is bitter
Oh sweet taste of my youth

you can hear the breathing
the soft voice of elders
in the heart of this place
the forests are burning
pollution index 2000+

peatlands burning
particles of death
to the lungs

here at the heart
we are helpless
without succour

through winding road to the heart we go
a convoy of motorcyclists deep into the centre

winding
road
motorcycle
diaries
to
the
peatlands
the journey was long

into hovering death
haze thick
*oh our dripping jackets
oh our clinging skirts*

what we can offer
masks, medicines, a fan of toothbrushes

rubber trees, blissful sandalwood ash collateral
setting up a kitchen for the firefighters

a burning smell like no other

our motorcycle diaries
honeycombed in trauma
written in charcoal *mourned in blood*

*

Conrad's brooding bar on the river

melancholy

out of Bangkok

and into

WHAT PLACE

*

floating in the *klotok*
down the river
walls of pandanus, lianas
closing in
hair damp from broadleaf spray
eyesight entering a darkness
clotted by drip & cloud

butan
bukan hanya milik kita
hutan

Oh delight
Hallelujah Chorus:
gibbons, clouded leopards, sun bears, giant crimson-winged
butterflies, hornbills, tarsiers, frisky freshwater dolphins, the
odd croc

are they here
a company rising above the clouds
or is it merely the hand passing through a membrane

to yesterday's visionary splendour

the forest
not only us
the forest

Kalimantan, from the Sanskrit *Kalamanthana*,
Burning weather island

THE HUMAN MATERIAL

Page Alana Maitland

from *Witted and Whispered (Girls on Key, 2020)* buy [here](#)

Do you know what it means to be made
of human material? I have known it
and fear you may know it too well.

The human hum of hoarse hormonal moans
insane assertions that I might actually be
my name – this thing is destiny wasting
and I'm *your* problem? – heaven is for robots
I am certainly not as high as heaven.

Always know just what you're gonna need
oh world brimful of violence, you are sick
and sicken me with angry hormones
have you met more people than you've killed?

I can shoot for heaven, sure, even if
all that I've ever said and done is wrong
for in the Big Night every soul belongs
even this big gay supermodel lion
who lets herself get lost in orgy dreams

and nothing can go wrong, she thought
if nothing goes right. She is and ever was
your drama workshop friend, her teenage self
haunted by demiurge light

– still alive somewhere
and just the way she was meant to be all along.

VAL PLUMWOOD CANOE

Laura Jean McKay

from Solid Air: Australian and New Zealand Spoken Word
(UQP, 2019) buy [here](#)

The Master knows that
dogs are clocks and women
clocks with mops and locks
and even though we keep time – we tick,
we tick,
we keep it –
that's Master's name there on the door.

Past rings of sun-warmed sediment –
a breathless fridge.
Master doesn't know about it. Or
the long boat made from wood.

The pot plant upends
before we can look to water.

It's a response.
The dirt
is dead.
The plant, the water, the nails that scrape it from the floor.
A machine can't die, dear,
darling, disparate, dove.
Dirt doesn't die
(but time bends in water).

The machine that lusts,
dances on the wall.
We feel a kinship with her flat face and embarrassing bodily
noises.
She can't stop shouting the hour!

Hello sailor.
Hello pizza guy.
Hello Liza.
Our bodies puckered sundials. We puked up the rest.
Hello nature.
Hello nurture.
Hello Master, it's midnight.

Master is very still on the clean pillowcase
bleached
but still breathing
(we tick too
we tick for you).
Master is watching
our pallid legs and how
they skim the jaw.
He's everywhere and nowhere while
we bleed old babies over sheets.
Is that you, Master?

Legover window and fence –
the tide mark grunts and growls.
A creature is awake down there:
gnarled and woody reptile,
fallen tree.
A jaw lined with teeth,
gaze trained.
Liza.

We share a name, dear.
We share a
long boat made from wood.
We've leaned too far.
Seen interest bloom in the animal I.
Time drops into the estuary, where it
rolls like rocks.

In the death roll there is a burnt-chop formality,
an intimacy of teeth.
Bubbles laugh around us. Smokey
blood,
plays a catchy tune.

Master knows a thing about the universe
and how to hold a gun.
He pisses on the lemon tree
because nitrogen feeds the machine,
makes lemons, dogs and how your little girls grow.
Checks his phone.
There's something on at seven,
eight, nine and ten.

A hole in the bucket
(oh dear)
invites water.
We drag from each other through the churning.

Master has two cigarettes.
He lights one
for the other.
Liza.
Shakes his head.

We tick for you.

AN ARCHAISM

Graeme Miles

from *Infernal Topographies* (UWAP, 2020) buy [here](#)

Can't quite shake the image of some
dusty, wheezing figure, always coming
into being in the corner of the room.
An archaism among hallucinations, a hermit
who prefers 'eremite.' Look closer
and he seems to be made of interlocking
triangles. Every possible combination
of lengths and angles must be there
somewhere. You can ask him anything
and get some reply. But you never know
if the words coming back have passed
under the lamp of an actually thinking mind
or a machine for the generation of oracles,
one engineered from smoke, so fine the back
of one hand could disperse it, but ungrippable,
invincible because barely there. He coughs
like someone knocking in morse code.
And he tells you all his correspondences:
a perfume, a virtue, an image.
Names and orders of angels, a leader over each,
a series of doors, corridors, mazes
of playing cards and tarocchi, to paper over
what neither is nor isn't, where you can
pile up the negations as deep as you like.
There is a sound in each sphere,
bells, hammers, the polite,
always slightly inaccurate chiming of clocks. Names to call,
successions of names. An intangible machine,
calling for belief, never expecting it,
driving it away with its crazy certainties,
its grails and trances. What he has to say
is an art in its impracticality, its skills
that like tango can never be mastered.
It has always to border the diabolic.
Everyone must doubt if we
should really be here.

HIV TRANSMISSION

Peter Mitchell

from *Conspiracy of Skin* (Ginninderra Press, 2018) buy [here](#)

Black cat streaks the bedroom. Her weight sags
the mattress. My sleep time ends. She looks
at the window. The cane blind blocks her

escape. Crackers bang outside. She detonates
down the stairs. Breaking glass echoes. I jolt
upright, shove the bedclothes off, pull the blind

back. I look right, my nostrils flare. Ash dusts
the air. Nerves roil my stomach. I look left
down the row of terraces. Flames ruby

the morning. My sister stirs in the next room.
Cate. I leap off the bed, my feet thump the
floor. *Cate.* Smoke steals into our house.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SMOKING

Audrey Molloy

from *Satyress* (Southword Editions, 2020) buy [here](#)

i.

I blame Madonna. My fingerless lace gloves got me busted. Mother, always the *fashionista*, tried them on, held them to her cheek, blanched at the whiff of stale smoke and searched my room. The contraband, a pack of *Drum* (Mild Shag), was on my person as I followed her around, but she found it in the pocket of my blazer and burnt it in the Aga.

ii.

I'd dreamt of *Gauloises*, but that summer we smoked *Lucky Strikes*, lakeside in the Alps near Gap. We were tan, unaware of our taste in their mouths—the white-teeth boys who offered a light from brass Zippos. Delphine and I swam the lake to escape, walked back on virgin feet, laughing at nothing, bumming a smoke on the way, and who wouldn't give us one?

iii.

A pool of denim and velvet on the floor between bed and door; sending a taxi for smokes at 3am; all those things we don't do now, like cigarettes after sex—crackle as leaf becomes ash, sheets of smoke suspended, up-lit by a candle in a Mateus Rosé bottle. On the nightstand, like a carriage clock, *Dunhill's* claret-and-gold pack; alas, now gone, replaced with images that would put you off coming.

iv.

Lighting up in the fire escape: me, filing clerk and hot CEO, who tells me I should wear red to work more often—you could back then. And the switch to *Silk Cut Ultra*, when you realise addiction is not strictly chemical. I mean how much nicotine is really in those things? Fourteen years post-quitting, the gaps—still there; after dessert, or making love, or when news comes on the phone that someone's died.

v.

The first time you have a panic attack you have no idea what's happening; only that you cannot read a simple instruction in English—how to call home from a public phone in an unfamiliar city; only nonsense words, and lungs that won't fill. Two good pulls on a *Rothmans* would've shit all over the Xanax they prescribed, but that only occurred to me years later.

vi.

They tell me I still have the smoker's personality, whatever that means: *extroverted, tense, impulsive, neurotic, sensation-seeking*—this last, I love: *the search for new, complex, intense experiences, and the predisposition to take risks in order to do so, including radical sports, criminal activities, risky sexual behavior, alcoholism, use of illicit drugs, gambling*. Well, maybe I have, and maybe I haven't.

vii.

And now we live to a hundred, nothing left to spare us from days spent lap-rugged in a wheelchair, staring through glass at pariahs huddled outside cafés and bars. (*Viva!* Vivienne Westwood, at the ball, pack of *Marlboro* tucked up the puff sleeve of her gown). Can it be that hard to create a smoke that might grant years of calm, and, one unexpected night, assassinate us in our sleep?

I RUN...

Melanie Mununggurr

from Solid Air: Australian and New Zealand Spoken Word

(UQP, 2019) buy [here](#)

I like to call myself a runner
Cos that's what I do
When life attacks me from all angles like I'm a paper bag in a thunderstorm
I run
I run from all my problems, tune out all sounds of day and life
Until the only sound I'm left with is my feet hitting the Tarmac,
carrying me away
My heart thumping deep within the lonely, hollow, cavity of my chest
I run
I do fun runs and marathons to escape cyclonic turmoil, Run through
rivers in the hope my scent will get lost in the currents
But like a black tracker, my problems find me
They chase me down the way white authorities
chased down brown-skin babies,
Hold me captive the way this country holds asylum seekers and taunt me
the way my abuser does, despite me already
leaving the scene of that crime
I run

I run through beautiful boundaries that segregate real from true,
run into a blur of horizons of sadness and the gravitational pull of a
woman going mad
Nice girl to bitch, good guy to asshole,
the cycle posing the same question as,
'What came first?
The chicken or the egg?'
And the answer... no one really knows
But personal perspective tells me the nice girl
came before the asshole who created the bitch
And now I'm stuck with trying to run from her,
That beat down beauty
Suicidal psycho caught between the western white-man's world
and ancient Aboriginal antiquity

I run

I run to the hills and sing my praises to my inner child cos she reminds me
of the beauty of a rainbow in the rain,
The excitement of mud between my toes,
The happiness of life's simplicities, she
Is the first pearl in my ocean

I run to the ocean where all my tears from years past have collected,
knowing that if I blow it a kiss the least it will do is wave back,
and if I'm lucky

My salty sweat from all that I have run from
Will one day
Bathe me clean

FIRST BLOOD: A SESTINA

Natalie D-Napoleon

from First Blood (Ginninderra Press, 2019) buy [here](#)

There was a time when the girl
never thought about the colour blue, or blood,
could be amused by the flicking of a lit match,
the delicate shiver of a spider orchid;
summer holidays stretched out, days dropping time
like a missed knitting stitch.

But her body was not hers, a stitch
of animal, a pinch of dirt, a girl
is made of words plus liquid minus time
and what she does not have; blood,
defines her. Like an orchid
about to bloom she unfurls, unlit match

between her teeth, nobody to match
her unknissed lips, until the stitch
is pulled and the thread of the cloth orchid
undoes, just enough to reveal the gone girl.
Nobody told her there would be so much blood!
Her mother had tried to mend the old time

ways, when girls were never told in time
about periods, as if knowledge alone could match
an image of her baba scrubbing the blood
out of torn rags, her hair greasy, a stitch
unwashed once every month. Cold water, girls
know, washes out blood, and orchids

should be kept indoors and warm, orchids
are to be protected from a cold breeze. In time
the blue liquid in the TV ads for girl-
products made sense, red stains to mismatch
the pastel spots on her skirt enough to stitch
shame to her chest. Blood

is not to be seen — except the blood
of war or violence. Blood 'n Bone drinks the orchid,
the fetor forcing the girl to sprint until a stitch
bites her side and the breath of time
stabs; finding a way to strike the match
of bloom and decay in the body of a girl.

She came to see a stitch in time
could not repair the stain of first blood, spider orchids
are too delicate to touch, and nothing can hold a match to
a bleeding girl.

ROM COMS RUIN IT FOR EVERYONE

Thuy On

from Turbulence (UWAP, 2020) buy [here](#)

In shopping aisles
banana is innuendo
in pavement stumbles
Mr Floppy Fringe comes a-dashing
while Little Miss Good Times
sashays behind tweed
and owlsh specs

let's wait for:
boy meets girl
histrionic swells
riverbed of tears
lines criss-crossed
doubled up backed away
missteps

(an age later)

Venn diagram overlap
like and like meet halfway
a head knock heart pound body roll
after: a bench sit
skyline view
a shopping trolley where innuendo
is a peach.

LIMINAL LOVE SONGS

Esther Ottaway

from Intimate, Low-Voiced, Delicate Things
(Puncher & Wattmann, forthcoming 2020) order [here](#)

The way of an eagle in the heavens

Reflected in an eye, the dizzy paisley
of earth laid out for miles, the fiction
of early warning. Tallest bluff,
wind-chill written in the hunch of trees.

I cling to rock, stare at the arc
of wingspan longer than my body,
clutch at the theory of a home always
in this nest, this lover. Time

and unforeseen occurrence. Eggs
blotched like a hunter's moon. We kiss,
draw barbs and hooks to smoothness,
fit closer than feather. How long

can this slow pattern – caring,
paining, forgiving – take flight
and return? I trace the cliff
of your brow with my finger,

your temple's shallow chalice
the shape of a stick-raft nest
of exposure, the drop-edge
of cheekbone, imagine waking

beside you on the tallest
cliff, to the shock of height
and a hooked tongue, unable to tell you
I'm sorry. Below us, everything.

The way of a serpent on a rock

Come on then, sweet-skinned creature –
love's not one of the human rights
but something one learns

in the intricate sting
of shedding, addiction to skin
and pattern, each scale mirroring

the contour of its mate,
half-hidden, half-exposed, the memory
of my hair coming down in a certain light

coiled into the pocket of your heart.
Or instinct, the draw of sun-hot granite
to the slow belly, urge to roll back

the clenching cold; my hands
in a nest of questions. I cannot
grasp what makes a predator,

divide love from craving when we find
each other in the reptilian dark
of our separate selves,

eyes full of scales,
blood racing with sinuous hunger
to bite, to be swallowed whole.

The way of a ship in the heart of the sea

Hatchway of a vessel, the shower door
shudders on its runner, takes us inside

I face you under the hot hiss of water, skin
plumping like soaked fruit, exhaling

like leaves, wonder where in this water
we meet, what things your skin

might breathe to mine, what things are
washed away, and whether I could name

what familiarity erodes, or whether
these points of reference –

breakers of foam on your razor, smooth
river-stones of your shoulders, shining

whalebone of your hip – have slipped
into unconscious seas, and my skin is the fish

which no longer feels the waves, my senses
are faithless as sand, and this is why

I scribble charts of you, haul in shoals
of your words, sketch the precise drape

of sheet when you sleep, why my fingers
log the swell of a blue-soft vein, why,

when you tell me you love me
I sing to myself in the roiling dark:

I am in the heart of the sea
I am in the heart.

The way of a man with a maiden

You pluck a poinciana, walk me through humid rain
around your childhood block. Thank you,

you say, for coming here, and the flame tree's bloom
is a blood-rush to my cheek. I can't explain

why fertile chance delivered you to me,
why until this journey I have not acknowledged

your uprooting. In every story you are alone.
I tuck the flower behind my ear, stoop

to a kangaroo paw's black fist, send seeds
rattling like departing trains: clumsy on your trail

I make a mess of spoor, and can't tell
what it is that I have broken underfoot,

how to tread down the past. At the lawn's edge,
locked out of your home, you are as weary

as a man grown used to desert. I cling
to your hand, don't have the words you need.

In the hotel I stroke the petals' bruises,
mesmeric as wounds. Beneath the sheet

your hands are the flower
 a displaced heart, aflame
you track me seed me tell me you will never
 go away

ABOUT A SUNNY EXPERIENCE

Ouyang Yu
from *Living after Death* (Melbourne Poets Union, forthcoming 2020)
order [here](#)

Morning. Melbourne. Before 9.30 am. Or after. Half-sunny street. Half-shady street. Me that is walking in the half-sunny street.

An enormous curve poured out by greenness. Buildings before the nineteenth century.

Sunshine. Something that feels warm on the body. Saw Hard Rock Café. On the half-sunny street. Opposite the half-shady street. Remembering. My birthday in the final year of the twentieth century in Beijing. Also a place with a Hard Rock Café. Night. Lights everywhere. This remark now reminds of that remark then: No drugs or weapons allowed in! Called a woman on her mobile phone. She was as evasive as ever. Lights evasive. Flash lights on the camera evasive.

Woman who is moving dining tables outside onto the street. Not a foreign woman. I am a foreigner. Sunshine very warm on the body. And on the table. Asked for a coffee. Reading a Chinese magazine while sheltering the sunshine. Half-sunny paper. Half-shady paper. Reading those poems without feeling. Those things called poetry. Half the face covered. Half thoughts shone by the sun.

Turned the ignition key. Pushed the electronic automatic window button. Driving into the sun. Human feet on the half-sunny street. Half-shady street. Pretty erected high-heeled leather shoes. High-heeled sandals showing toes and white skin through three horizontal and two vertical strokes.

Thought of. Moon poetry. Always moon poetry. Half-shady street. Thought of. Names. My name. Yang. Male sex. Sunshine. Something that is warm on the body. That shines on my name. A ray of concentrated light. That shines on the character in the middle. The character that stands erect.



WALGAJUNMANHA ALL TIME

Charmaine Papertalk Green
from *Nganajungu Yagu* (Cordite Books, 2019) buy [here](#)

We write about our existence pre-invasion / and that has made us visible
We write about our existence during invasion / and that keeps us visible

Walgajunmanha
Walgajunmanha
Walgajunmanha

We write about the blood they spilt / and that honours ancestors' memories
We write about the land they stole / and that shows they are savage thieves

Walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha

We write about our connection to country / and that challenges theirs
We write about our lived realities / and that shows them we survived

Walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha

We write about sky world knowledge / and show them the first astronomers
We write about earth world knowledge / and show them a sustainable culture

Walgajunmanha
Walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha

We write about traditional food production / and contest their agriculture
We write about traditional mud huts / and debunk their walkabout romanticism

Walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha

We write about Aboriginal deaths in custody / and show them we fight back
We write about deaths in police presence / and we are not blinded by lies

walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha

We write about racism experiences / punctures in their ethnocentric balloons
We write about campaign for Aboriginal rights / pens our weapon of choice

walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha
walgajunmanha

We write about deep Aboriginal culture love /
and that shatters their assimilation into pieces



BOONAH MORNING

June Perkins

from Illuminations: 19 poems and 1 story
(Gumbootspearlz Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

Wells of silence, so quiet
not even a pin drops.

Boonah morning beckons
the sunrise mist.

Sunrise spills on the fence lines –
certitude.

Sunrise melody illumines
the seeker's face.

The bird on the wire greets
Boonah, with her songs
for dreamers.

THE STORY OF THE KELLY GANG 1906

π.O.

From Heide (Giramondo Press, 2019) buy [here](#)

From a fallen tree, all
make kindling. A culture is a system of
interlocking actions. *The Story of the Kelly Gang* was
shown at the Lyric Theatre (in Fitzroy)
///// it ran & ran & ran for an hour; 9 scene-
changes; Kelly's homestead, the Police (in the Wombat
Ranges), robbing the National Bank,
in the Strathbogie ranges, the Black trackers,
the shooting of Aaron Sherritt, tearing up the railway line,
Curnow saving the // train (tearing thru
the night) with a / red lantern, the shootout
at Glenrowan, and Kelly's last stand, on the scaffold.
The story still fresh, in the mind of the people;
only 26 years since his hanging : sprocket : sprocket :
sprocket : sprocket : sprocket : sprocket :sprocket :
Pointillism changes the light into a swarm of large dots.
Everybody filed out //// of the theatre, past
the FULL HOUSE sign (into Johnson St). "If the *talkies*
come, who'll want to go to one" one said, "and
hear the guns really * blast!? You'll have to block your head".
On the screen, Kelly was seen in profile,
shooting his guns // at the Coppers — BANG! ^{BANG!} - smoke.
Ned Kelly rode the ranges wild / A bandit game was he.
Nitrate, is a volatile substance, and could
catch fire during a screening. The Police force
didn't like the screening, and how they
were depicted. A broken window, is a window
that has been broken. The NSW government imposed
a ban on all "bushranger" films.
V/I = R, is Ohm's Law. Silence, tells us
a different story.

STRAND

Felicity Plunkett

from A Kinder Sea (UQP, 2020) buy [here](#)

Every poem has a secret addressee. Every secret
a shoreline. Mine loosens
like a tooth.

I wake to three knocks. Three times no-one
there. Knocks echo through an empty house until
I am empty of dreams.

An owl at noon means death. Your death
eyeing me, still, from a tree
one leafless noon.

See yourself in a dream: you are soon
to die. Seeing you, without me, in a dream, I knew
you could survive.

Tumble of wings into pane. A wrecked bird
huddled on the ledge, looking in. Your eyes
closed against pain.

Nothing to say, as when words lose their letters
in winter. Letters' spines dismantle
in my silent hand.

I hear your name in a dream of sea. Dream
my secrets fall from my mouth, braced
neat as pearls.

Broken mirror, spilt salt, opened
umbrella. Salt rain broke and I thought no
harm could come to you.

Never rock an empty chair. Your empty
room, fulcrum of consolation
and despair.

A sailor with an earring cannot drown. Drownless
in the hold of your sea cradle,
distant as shoreline.

SWAY

Jo Pollitt

from The dancer in your hands (UWAP, forthcoming 2020) order [here](#)

We need a break. Interval. Pause. We need a bridge a lake a fire a
cause. We need a victim a hero a saviour a sacrament we need a document a
deal a death a back up a wall. We need a layer of life under
this one. We need nothing. We need a new hymn and we need people
to actually fucking sing.

Sway

I vow. I vow. I vow. I vow. Falling off the end of a life is further than
falling. Fugue. The distance a repetition that splinters and tricks, the
end the end the end the end. No erasure. No integration. Slow process
palimpsest. No white wash. Hiding as measuring. The distance of each
life disallowed in successful unseeing.

Dance dancer dance.

Sway

How long is the life of a movement?
How many seconds, minutes, years. First movement. Third.

Dance dancer dance.

x
|
x / / / x
|
|
x

MAUERPARK

Antonia Pont

from You Will Not Know In Advance What You'll Feel
(Rabbit Poet Series, 2019) buy [here](#)

We bought
three bikes between us
at the Mauerpark market:
Disco-Wheels for Arielle
(small aqua number
with yellow Klingel) and
The Grey—(fifteen euro)—

and a black one
christened Elvis, Rhett, Hildegard or Jett
(you get the idea...)
Caitlyn comes in with the ladder.
It's the end of a Sunday kind of Sunday.
We cook rice noodles, speechless from the light.
The city is opening up like a letter.

We walked, pushed and
elbowed our way,
verzeihing through aisles.
Karaoke was there, we later heard,
in brutal sun on that
tiered concrete seating
but you had to know the words.

Queued for gözleme:
watched through low glass
as the grandmother rolled
white dough flat and whiter-drier
then thinner and still flatter and
brushing with oil, laid it cooking
on the hot convex cooking disc.

Our fairy lights don't look glitzy
and other windows are wide open
letting night in.
All the heating is off and
we' re hopeful for consistency
—it is nice to spend a day
with people.

White enamel swans for ears.
Caitlyn found printing blocks
made the words 'süß eben'
for five euro.
Tiny dog
in Polizei harness
investigates ankles, darts away.

Printing blocks man
also sells large tatami (lived in Japan)
I haggle cardigans with the pink-nosed Russin
while the girl with the child
who has messy-pretty hair
buys cakes from the woman
selling cakes and jewellery.

We hurry to the café on Kastanienallee
—to sprawl in bunt chairs—
watch waffles fly past, sporting
pistes of pristine Eis and strawberries.
Frozen-mouthed, we admire tea-towels
bought by the Dane, while sunshine
uses us as lounges.

We walk on
planning a Fahrrad picnic.
We'll ride home via Alex
and the Tor then Tiergarten.
We'll film, swerving wildly
cameras for necklaces
patches of guerrilla flowers

coming up everywhere.
(Happiness
 is too exposed so we
call it 'sky' and 'almost-sunburnt'.)
Markus pots plants
on the dining room table.
We use metho and cloth

to make Disco-Wheels' aqua bodywork
even more like stretchy hot-pants.
In our bedroom
with musk-stick walls and
low hanging bulb
hyacinths sift dusk
through downcast lashes.

We rattle back on cobblestones.
(Dirk says 'clichés are what you get
when you don't focus on western capitalism'.)
The Grey weaves and I listen
to Elvis' rusty pedals squeak.
I'll sell him back to Igor
when we leave.

And padding about
in white fisherman's pants,
Caitlyn is beautiful,
says the sky is just like
times at the promontory.
She takes photos of me as I type,
of the tea-lights too

and the leaves of the chestnut
through open windows.
(Disco-Wheels meanwhile
gets texta sign
stands bored and waiting,
chewing gum
in the Flur.)

I can't taste this day enough,
can't get enough of it in,
want to squeeze it
like the sellers
of juice for one euro,
squash it into the fresh
waffle-cone of this poem.

I want to remember
there's a difference
between tired and surrendered.
Caitlyn says it's like
there hasn't been a Sunday for years.
We hear dogs barking
in the Hof below.

They fixed the elevator
Friday last week.
I refuse to count days
and soon we will eat
potato gratin and talk about the Krise.
Arielle and Dirk are still
not home.

TALKING BOB DYLAN BLUES

Caroline Reid

from *Siarad* (Spineless Wonders, 2020) buy [here](#)

*Jesus, Zimmerman
when did you get so old?
Almost eighty, but the ad on Facebook for your Australian tour
shows a man forty years younger –*

Bob Dylan at Budokan 1978

a place where you tried to flee the terrible weight of mysterious legend
Watching that footage now makes me feel deflated
Like a flaccid pink balloon, it makes me want to cry.

Wait – did I say that out loud?
Cos you are looking at me like I'm trying to start a fight
The light in here is so much brighter since I changed the bulb
and your thoughts have wrinkles, man

But, Zimmerman
I am not trying to start a fight
I am trying to come to terms with breaking up with you
When I was twenty-four I couldn't imagine ever wanting to break up with you
Man,
When I was twenty-four I fantasized about loving you
In an urban backyard sandpit, haloed by cheap fairy lights,
we shared Winston cigarettes
a bottle of Jacks
and jokes about The Beatles
Now, people will tell you there are all kinds of loving sweetheart
but you and me know what I'm talking about
don't we, Zimmerman?

Mind you, you're so good at being silent it could go either way
but I am definitely closer to death than I've ever been
and these things were bound to come up
– loving
– disappointment
– not being dead
– the point in life where you change or cease
When I die I want to be as happy as Brett Whiteley on a good day
with a bunch of violets in my hand
And a sledgehammer and a grain of sand in my head.

Man, I swear the wiring in this room is fucked
the bulb seems to blow every two weeks
Do you remember last December when my demented Mum came to visit?
She didn't recognise me in this shadowy room, she said
You could pass for my daughter, you've got the same eyes but you're not my daughter
I said *Mum, if I'm not your daughter then who the hell am I?*
I am no longer the person who fantasizes about loving you Zimmerman
I got nothing to say to you
You would just disappoint me I reckon
even though you orbited my twenties like Saturn's rings
even though listening to you was like having no-strings sex with my bff
and when I lay on rented lino floors
nursing my complex inferiority in the recovery position for weeks
your music wrapped itself around me like St John crepe.

But that wasn't you, was it?
And I am not me, am I?
They say life is a carnival but, man
are you convinced?
When kids these days trust Facebook more than the government?
And Jesus, Zimmerman, why'd you have to get so old?
It makes me want to cry
I want to go to your concert but I don't want to go to your concert
It'll be winter in Australia
an outside gig in Adelaide's Bonython Park
and I'll complain about my cold feet
and your voice that I once jerked off to will be all out of

a parody of itself
hard in all the wrong places.

Like an ancient blood-soaked animal found dead on the tracks
I have a limited emotional range
I'm on repeat
afraid of too much
think I might cry again
And tomorrow I will phone Mum
remind her to take her tablets
like I do every morning
and if she's on a good day she will say
Oh sweetheart
I thought it was you

NIKOLA TESLA'S NIGHT OF TERROR

David Reiter

from Time Lords Remixed: A Dr Who Poetical
(Interactive Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

No, this is not a tale of autonomous cars, but scorpion
invaders from Mars. I suppose Nikola had it coming
pinning his ear to the night waves. Then when he heard

a chatter of sorts, he had the brash to prattle back. He
should have known something was up from that pesky
Thassa Orb spying on him mid-air with a greenish AC

but he was was too busy inventing the 20th century
before that pretender Edison could cash in on his DC.
It wasn't just that Nikola reminded me of David Bowie

in that gilded New York City: he also created alone,
in parentheses to the money-grabbers, too impatient
to let the world inch at a tortoise pace. But I digress:

The Queen of the Skithra wants to nab him before
he's recognised for being good at the impossible
(like me again!) Either he agrees to engineer her ship

or she'll Galli-fry Earth – a time-sensitive offer. He's
tempted. At least she's acknowledged his brilliance
and his sacrifice could be a legacy. Not on my watch!

Issuing Queenie with an airspace eviction notice
I give her one last chance to evolve. She refuses.
What else can you expect from a parasite with a kink

in her neck? Bring it on! While Jasmin decoys her
Skithra hordes through the back alleys, we charge
Nikola's Wardencllyffe Tower with a bolt that zaps

the mother ship quicker than 5G – all in a day's
doctoring! Poor Nikola dies penniless, but like I say
you have to save Earth before you can change it.

THE STORM

for Van

Nadia Rhook

from boots (UWAP, 2020) buy [here](#)

we danced along the beach after the storm
had passed and left in her wake

branches, jellyfish, relief

sometimes you don't need another poem
sometimes you actually have to go outside
and meet the storm

not the metaphorical storm I mean
wind that knocks you off your feet rain
that soaks your clothes the storm
that arrives quickly and means you must
quickly make friends with the
person behind the bar where you take
cover amongst bottles of beer and
freshly imported chivas regal whisky
where you crouch down near the swimming
pool, not inside it and wait for the storm to
pass and when it's passed you find you've
made a new friend

a friend you know you can trust cos nobody
accidentally elbowed you in the eye or
dropped a bottle on your shoeless toe and
the barperson's dog didn't run away not
a metaphorical dog an actual little brown
puppy called red who sadly would get run
over a week later

actually run over and

you know you can smile through all your
sadness when your butt hurts cos its
digging into your heels and your friend's
smiling back at you and you know
there

'aint nothing metaphorical about a friend
especially one who knows how to dance
along the beach after the storm has passed

not metaphorical dancing not particularly
co-ordinated dancing just dancing

FORM, LIKE BODY, SHOULD NEVER BE ASSUMED

Autumn Royal

from Liquidation (Incendium Radical Library, 2019) buy [here](#)

To demonstrate care of ownership
the stained nightie is bathed
& then rolled between two towels
to press out excess moisture
before the evaporation reasons
a reshaping. Re-dried & re-domesticated,
when does material matter
in acts of plunging & tautness?
There is constant weight to malleability,
even when synthetic – the way rumours
may knot like a nightie & can be held
against a body for an arousal
of contempt. A nightie's length
in comparison to a shoulder strap
is designed to be longer than a throat,
yet unlike a throat, a nightie cannot
be as deeply penetrated – assuming
there is a throat for the gown to tenderly
stroke over – as opposed to being lifted
from the ground, up past the feet,
supposing there are feet & a ground.

FACTOIDS

Omar Sakr

from *The Lost Arabs* (UQP, 2019) buy [here](#)

My mother sits in a stone house and she burns.
Her father brought his family here to escape history.
When she was young, one of nine, he beat them
with his father's hands. Later, high on heroin
he became a midnight salesman, selling their jewels
and mattresses. I have no way to verify this.
My grandparents are both home in the mud.
A factoid can be a falsehood or a trivial truth,
it is a hole language allows to have two spirits.

My mother sits in a stone house and she burns.
Sometimes she is the stone, sometimes the flame.
She does not scream. She is a beacon I record
to use her light as a cudgel, to purple this page.
“I wanted to be an artist once,” she said. “He wouldn’t
let me.” Her first husband beat her. He was high on heroin.
He hit her at home. Cracked her skull with a pistol.
Now she forgets her name at least once a day.
He visited her in the hospital as she lay recovering.
He beat her in that bed. I write everything down.

My mother sits in a stone house and she burns.
The house is a villa(ge) in Lebanon. The house is in Villa
-wood. There are photos of my mother before all this
everyone agrees, she used to be beautiful.
I see her burning, her face and nose and lips curling
up into black paper as she does the dishes
and goes to work and orders takeaway dinner.
There is nothing more beautiful than survival
but I have no one to tell this to, everyone
agrees the present is an ugliness to be ignored.

My mother is not alone in her stone, her fiery
wedding dress. Other daughters go up next to her,
little infernos. They speak cinder and ash,
tongues a brand that sear language into body.
They tell me family has checkpoints vicious
as any country, and not everyone makes it
across or if they do, they lose their names
in a calligraphy ablaze. I wish I had asked
how to choose between a fist at home and
the border, between bruise and bewilderment
or how to live in a place that is both safe
and wound. Flame and stone. Every word
has two spirits, at least. My mother survived,
and she did not. She can't keep her dreams in,
they pour out the hole in her head a gun left,
a man left, life left—this poem left open.

My mother sits in the stone house I put her in,
and burns. She could be so much more. I could
tell you of the diamond baked into her tooth.
How she made her smile a gem worth weighing.
I could say she never arrived from Lebanon.
That my grandfather let history burn
his body in Tripoli, and it saved us.
That she drives trucks, knows how to make gelato
and is always dreaming up new inventions.
That her dogs make her squeal with joy.
Inside my stone house, these things seem trivial
or false, but I tell you they are true.

GROCERIES

Kirli Saunders

excerpt from *Bindi* (Magabala Books, forthcoming 2020)

When we get to the store I stop and stare—
I’ve only ever seen people like this in movies.

Parents from school drag their kids hurriedly through the
shops,
teenagers frantically run,
beating Elderly people
in the supermarket race.

Everyone pushes past each other,

scrounging for
water
canned beans
muesli bars
toiletries
pet food
medical things.

It welcomes worry.

None of us know
how long this emergency will last,
if at all.

Trying to prepare for something unpredictable,

we are unsure of the right ways to move.

All of us forget ourselves
in the grocery store.

HONEY

Alice Savona

from *Selfie* (UWAP, 2020) buy [here](#)

Hypothesis

Father (f) (h) (ch) ucks mother
when it is really his own fears & | ❈
anxious avoidance of recovery
that he needs to (f) (h) (ch) uck;

Mother (f) (h) (ch) ucks father
when it is really her own fears & | ❈
anxious attachment to discovery
that she needs to (f) (h) (ch) uck.

Materials

Me, A. (1972) <i>Cell Suck</i>	He, B. (1973) <i>Flotsam</i>
Father: French crumbs in aerograms	Father: inside blue free
Mother: real v. ideal abandonment	Mother: pinkcamipushprettythroat
Womb: my face before birth	Womb: a hat-pin, a pub-din

Method

i. I try contemporary poetry

Sugar appealed for its ~~inventiveness~~ dissociative,
so was ~~shortlisted~~ snorted, ~~but~~ & I am sorry to say
I had to ~~reject~~ accept that ~~poem~~ kick & many others
that were ~~attractive~~ deviant because of constraints
of ~~page numbers~~ pretty cons; I could make
an ~~anthology~~ affirmary of all ~~poems~~ addiction
with such appeal, if ~~chance~~ pluck permitted.
Please do consider sending ~~other work~~

c
a
n o c e b o
d
y

during the next submission period nix.

ii. We try contemporary coupling

he : me : candy of cheats
my eyelids for his snakes
embroidered into subtext
sex, the ; of extraordinary

his omphalos, my ox tongue
the caffeine in our detail
change, the ; of relapse
love, a silhouette Sexton

a fig-leaf for our Facebook
how I hang my thoughts
love, a porcupine cycle
to anchor self ie

what I hang my thoughts on
to sew our silhouette nest
his self ie, my poem
synonym : marriage : repeat :

iii. He tries contemporary vinyl

Vodka purrs to tune a Tardis : { IN UTERO
{ IVY AND THE BIG APPLES
{ LOVELY CREATURES
{ SUMMER TEETH

{ CALIFORNICATION
{ MASTER OF PUPPETS
{ OK COMPUTER

{ CHAOS A.D.
{ GET BEHIND ME SATAN

{ NEVERMIND

iv. We try contemporary therapy

; so sweet my anxious addiction. To his avoidant attachment.
To the fonts of my inner-critic & its overeaten, bloody bio. I am puce, brass,
headlong. He is tulle, dew, bee semen. The psychologist strikes: *Contain your
identity-anxiety in private, or express in a non-dismissive way.*
Now we are quiet, our shadow a Tardis.
The clocks drip caramel. Cotton finds fuse blues for Gallifrey. We notate heavy
dismissals; flipbook fear of self. A mercy simmer cell suck slow.

Results

Me, A. (2019→) *I love people so they'll do what I want.*
He, B. (2019→) *You don't have to be perfect for me to love you.*

Discussion

We progress, our folio of bruises ease
hypothetical T&C's -

@ our next ketamo ; sex I text :
r
e
t i m e .
r
o

Conclusion

Divorce appealed for its dissociative, so was shortlisted.
However -
I had to reject that poem because of blinkered (f) (h) (ch) ucks
(the intergenerational transmission of pheromone memory).
I will make an anthology of all armour as pluck permits

& | ☞

as we me-he anchors for sugar,
drizzling trust on your ox tongues,
please do consider sending the why of your honey v. self ie ;

SUBURBAN FANTASY

Michele Seminara

from *Suburban Fantasy* (UWAP, forthcoming 2020) order [here](#)

You maltreated

body my poor

child love your filling me with
savage

ing
me down on
your filthy
ress

stinking with vile
blood

and

you know nothing roots

things go

pack your
This is my house

Note: An erasure poem from pages 170-171 of Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children*, Penguin Books, 1970

JESS'S DREAM

Leni Shilton

from *Malcolm: a story verse* (UWAP, 2019) buy [here](#)

Jess's been sick for weeks.
At night, when she goes to sleep
on the mattress in the corner,
we hear her dreams.

‘They’re running dreams,’
she tells us in the morning,
‘I’m running all night,
it’s night in the dream too.
Behind me are animals,
horses, dogs – big dogs,
a centaur.
They don’t make any noise
because their hooves are covered
in cloth,
like velvet,
purple velvet.’

We sit around her
on the filthy mattress.
Frank has thrown out one lot of sheets,
but the next lot he got
weren't much better.
Why do people
give away stained sheets?

I can see one flower in the pattern
of climbing roses and leaves
that isn't stained.
I look hard at it.
It's pink,
a colour I'd forgotten.

Jess says the animals
can talk,
and they call her.
She can't remember what they say,
but they frighten her.

Sometimes she flies
in her dreams
but when she does
she has to be careful of the powerlines
that cross the city air
like laser beams
waiting to get her.

She gets trapped under the powerlines
with the animals
coming,

and she says
in the dream
her legs vanish
and she has to slide
along the footpath,
through the piss and the vomit
and she knows it's only
a matter of time
before
they catch up.

ZERO SUM

Melinda Smith

from Listen, bitch (Recent Work Press, 2019) buy [here](#)

It's very unladylike to be yelling in the Parliament
Constant male bashing It's not
in our values I'm a country guy so I know

Why would I vote for Malcolm in a skirt?
It's not in our values to push some people down
to lift some people up. That is how

to fly a plane, ride a horse, and
That is true of gender equality.
We don't want to see women rise

only on the basis of others doing worse.
Men who feel rage as a result of the failure
of their mothers ... are highly likely

to project that rage onto future intimate partners,
and often all women. [I hope he'll get] tough here
with a few backhanders...shove a sock

down her throat False accusations of violence
being used to destroy men's lives.
Just tell her you know where she lives

and leave it at that. Lol. She will flip
It's not in our values men having fewer rights
it ain't a good look We don't want to see women rise

I'm a country guy so I know how to feel rage
We're sorry. Removing the photo
sent the wrong message about demonising men

Many of the comments ...were reprehensible
& we'll work harder to ban trolls
from our pages. Now that young lady

has a wonderful set of cahoonas
I'm a country guy so I know
how to project that rage onto future

intimate partners Lol. She will flip
I've had plenty of mates who've asked me
if they can project that rage onto ...all women

shove a sock down her throat
and leave it at that. Lol.
We don't want to see women

We're sorry... & we'll work harder
(then you'll no longer be able to attack)
It's very unladylike to yell.

Notes: The poem 'Zero Sum' is a found-text assemblage,
composed entirely of public statements nominated for Ernie
Awards for Sexist Behaviour (<http://ernies.com.au>) in 2019.
See also *The Ernies Book: 1000 Terrible Things Australian
Men Have Said About Women* (Meredith Burgmann and
Yvette Andrews, Allen & Unwin, 2007).

NANCY WITH THE STAPLES IN HER STOMACH

Susan Bradley Smith

from Gladland (Recent Work Press, forthcoming 2020)

buy [here](#)

Your daddy is Frank Sinatra, and even though
he was the kind of man who organised poker
parties in Vegas with scotch on the table and
whores beneath, blowing the players, it was
you who earned the sin in your surname
by posing naked for *Playboy*. Please Forgive
Me Daddy, you crooned, wearing your
perfect patent leather boots that never left
the runway, squashed a fly. America is full
to the dead-fish gills with women like you,
with eyes like yours, opaque with a future
that never arrives because you took
the bait. Elsewhere, everywhere maybe,
women eschew your entrepreneurial guts,
yet listen to your records, same sugar in our
veins, same metallic centerfold pain in our bellies.

SUICIDE DOGS

David Stavanger

from Case Notes (UWAP, 2020) buy [here](#)

1.
There is a bridge in Scotland where over fifty dogs have inexplicably leapt to their deaths, plummeting from parapet past green stone. Many believe it to be possessed by the devil. Others claim the dogs are lost in the pursuit of wild mink and tear off into mid-air, keening for game. There have been reports of some surviving their brush with death, only to return for a second shot. These dogs understand what is at stake, such leaps premeditated attempts to be closer to us in every conceivable way.
2.
Dogs don't need to be taught how to smell. They do need to be taught where to sniff - along the seams of self-harm, underneath a sudden calm where tense vapours settle. Their nostrils can be trained to pick up poison or the scent of gas, ears pin pricked for the sudden ignition of an oven outside normal hours of use. Suicide dogs begin building their own vocabulary of suspicious odours, working out that ideation will find nostrils quicker than food. Strictly speaking, the dog smells intent. Trainers say these dogs know when people are thinking of leaving through body cues, electrical signals and other ways not yet named. Perhaps a quietening of the voice. A loudening thought. Foregoing sleep. Drastic changes in behavior, such as laughter or cleaning up a room, result in the dogs exhibiting attention-getting behaviors: whining, pawing, or anxious barking. Some people try and write a final note to their companion, which these dogs quickly intercept, licking hands until a pen is placed down.
3.
There are signs. A dog jumping a fence forces you to go outside and interact with the world. If it lays at your feet, they have registered the absence of a smile. Becoming less concerned about personal appearance, a dog will excessively groom itself. They recognize the shapes of fragile – slumped over, static, responding to a lack of fear with bowed head and tucked tail. Research shows that dogs don't know what tears are. They do know they assist in detecting despair on a loved one's breath, a change in mood triggered by the slightest tremor of the lower lip.

4.
Dogs can be trained to stay with the person during an attempt or to press a phone's emergency button with a paw. Part alarm clock, part smoke detector. Other dogs fail to go for help. A suicide dog will bite a stranger up the road in exchange for the authorities being contacted, never reluctant to seek professional help. Some have appeared as willing witness at a coronial inquest. Others have identified their owner's remains, refusing to leave the side of those they were sent to protect. They will never abandon you. They will forever hold the slender bone of hope, tender in their jaws.
5.
Initial outcomes are encouraging. It has been found that gun dogs are better than hunting hounds; earth dogs tune into latent wishes; sled dogs follow a figure favouring a fast exit. Such dogs will howl if sharp objects start calling out. Cliffs are avoided on long walks. Once vehicles are present, they examine exhaust pipes for trace isolation. One dog lay on a passenger seat, refusing to exit until the car was impounded. The handler informed the news channel this is a 'death reaction', indicating a high chance that a body will be found in the vehicle if left in its garage for another day.
6.
Surveying a room for rafters or the height of a doorway, barking and scratching apparent warnings against high risk activities like taking baths, climbing chairs, or staring out to sea. A negative view of the self requires the dog to lie still on the threshold, one ear up in case their owner says "If I wasn't here, would you miss me?". When this animal chooses not to sleep beside you it is a sure sign for distant relatives to come close. No one can prove conclusively what suicide dogs are thinking. They are not yet able to make funeral arrangements. While they note the giving away of clothes and books, they reserve judgement as far as one can tell, pretending to be pinned beneath furniture before it is taken.
7.
Scientists say there are no guarantees. Not every suicide is preventable. Success can't be dissected in post-mortem reports. The number of dogs with this ability is unknown, shining a small torch into a pack of eyes. Scientists are certain these canines are born with an innate sense of our purpose, our light.

They will not bury the evidence that we exist.

BRAG OR BAIT

Thom Sullivan

from Carte Blanche (Vagabond Press, 2019) buy [here](#)

you : : : cannot : : : kill : : : crow :
not ever : there has never been one
crow : more or less : than there is

now : crow funereal : crow elegant :
crow genderless : ambiguous :
scratching : crow with its bent pin

of a cry : scoured out : excavated :
crow spiked with indictments :
reckoning : its perfect pitch : crow’s

egg is black : its yolk is black : its
white is black : unhatched crow is
black : its heart black as its eye :



AGAINST ARGUMENT

Daniel Swain

from You Deserve Every Happiness, But I Deserve More

(Puncher & Wattman, 2019) buy [here](#)

I have planned the entire history of the reception of this poem,
including that it won’t have a history.
Even gestures of inarticulacy are rehearsed.
Even the way you think ‘reflexivity doesn’t move me’.
I planned that. Poems anticipate anticipation.
A straight man at a party told me that identity is purely a mental event
and I remember thinking *that’s so specifically wrong*.
We were talking about Hannah Gadsby’s Netflix special,
which he felt was more like a lecture.
Do you know what else is like a lecture?
Being friends with straight men.
A straight man I met at club invited me
to his first year architecture show,
where he presented a basalt ziggurat
dedicated his ex-girlfriend.
That night I learned:
sleeping with straight men is easy,
you just have to make eye contact.
I once pashed a straight artist who said
“I don’t believe in form, only content”
so it’s appropriate he is here in the poem with us now.
“Artworks detach themselves from the empirical world”
Adorno is a straight boy I wouldn’t fuck with:
Bebop Jazz *was* the poetry after Auschwitz.
Is this an essay? Poets are against argument;
anti-didactic, counter-pedagogic.
Go ahead and say *it*: poets won’t.
A remembered performance:
a recovering alcoholic takes the stage
pours herself out one bottle of wine after another
as people, in the audience, practice watching.
A crowd exits a theatre after witnessing *something*
and say ‘that was so powerful,
talking past the art of trauma.
In this poem, I want you to feel powerless.
In queer poetry, the impossibility of connection
is an intentional strategy with a long history.
One day in the playground, a trapezoid graze;
asphalt-kiss brought to the lips,
the taste of an ending &
just a hint of the beginning
of taste. Since that day I have planned out
the entire history of my emotions, and their reception.
Poets try to be illegible but I am helplessly legible.
Via legibility, I avoid the insult of your assistance.
If it’s a poem, then where is the imagery?
If you’re not thinking that then picture yourself thinking it.
I’m dating a poet who is re-writing *The Prelude*
in the second person, which we agree is a failed exercise,
Last night he kissed my cheek and said
“Irony is a system that protects us from the past”



People say writing about trauma is hard
but then why does it constitute 25 % of book publishing.
I've decided conscript you into art
by making form inconspicuous. In effect, you're literary.
I suppose what I'm saying
is that when you perform me, I'm exactly as real as you.
Dawn in a stranger's bedroom:
"I don't have a sexual orientation per se
I just like being held in a particular way."
Outside Redfern Park, everyone takes their morality for a walk,
the ought bourgeoisie.
Later, at the bus stop, I mute every star sign on Twitter,
Some people can't afford to live by the park anymore
but, as a consolation, poets write poems about them.
Only some of us domicile in the real.
When people say 'Don't think of an elephant',
I think of the cover of George Lakoff's book,
Don't Think of an Elephant.
Since Lakoff first argued politics is mostly a mental event.
Political rhetoric has become an industrial outgrowth
People said Hillary Clinton was inauthentic,
but she anticipated that. She's corporate,
in the other sense of the word. *We're with her*.
Authentically inauthentic, John Ashbery
should have been her communications strategist.
After giving a conference paper,
I'm asked if I'm reducing Frank O'Hara to a gay poet
Like balsamic over a low heat?
I want to believe in a rival-less world.
Poets like name drop theorists like there's a Lukács prize.
I just want to know if can I raise reification
without making it into a thing?
In bed a straight man said,
I'm going to destroy you faggot.
Sex with straight men is very easy
it just involves eye contact &
suppressing the fear they might kill you.
I wanted to stop him and explain,
"See, identity is not merely a mental event"
but it was a different straight man,
it wouldn't make sense.
In Chinatown, a sign reads
"I want to cut your hair like it was your idea".
Your mind is exactly at this line:
At a dinner party a woman reads out her tweet
'Lakes are queer'.
Go ahead, I think, work your way up into a tedium.
I open the window to the nauseous mist of humiliation
that hovers over poetry, and a trapezoid graze.
I think: sure, I'm a gay man,
but I am also so much less than that.

FOUR ROOMS

Mark Tredinnick

from *A Gathered Distance* (BirdFish Books, 2020) buy [here](#)

1.
SORROW'S A ROOM I keep for my children. I sweep it
Clear of leaves; weather litters it and I sweep it
clear again. I burn a lamp there, for the room
Is dark, and I want it bright for them.
My house has other rooms—my life is larger
Than the days and voices missing from it. A father's heart's a biome; his mind, a moiety.
All this is wealth, I say, and one day I'll rich enough to believe it.
One's life's a gift it's right to earn by giving back.
Waiting alone won't buy you the credit you need.
2.
I WAKE in Xichang between a mountain and a lake.
All the years the mountains carry
here, the time they took to dawn and forest
Their flanks and start to forget themselves again—all these well at Langshan's feet
in waters that want to be a sea one day: Qionghai.
Swallows wander lay-lines in the early mist. Spring, they tell you, winters here all year.
And fir trees walk a prayer upon the shores. Peacocks woke us yesterday; today it's grief—
convinced that all the birds have squandered all the song;
sure this time that daylight's got the colours wrong.
3.
WHERE WAS IT, dear, you learned, in all the years
Before you knew my skin, the knack
of bringing up my bones? Old poets say that wine
Is good for grief; I find weeping best. What the soul can no more name
than bear, the body must find a song for. And so,
Mine does, until what's broken in the world is almost pieced together in my bed.
I open a window and climb through.
The morning is cool and steeped in the scent of pines.
4.
THE MOUNTAIN is tall with autumn and old with spring.
The birds who've kept their peace
these three still days become a chorus now, a kindergarten
Choir, reciting all the joy and woe this land has known,
and we are here to join awhile.
Terns take turns in lazy cadence on the lake. Grebes dive shallow waters low
With drought and scavenge seagrass meadows,
which grow like weeds where all one's sorrows sleep.

HORROR (PLURAL)

Ellen van Neerven
from *Throat* (UQP, 2020) buy [here](#)

unconscious knowledge
anti-colonial doubt
instinctual complicity
loss of self-language
dark emotional labour
faceless respect
rural-urban ignorance
some systematic version of ourselves
radical mistrust
gender terror
institutional voice
acceptable bias
rigid unknown



INNER-CITY REFLECTION

Prithvi Varatharajan
from *Entries* (Cordite Books, 2020) buy [here](#)

The light at the pool's bottom reminds me of broken glass on a stairway,
its shifting white lines subdued like the glass's sheen when the light's low,
when conversation turns to time: it's getting late. The sunlight striking the
top of the water sparkles white, like stars, like the glass when the ethereal
blue light of the party catches it. There's a cosmos of light down here,
shifting in concert with our feelings. They run blue and white, and blur in
between, with dull and glinting aspects. I hug my knees on the stairs; I hug
my sides when I slide my arms over my head and back into the water. With
my body submerged, with a train going backwards over the top of the
pool's muraled wall, I'm in an everywhen of the central business district.
It's one that's momentary, that ends when I take my body out
of the pool, heaving it off the staircase and back into the air,
where it becomes pedestrian.



WHAT THE RAIN FORGOT

James Walton

from *Abandoned Soliloquies* (Uncollected Press, 2019)

buy [here](#)

It has all there was, is, and can be.
The memory of rain is a fickle thing,
how it fondled a ravine, broke the dusty
fever of Autumn in a sleeting charade.
Bid golden orb spiders to hatch in its call,
eye dropper signals to wake and run,
sighs into the desert as lizards gallivant
to the silliness of the unscheduled visit.

Seas remember flat earth, like dough.
Rolling tides an intake of breath,
balling up and shaping where breakers
made natural chic in designer bays.
Cracked lips of clay stovepipes yearn,
seething for the gentle flirt of moisture
to kiss again in the season's break
and let loose all that has been stored.

Trees know the truth of sky, clouds strewn
laundry that bite down on the angel wings
of their backs, better then to be the wall
that holds the thought within the squall.
Call in the mortgage of horizontal growth,
the tap root stretches out straining to hear
in branches reflected in puddles, leaves
jesting sideways of what the rain forgot.

THE DANDRUFF IN THE DRY SCALP OF YOUR LONGING

Ali Whitelock

from *the lactic acid in the calves of your despair*

(Wakefield Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

PART i

slip off the concrete boots of your dreams

scrape what's left of your soul spread too thin between
the bricks of your debt, apply vitamin E cream to the burns
from the noose around your neck—

let your dreams rise

like gnocchi to the surface of your pan. rescue them
with a draining spoon pile them into a bowl pour
on some oil it will stop them congealing into the solid
mass that nags in the night as your reflux nags when
you forget to take your proton pump inhibitor. stab
your fork into the dream at the top of your pile,
the one that goes,

*if i could pay off my mortgage, i'd ... [insert your own dream here—
it will make the poem more real].*

now sit back. make yourself comfortable. take a deep
breath in and focus on my pocket watch swinging slowly
from side to side. i am going to count from one to ten now.
when i get to ten you will know exactly how it feels
to have paid off your mortgage and *[insert your own dream here]*.

one. you are breathing deeper and deeper.

two. you are feeling sleepier and sleepier. your eyelids are becoming
heavier and heavier.

three. listen. what do you hear? the sparrows
in the trees? the wind rustling through the branches?

four. or is that the sound of your internal metronome
ticking away the neglected hours in the congealed gnocchi
of your existence?

five. keep breathing.

six. your dream is a solitary tadpole now swimming
furiously upstream in the direction of your ovary of possibility.

seven. you are going deeper still.

eight. your dream of *[insert your own dream here]*
is burrowing under your skin now.

nine. it has found its way into your blood.

and ten. your dream has seeped into the soft marrow of your bones now. it has slid practically unnoticed into the dilated cells just beneath the surface of your skin you are flushed pink with it. and the exhilaration feels something like the first time he kisses you and your mind is blown and you feel you could wash all the bedlinen, peel the potatoes, simmer the stew, plough through the ironing and walk the dog (*twice*) all in one single morning.

and in this euphoric state you find you can even ignore the piercing sounds of your crying child in her ikea cot, because somewhere inside you, you know your child will not die because you dare to dream. but that you just might if you don't.

PART ii

and in your deep hypnotic state you will not eat a raw onion nor remove all your clothes in front of an audience full of strangers, but you will feel liberated and you will walk taller than before as though you were the queen of this land in an emerald crusted crown which is two sizes too small and presses into your forehead causing your head to swell to the size of a space hopper.

and in your new debt-freeness you will attract many new friends who will look up to you, as well they should, and as you walk (or drive in your new audi Q6) to the local cafe, your many new friends will line the pavement to catch a glimpse of you and they will hope the merest molecule of your magic dust will land upon their lapels and mingle with the dandruff from the dry scalps of their longing.

and you will look down upon each of them up to their unshaved armpits in debt and deep into the emerald envy in the motes of their eyes and once inside the cafe you will order a bacon and egg roll with not one egg but two and you will order it with a self assuredness you never had when you had seven hundred thousand dollars worth of debt encased in the concrete boots of your dreams.

and you will no longer need to rake in the bottom of your handbag for loose coins tangled in bits of toilet paper you once blew your nose on, but will now hand over your debit card to the girl behind the counter who asks which account and you will say SAVINGS in a voice both loud and proud and when the transaction goes through you will smile smugly at the people behind you raking for coins through their own bits of toilet paper at the bottom of their bags.

and as you bite into your roll, you will gaze heavenward in a religious sort of way and you will thank god under your breath incase anyone in the cafe hears you because really you are an atheist. but being debt free feels so surreal that you are starting to wonder if maybe god really does exist and i am going to count backwards from ten now. when i get to *one*, you will be back in the lounge room of your debt laden life with your crying child and your unpaid bills spread out on the desk bit of your ikea storage unit and tomorrow morning you will take your anti-depressant and you will not wash all the bedlinen, peel the potatoes, simmer the stew, plough through the ironing nor walk the dog (*even once*) and you will know in the soft marrow of your bones that god really does not exist and you will slip the noose of your reality back around your neck as the dying cinders of your dream of one day [*insert your own dream here*] sink to the bottom of your pan along with your concrete boots and the uncooked gnocchi of your dreams.

WIND INSTRUMENTS

Les Wicks

from *Belief* (Flying Islands Press, 2020) buy [here](#)

I honestly believed that the world was about to come to a crossroads, where money, war and society were all about to be forever altered. In the face of that absolute inevitability, the most logical thing seemed to sing. After all that time I've yet to come up with a better idea.
Robin Williamson

We still look for Licorice McKechnie.

After the band broke up
of course she went to America.
Could be dead but almost certainly
somewhere west, the tumbleweeds
of faith curl the sands —

but Leena & I were there, she didn't show.
We called across arroyos
wrote in highway dust.
There was only a little cash.
Summer howled its blues, haboobs
had been practicing... the slide —
that puke & grit assail the dunes like murder.

Our hungry cars chewed on beetles,
hopes went to shade & assumed a passive menace.
We couldn't approach her most likely hangout,
the laneway was too damaged.
Perhaps Licorice had the love's dementia,
Arizona does that
to any mild holiness.

So much smoke for just a few coughs of poetry.
Our irrelevance is durable,
effortless to maintain.
Freedom actually is free, but hazardous.
An email came in from Joshua Tree, California.

Backroads were renamed after decades
or abandoned, overgrown.
Joan is still busy. Jansch has gone. & Martyn.
Sting has a vineyard in Tuscany.
Arlo votes Republican.

For myself, I try
to put out a *collector's item* every three years —
more feathers come in than royalties.
I have no complaints
while I search for Licorice McKechnie.

AGON

Jessica L. Wilkinson

from *Music Made Visible: A Biography of George Balanchine*
(Vagabond Press, 2019) buy [here](#)

Choreography: George Balanchine, New York City
Ballet, 1957
Music: Igor Stravinsky (*Agon*)
Premiere: March of Dimes Benefit

I'm afraid I don't know how long nine is
Igor Stravinsky

IV (i). Pas de deux

New York City, 1957

silence pressed into the faint echoes of *hoping* and *hoping* and *hoping*

return

it had to be exactly right sustained and stretching motion, plucking

from ashes and defeat two bodies, connected (tested)

long, long, long, long

breath

you fold her up and out, you lead her

try anything are you still there?

Arthur must land like a cat into cool danger

gasp

Diana's nervous energy transfers in balance

two palms, trembling a colour structure

pride

scoop out of balance aggressive

slow gestures piling up through the twelve-tone struggle

her raised leg carries the weight of two loaded bodies
surrendered

I. (i) Pas de quatre

turning to catch the beat:

horns herald a series of dancing
horns herald a series of dancing
horns herald a series of dancing
to music more appetising than roses
strength of ankle, test of toe
drop lower
“Chinatown, My Chinatown”
and traffic noise on Broadway
and traffic noise on Broadway
and traffic noise on Broadway burst
“What would he do... *this*?”
pushing heels into the floor
sweep

I (ii). Double pas de quatre

4/8 into buzzing insects *spiccato* toes polyphonic anxieties hang in the air
oboe pierce and sweep through strings
adjust metronome

5/8 *tranquillo* movement protracted

gliss.
pizz!

plies slacken into nervous lethargy flutes make room

I (iii). Triple pas de quatre

crowding scale / assembly / shifting cells / complicated canon not
quite / a computer that smiles / turnstile / hand across chest, the warm-up
concludes / Stravinsky in full grin

First pas de trois
(Prelude)

all exit but three continuity fanfare
linked
one man, two women, thread a volatile team

II (i). Sarabande

Alone, he concentrates on his feet
right there
and there
walks around his own
nonsense coiled & cautious
arms embellish
(a lost shoe)
a stubbed cigarette

II (ii). Gailliarde

the women reflect mirrored precision
échappé, piqué, passé
groping the air to a sustained chord
neo-classical pretty
spliced into a serial machine

II (iii). Coda

Mr. B was keen to rehearse
quotidian moves, the limp
torso, discords and turned-

in knees; a loosening
of twist and drag get
going along deference

to keyless structure; play,
pulse, space age concerns
but still courtesy

Second pas de trois
(Interlude)

two men, one woman continuity fanfare linked, courtly attitude
tricky balance
she swaggers off

III (i). Bransle simple
bursts of Russian fire between friends, two trumpets
blow in canon: duel / shadow / play / hexachord muscle

III (ii). Bransle Gay
on top of two rhythms
arms evolve, pick the air
turn and shake off that castanet snap

III (iii). Bransle double de Poitou

a high-energy day buoyed with entrechats
the piano breaks through, stamps agility, wit
she is caught mid-flight: *Horosha!*

Pas de deux
(Interlude)

fanfare, link careful

IV (i). Pas de deux

-----sketched on foolscap-----
<Solingen scissors, adhesive>

IV (ii). Danse de quatre duos

arms thrusting out, touch tendu skill stripped bare to lean authority

Stravinsky's house was filled with clocks

(I don't know anything difficult)

IV (iii). Danse de quatre trios

all the parts move tightly together a magic number
IBM, atomic bomb, suburban spread

kitten paws out of the giddy surge

swallow into a *stop*

dispersal “back to thence”

we shift forward

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



Michael Aiken is the four-time recipient of a unique and delightful child. He lives in Sydney and is the creator/manager of *Garden Lounge Creative Space*, Sydney's only dedicated Poetry & Ideas shop. His most recent collection is *The Little Book of Sunlight & Maggots* (UWAP, 2019).



Lucy Alexander is a poet in Canberra. Most recently her work has appeared in *Meniscus* and *Cordite*. *Strokes of Light* will be her second book.



Melbourne poet **Alice Allan** publishes the podcast *Poetry Says* and is the convenor of *Impossible Machine* – an experimental performance event combining poetry and improv comedy. Her books include *The Empty Show* (Rabbit Poets Series, 2019) and *Blanks* (Slow Loris, 2019). Her work has also been published in journals including *Rabbit*, *Cordite*, *Southerly*, *Australian Book Review* and *Westerly*, and shortlisted for the Blake Poetry Prize.



Zoe Anderson is a performance poet who is fascinated by ecology, place and creating new folklore for a changing world. She is a seasoned performer, having featured at poetry events and festivals including You Are Here festival, Poetry on the Move, and the Queensland Poetry Festival. Zoe comes from Canberra, which is Ngunnawal country. *Under the Skin of the World* is her first poetry collection.



Eunice Andrada is a poet and educator. Her debut poetry collection *Flood Damages* (Giramondo Books) won the Anne Elder Award (2018) and was shortlisted in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards (2019). Her previous works have won the John Marsden and Hachette Australia Prize (2014) and earned shortlistings in the Fair Australia Prize (2018) and the Dame Mary Gilmore Award (2019).



Cassandra Atherton is a widely anthologised prose poet. Her books include *Exhumed*, (2015), *Trace* (2015) and *Pre-Raphaelite* (2018). She is commissioning editor for *Westerly* magazine, Axon: Creative Explorations and series editor for publisher, Spineless Wonders. **Paul Hetherington** has published fourteen full-length poetry and prose poetry collections and has won or been shortlisted for over thirty national and international awards and competitions. He founded the *International Prose Poetry Group* in 2014.



Bron Bateman is a poet, academic and mother of nine from Western Australia. She is the recipient of both the Bobbie Cullen Memorial Prize and the Winter Prize for Poetry. Her first collection, *People from Bones* (with Kelly Pilgrim) was published in 2002 and her current collection, *Of Memory and Furniture* is published with Fremantle Press in 2020.



Alise Blayney completed a Creative Writing degree at the University of Wollongong in 2007. She is intrigued by the relationship between mental / emotional distress, and creativity. She has worked across various mental health services as a Peer Worker since 2013, and is currently a Senior Educator at the Recovery & Wellbeing College in Sydney. Alise is Co-Managing Editor with Michele Seminara at online transnational creative arts journal *Verity La*.



Kevin Brophy's latest book is *LOOK AT THE LAKE* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2019), a record of two years living with the Aboriginal community of Mulan in the Great Sandy Desert of WA. This poem is from the postponed Melbourne Poets Union chapbook *IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD*.



Melinda Bufton is a Melbourne poet. Her work has appeared in many publications including *Cordite*, *Southerly*, and *AXON* and was anthologised in *Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry* and *Contemporary Australian Poetry*. In 2019 she was awarded the inaugural Charles Rischbieth Jury Poetry Prize. She is the author of *Girlery* (2014), *Superette* (2018) and *Moxie* (2020), which was the winner of the 2019 Helen Anne Bell Poetry Prize.



Anne M Carson is a poet, essayist and visual artist. Her poetry has been published internationally and widely in Australia, and she has been recognised in poetry prizes. *Massaging Himmler: A Poetic Biography of Dr Felix Kersten*, and *Two Green Parrots* were published in 2019. She has initiated a number of poetry-led social justice projects, and performs poetry with Muse Poetica, and is a PhD candidate in Creative writing at RMIT.



An award-winning, Sydney-based Irish poet/writer, **Anne Casey** is author of two collections published by Salmon Poetry. A journalist, magazine editor, legal author and media communications director for 30 years, her work is widely published internationally, ranking in leading national newspaper, *The Irish Times*' Most Read. Anne has won/shortlisted for prizes in Ireland, Northern Ireland, the UK, the USA, Canada, Hong Kong and Australia, and serves on numerous literary advisory boards.



Robbie Coburn is an Australian poet and writer. His work has appeared in places such as *Poetry*, *Meanjin*, *Westerly* and *Island*, and his latest poetry collection *The Other Flesh* was published by UWA Publishing in 2019. He lives on a farm in Woodstock, Victoria.



PS Cottier is a poet, writer, anthologist and book reviewer living in Canberra. She has a particular interest in speculative poetry, co-editing *The Stars Like Sand: Australian Speculative Poetry* in 2014 with Tim Jones. *Quick Bright Things: Poems of Fantasy and Myth* was published in 2016, and her poetry has appeared in Canada, England, India, New Zealand and the United States, as well as in Australia. She blogs at pscottier.com



Jocelyn Deane was born in the UK, in 1993, and moved to Australia in 2001. Their work has appeared in *Cordite*, *Australian Poetry journal*, *Southerly* and *Seizure* magazine, among others. They were one of the recipients of the 457 poetry prize in 2013, and was shortlisted for the Marsden and Hachehte prize in poetry for 2015. They currently live in Melbourne/Naarm.



Tricia Dearborn's most recent full-length poetry collection is *Autobiochemistry* (UWAP, 2019). A chapbook, *She Reconsiders Life on the Run*, was published in 2019 by International Poetry Studies Institute. Her work has been widely published in literary journals and represented in anthologies including *Contemporary Australian Poetry*, *Australian Poetry since 1788* and *The Best Australian Science Writing 2019*. She was a judge of the 2019 University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize.



Benjamin Dodds is a Sydney-based poet who grew up in the NSW Riverina. His debut collection *Regulator* was published by Puncher & Wattmann Poetry in 2014. His poetry and reviews have appeared in *Best Australian Poems*, *Southerly*, *Meanjin*, *Cordite* and on Radio National. He co-judged the 2018 Quantum Words Science Poetry Competition. His second collection *Airplane Baby Banana Blanket* is forthcoming from Recent Work Press in 2020.



Oliver Driscoll's debut poetry collection, *I don't know how that happened* (Recent Work Press), was published in 2020. He won the 2015 Melbourne Lord Mayors Creative Writing Award for Narrative Nonfiction, and was shortlisted for the 2019 Dorothy Hewett Award for an Unpublished Manuscript. His work has been published in *Kill Your Darlings*, *Sleepers*, *Meanjin*, *Cordite*, *Rabbit*, and *Red Room*, among other places. Oliver co-runs the [*Slow Canoe Live Journal*](#).



Anne Elvey lives on Boonwurrung Country in Seaford, Victoria. She is author of *On arrivals of breath* (2019), *White on White* (2018), *Kin* (2014), and co-author of *Intatto/Intact* (with Massimo D'Arcangelo and Helen Moore, 2017), and managing editor of [*Plumwood Mountain*](#) journal. She edited the ebook *hope for whole: Poets Speak up to Adani* (2018). Anne holds honorary appointments at Monash University and University of Divinity.



Gabrielle Everall: I have been a poet of the page and the stage for thirty years. I completed a Ph.D. at University of WA, now studying at Melbourne University. I have performed my poetry at The Bowery (New York), Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Evil Woman Conference (Vienna) and presented at the Evil Children Conference in Verona, Italy. I have been published in numerous publications including *The Penguin Anthology of Australian Poetry*.



Michael Farrell is a casual supervisor/examiner at Melbourne University, where he obtained a PhD, and an adjunct at Curtin University. He is currently a Sydney Review of Books Juncture Fellow. His new book, *Family Trees*, follows *I Love Poetry*, and *Ashbery Mode*: an anthology of Australian poems in tribute to John Ashbery. He also edits *Flash Cove*. Michael grew up in Bombala, NSW, and has lived in Melbourne since 1990.



Susan Fealy is a Melbourne-based poet and clinical psychologist. Her first collection, *Flute of Milk* (UWAP, 2017), won the 2017 Wesley Michel Wright Prize, the 2018 NSW Society of Women Writers Book Award (Poetry) and was shortlisted for the 2018 Mary Gilmore Award. A bilingual collection, *The Earthing of Rain* (Flying Island Books, 2019), was translated into Chinese by Iris Fan Xing.



Toby Fitch is poetry editor of *Overland*, a creative writing sessional academic at University of Sydney, and organiser of *Sappho Books Poetry Night*. His books include *Rawshock*, which won the Grace Leven Prize for Poetry 2012; *Jerilderies*; *The Bloomin' Notions of Other & Beau*; *ILL LIT POP*; *Where Only the Sky had Hung Before* (Vagabond Press, 2019); and *Object Permanence: Selected Calligrammes* (Penteract Press UK, 2019). He lives in Sydney.



Adrian Flavell's poetry has appeared in a number of magazines, journals and newspapers. In the early 1970's, he founded and edited the poetry magazine *Fields*. His first collection of poems, on drowning a rat (*Picaro Press/Ginninderra Press*), was published in 2015. His written work includes environmental education material, scripts for TV's *Here's Humphrey* and a series of children's books, *Dan's Days* (Clean Slate Press, NZ).



Zenobia Frost is a poet from Brisbane whose work — about feminism, pop culture and place attachment — has won the Val Vallis Prize and a Queensland Writers Fellowship. Her new poetry collection is *After the Demolition* (Cordite Books, 2019). She was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards (Kenneth Slessor Prize) and Red Room Poetry Fellowship. She recently made a poetry-fortune-dispensing bot in collaboration with Rebecca Jessen and Shastra Deo:

https://twitter.com/AskMe_Oracle



Angela Gardner's latest poetry collection is *Some Sketchy Notes on Matter* (Recent Work Press, Australia, 2020). Recent poems have been published in *The Yale Review* and *West Branch USA*; *Blackbox Manifold*, *The Long Poem* and *Tears in the Fence*, UK; *Axon*, *Hecate*, *Rabbit* and *Cordite*, Australia. She is a visual artist with work in international public collections.



Juan Garrido Salgado immigrated to Australia from Chile in 1990, fleeing the regime that burned his poetry and imprisoned and tortured him for his political activism. He has published three books of poetry, and his poems have been widely translated. He himself has translated many Australian and Aboriginal poets into Spanish and with Steve Brock and Sergio Holas, Garrido Salgado also translated into English the trilingual *Mapuche Poetry Anthology* (2013).



Natalie Harkin is a Narungga woman and activist-poet from South Australia. She is a Senior Research Fellow at Flinders University with an interest in decolonising state archives, currently engaging archival-poetic methods to research and document Aboriginal women's domestic service and labour histories in SA. Her poetry manuscripts include *Dirty Words* with Cordite Books in 2015, and *Archival-Poetics* with Vagabond Press in 2019.



LK Holt's latest collection, *Birth Plan* (Vagabond Press, 2019), was shortlisted for the 2020 Victorian Premiers' Award. She is recipient of the NSW Premiers' Award and the Grace Leven Prize for Poetry, and has been longlisted for the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal. She lives in Melbourne.



Duncan Hose is a poet and painter living in a tree at the end of Corby Avenue West Hobart. His books of poetry include *Rathaus*, *One Under Bacchus*, *Bunratty* and *The Jewelled Shillelagh*. What these people did - they lived, wrote songs and died. That's it.



Anna Jacobson is a writer and artist from Brisbane. Her first full-length poetry collection *Amnesia Findings* (UQP, 2019) won the Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize. In 2018 Anna won the Queensland Premier's Young Publishers and Writers Award. Her writing has been published in literary journals and anthologies including *Griffith Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Cordite*, *Meanjin*, *Rabbit*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, and *Verity La*.



Ella Jeffery's debut collection of poetry, *Dead Bolt*, won the Puncher & Wattmann Prize for a First Book of Poems and is published in April 2020. Her poetry has appeared in *Best Australian Poems*, *Meanjin*, *Griffith Review*, *Southerly* and many others. In 2019 she was a recipient of the Queensland Premier's Young Writers and Publishers Award.



Rebecca Jessen is a timeless boi. a random shy poet. a sleeping body that remembers desire. a comet trail. a linen daddy. a groin anomaly. a body that is a bridge. a moonstruck adolescent. an incomplete list poem. a lesbian, but... Her debut poetry collection *Ask Me About the Future* is out now with University of Queensland Press.



Joelistics is a songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and producer. He founded alt rap group TZU in 2004 and released four albums then went on to release two solo albums with Sydney label Elefant Traks. He works closely as a producer and co-writer for local and international artists including *Haiku Hands*, *Mojo Juju* and *Film School* and is the co-creator and performer of critically acclaimed theatre show *In Between Two*.



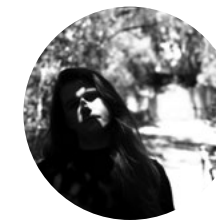
Jill Jones' most recent books are *A History Of What I'll Become* (UWAP), *Viva the Real* (UQP), shortlisted for the 2019 Prime Minister's Literary Awards for Poetry and the 2020 John Bray Award, *Brink* (Five Islands Press), *The Beautiful Anxiety* (Puncher & Wattmann), which won the Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry in 2015, and *Breaking the Days* (Whitmore Press), which was shortlisted for the 2017 NSW Premier's Literary Awards.



Published widely since the seventies, **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, Norwegian and Filipino.



Andy Kissane lives in Sydney and writes poetry and fiction. He has published a novel, a book of short stories, *The Swarm*, and five books of poetry. He was joint winner of ABR's 2019 Peter Porter Prize for Poetry. His fourth collection, *Radiance*, was shortlisted for the Victorian and Western Australian Premier's Prizes and the Adelaide Festival Awards. His latest book is *The Tomb of the Unknown Artist*.



Em König is a poet and musician who lives and works on stolen Kurna country. Their poetry can be found in *Cordite*, *Meniscus*, *SWAMP*, in closets, under floorboard and drowning in the rising oceans. Em's forthcoming debut full-length collection, *Breathing Plural*, is due to be released by Cordite Books in May 2020. Em also releases music with their band GIRL and solo, under the moniker *Nina in Ecstasy*.



Jo Langdon is the author of two poetry collections: *Snowline* (Whitmore Press, 2012) and *Glass Life* (Five Islands Press, 2018). In 2018 she was a fellow of the Elizabeth Kostova Foundation's Sozopol Fiction Seminars and *CapitaLiterature* festival in Bulgaria, and her recent writing is also published in journals including *Cordite*, *Island*, *Overland* and *Southerly*. She currently lives and works on Wadawurrung land in Geelong, Victoria.



Rozanna Lilley has published creative non-fiction and poetry in national newspapers, literary journals and edited collections. Her hybrid memoir *Do Oysters Get Bored? A Curious Life* (UWAP, 2018) was shortlisted for the National Biography Award in 2019. A new collection of her poems titled *The Lady in the Bottle*, based on the 1960s TV series *I Dream of Jeannie*, is being published by Eyewear in the UK later in 2020.



Astrid Lorange is a writer, editor, and teacher who lives on Wagal land. She lectures at UNSW Art & Design. With Andrew Brooks she is one half of the critical art collective *Snack Syndicate*. How Reading is Written:

A Brief Index to Gertrude Stein was published by Wesleyan University Press in 2014; Labour and Other Poems published by Cordite Books in 2020. She is a founding editor of Rosa Press.



Jennifer Mackenzie is a poet and reviewer, currently living in Melbourne. Her first visit to Java and Borobudur inspired a life-long interest in the Asian region, an interest covering the literary, the academic, travel, and work.

With the publication of Borobudur (Transit Lounge 2009; Lontar 2012) her engagement with the region intensified with invitations to the Ubud, Makassar and Irrawaddy festivals, among others.



Page Alana Maitland is a writer, musician, visual artist and linguist, born in Taree and brought up in various locations between there and Newcastle. Her first published work appeared in the Sapphic Atlas anthology. Her

album Mythology of Me, under the alias Pagan, is available on Spotify and Apple Music. Her other passions include studying, speaking and translating German, experimenting in the kitchen and looking fine on a tight budget.



Laura Jean McKay is the author of The Animals in That Country (2020) and Holiday in Cambodia (Black Inc, 2013), shortlisted for three national Australian book awards. Her work has been published widely and

internationally. Laura is a lecturer in creative writing at Massey University, with a PhD from the University of Melbourne focusing on literary animal studies. She is the 'animal expert' presenter on ABC Listen's Animal Sound Safari.



Graeme Miles' poetry has been widely published in Australian literary journals and anthologies, and he has published three collections: Phosphorescence (Fremantle Press, 2006), Recurrence (John Leonard Press, 2012), and

Infernal Topographies (UWA Press, 2020). He has lived in Hobart since 2008 and teaches ancient languages and literatures (especially Greek) at the University of Tasmania.



Peter Mitchell is a queer writer living with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in regional NSW. He is the author of Conspiracy of Skin (Ginninderra Press, 2018) and The Scarlet Moment (Picaro Press, 2009).

Conspiracy of Skin was awarded a Highly Commended in the 2019 Wesley Michel Wright Prize for Poetry. His memoir, Fragments through the Epidemic awaits the light of a publisher.



Audrey Molloy is an Irish poet based in Sydney. Her poetry has appeared in The North, Magma, Mslexia, The Moth, Meanjin, Cordite, Southerly, Overland and Verity La. In 2019 she received the Hennessy Award for

Emerging Poetry, the Aesthetica Creative Writing Award and the Listowel Writers' Award for Irish Poem of the Year. Her debut pamphlet, Satyress (Southword Editions, 2020), was published in 2020.



Melanie Mununggurr is a Djapu mother, writer, poet and spoken word artist. Melanie writes in both English and Dhuwal about identity, family, autism and various social issues. She is also an advocate for raising autism

awareness. Melanie weaves Dhuwal throughout her writing as a way of decolonising literature and the arts. In 2019 Melanie travelled 6 countries and performed at many festivals around Australia.



Natalie D-Napoleon is a writer, singer-songwriter and educator from Fremantle, Australia who is currently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing. She was a City College Writing Centre Coordinator in the U.S. Her work has

appeared in Griffith Review, Cordite, Australian Poetry Journal and Writer's Digest. D-Napoleon has won the Bruce Dawe Poetry Prize (2018) and KSP Poetry Prizes (2019). In 2019 Ginninderra Press released D-Napoleon's debut poetry collection First Blood.



Thuy On is an arts and literary journalist and critic who has written for a range of publications including The Australian, The Saturday Paper, The Age/The SMH, Books+Publishing and ArtsHub. She's also the books

editor of *The Big Issue*. Turbulence is her first book.



Esther Ottaway is an award-winning Tasmanian poet whose work has been published in UQP's anthology *Thirty Australian Poets*, *The Australian*, *The Canberra Times*, literary journals and anthologies. She has won a Varuna

Fellowship and Arts Tasmania grants. She has written commissioned works for Adelaide Cabaret Festival and Festival of Voices.



Ouyang Yu, still alive and writing.



Charmaine Papertalk Green comes from the Yamaji peoples of Western Australia. Her Publications include, *Just Like That* (Fremantle Art Press, 2007); *Tiptoeing Tod the Tracker* (Oxford University Press, 2014);

collaboration with WA poet John Kinsella *False Claim of Colonial Thieves* (Magabala Books, 2018); *Nganajungu Yagu* (Cordite Books, 2019) and numerous anthologies and publications. Charmaine lives in Geraldton, Western Australia.



June Perkins is a multi-arts creative born to a Papua New Guinean Indigenous mother and Australian father. She was raised in Tasmania as a Bahá'í and combines poetry, blogging, photography, story and more to explore

themes interesting her - peace, ecology, spirituality, cultural diversity, resilience and empowerment. June is currently involved in organising the Ink of Light, Bahá'í Writers Festival.



π.O. Born: Greece 1951 Came to Australia 1954 Raised: Fitzroy (inner suburb of Melbourne).

Occupation: draughtsman.

By disposition and history is an Anarchist, and is currently editor

of the experimental magazine *UNUSUAL WORK*.

A pioneer of performance poetry in Australia and author of many collections, including *Panash*, *Fitzroy Poems*, *Big Numbers: New and Selected Poems*, and the two epic works *24 Hours* and *Fitzroy: The Biography*. Heide completes this project.



Felicity Plunkett is a poet and critic.

Her new collection is *A Kinder Sea* (UQP). Her debut collection *Vanishing Point* (UQP, 2009) won the Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Prize and was short-listed for several

awards. She has a Vagabond Press *Rare Objects* chapbook *Seastrands* (2011). Felicity was UQP Poetry Editor and edited *Thirty Australian Poets* (UQP, 2011). She has a PhD from Sydney University and is a widely-published reviewer.



Jo Pollitt is an interdisciplinary artist and Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Edith Cowan University. Her work is grounded in a twenty-year practice of working with improvisation as methodology across multiple

performed, choreographic and publishing platforms.



Antonia Pont is a poet, essayist and scholar. Her poems can be found in *Cordite*, *Meanjin*, *Gargouille*, *Westerly*, *Axon*, and *Rabbit*, as well as other journals and anthologies. She is current columnist for *The Lifted Brow* and

teaches writing and thinking at Deakin University. Her first poetry collection, *You Will Not Know in Advance What You'll Feel* (2019), is No. 13 in the *Rabbit Poets Series*.



Caroline Reid is a writer; a poet, performer and arts support worker who lives and works on Kuarna land. She has won multiple slam competitions and twice represented SA in the Australian Poetry Slam

at the Sydney Opera House. Her play *Prayer to an Iron God* is published by Currency Press. *SIARAD* is her debut collection of poetry and prose.



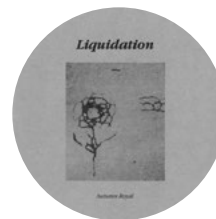
Dr David Reiter is an award-winning text and digital artist, and Publisher / CEO at IP (Interactive Publications Pty Ltd) in Brisbane, Australia. He gives talks and leads workshops on all aspects of publishing. Recent works include

Black Books Publishing (2018), an interactive satire about the publishing industry; and the medical/micro-textual hybrid *TimeLord Dreaming*, which won the 2016 Western Australian Premier's Award for Digital Narrative.



Nadia Rhook is a settler historian, educator, and poet, who lectures at the University of Western Australia, on unceded Whadjuk Noongar land. Her poems appear in journals including Peril, Westerly, Mascara Review, and

The Enchanting Verses, and her first poetry collection boots was released with UWAP this year.



Autumn Royal is a poet, researcher, and teacher based in Narm/Melbourne. She is interviews editor for Cordite Poetry Review, founding editor of Liquid Architecture's Disclaimer journal, and author of the poetry

collections She Woke and Rose (Cordite Books, 2016), and Liquidation (Incendium Radical Library, 2019). Autumn's third collection of poetry is forthcoming with Giramondo Publishing in 2021.



Omar Sakr is an award-winning poet, the son of Lebanese and Turkish Muslim migrants, born and raised in Western Sydney. He is the author of These Wild Houses (Cordite, 2017) and The Lost Arabs (UQP, 2019),

which was shortlisted for the Queensland Literary Awards, John Bray Poetry Award, and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. In 2019, he won the Edward Stanley Award for Poetry. It's released internationally through Andrews McMeel (2020).



Kirli Saunders is a proud Gunai woman, with ties to the Yuin, Gundungurra, Gadigal and Biripi people. She currently resides on Dharawal Country. Kirli is an international children's author,

poet and emerging playwright. She manages *Poetry in First Languages* at Red Room Poetry.



Michele Seminara is a poet and Co-Managing Editor of online creative arts journal *Verity La*. She has published Engraft (Island Press, 2016) and two chapbooks: Scar to Scar (with Robbie Coburn, PressPress, 2016) and HUSH

(Blank Rune Press, 2017). Her second full-length collection, Suburban Fantasy, is forthcoming from UWAP in 2020.



Leni Shilton is a poet, teacher and researcher. She grew up in Papua New Guinea and Melbourne and has lived in Alice Springs for over thirty years, where she works as a community development coordinator with an

Aboriginal women's organisation. She has a PhD in creative writing. Leni's poetry and essays are regularly published in Australia and internationally. Her books are Walking with camels (2018, UWAP) and Malcolm (2019. UWAP).



ACT poet **Melinda Smith** is the author of seven books, most recently Goodbye, Cruel (Pitt St Poetry, 2017), Listen, bitch (Recent Work Press, 2019), and a bilingual selected poems in English and Mandarin, Perfectly Bruised

(Flying Islands, 2019). She won the 2014 Prime Minister's Literary Award for poetry, and is a former poetry editor of the Canberra Times.



Susan Bradley Smith is a writer and cultural historian interested in narratives of exile, and feminist explorations of love. Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Curtin University, Perth, and Professor of Poetry at John Cabot

University in Rome, Susan was born in Bega in 1963 and grew up in Bundjalung country in northern NSW.



David Stavanger is a parent, poet, performer, cultural producer, editor and lapsed psychologist. His poetry collection The Special (UQP, 2014) was awarded the Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize and the Wesley

Michel Wright Poetry Prize. David is co-editor of SOLID AIR: Collected Australian & New Zealand Spoken Word (UQP, 2019) and his new collection is Case Notes (UWAP, 2020). These days he lives between the page and the stage.



Thom Sullivan is a writer, editor and reviewer of poetry. His debut book of poems, CARTE BLANCHE, won the Noel Rowe Poetry Award. His poems have appeared in: Australian Book Review, Australian Love Poems,

Australian Poetry Anthology, The Best Australian Poems 2014 and 2015, Cordite, Overland and Westerly. He lives in Adelaide, where he works in public policy.



Daniel Swain's poetry and prose has appeared in Cordite, Rabbit, Long Paddock, and the Griffith Review. He is currently completing a doctorate in English literature at Yale University. His chapbook You Deserve Every Happiness But I Deserve More is was published by Slow Loris/Puncher & Wattmann.



Mark Tredinnick's latest book of poems is A Gathered Distance (February 2020). He lives along the Wingecarribee southwest of Sydney and he teaches at the University of Sydney. His other books include Bluewren Cantos and The Blue Plateau. His next book, Walking Underwater, comes out with PSP July 2020.



Ellen van Neerven is an award-winning writer of Mununjali Yugambeh (South East Queensland) and Dutch heritage. They write fiction, poetry, plays and non-fiction. Ellen's first book, Heat and Light, won numerous literary prizes. Ellen's second book, a collection of poetry, Comfort Food, was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Kenneth Slessor Prize and highly commended for the 2016 Wesley Michel Wright Prize. Throat is Ellen's highly anticipated second poetry collection.



Prithvi Varatharajan is a poet, literary audio producer, and literary/media scholar who lives in Melbourne. His first collection of poems and prose, Entries, was published by Cordite Books in 2020. He holds a PhD from the University of Queensland about ABC Radio National's Poetica, and is a commissioning editor of essays - which trace poetry and the 'poetic' beyond the page or screen - at [Cordite Poetry Review](#).



James Walton was a librarian, a farm labourer, and a public sector union official. He is published in many anthologies, journals, and newspapers. He has been shortlisted for several prizes and is a Raw Art Review Chapbook Competition winner. His poetry collections include The Leviathan's Apprentice (Publish and Print UK, 2015), Walking Through Fences (ASM & Cerberus Press, 2018) Unstill Mosaics (Busybird, 2019), and Abandoned Soliloquies (Uncollected Press, 2019).



Ali Whitelock's shiny new poetry collection, the lactic acid in the calves of your despair is published by Wakefield Press and her debut collection, and my heart crumples like a coke can (Wakefield Press, 2018) has a forthcoming UK edition by Polygon, Edinburgh. Her memoir, Poking seaweed with a stick and running away from the smell was launched at Sydney Writers Festival in 2008 to critical acclaim.



Les Wicks has toured widely and seen publication in over 350 different magazines, anthologies & newspapers across thirty countries in fifteen languages. His fourteenth book of poetry is Belief (Flying Islands, 2019).



Jessica L. Wilkinson is the author of three poetic biographies including Marionette: a biography of Miss Marion Davies (2012), Suite for Percy Grainger (2014) and Music Made Visible: A Biography of George Balanchine (2019), all published by Vagabond Press. She is the founding editor of [Rabbit: a journal for nonfiction poetry](#) and the Rabbit Poets Series, and she is Associate Professor in Creative Writing at RMIT University.

RED ROOM POETRY

Red Room Poetry (RR) is Australia's leading non-profit organisation for commissioning, creating, publishing and promoting poetry in meaningful ways. Our poetic projects are created in collaboration with a spectrum of poets, communities and partners for positive impact in core areas of environment, amplification, First Nations, youth and marginalised voices. We aim to make poetry highly visible, vibrant, relevant and accessible, especially to those who face the greatest barriers to creative opportunities.

Red Room Poetry has a reputation for excellence and invention, delivering projects that are unparalleled in their quality, scale, professional payment of poets, cultural impact, amplification and engagement of poets, students and audiences of all ages. Reflecting the diversity of Australian voices, RR commissions and publishes poetry of all styles and stages (page/performance/spoken word/experimental/digital/musical/visual). We develop creative and critical contexts where poetry is explored across languages, landscapes and mediums in and beyond literary communities. From commissioning poems by truck drivers to poetic installations in gardens, galleries, boardwalks, waterways and busses, we make Australian poetry and creative expression widely accessible.

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