In Your Hands

A poetry collection for isolated times

Hands

Michael Allen
Lady Alexander
Calumet Atherton and Paul
Hatherington
Barbara Balmoral
Alice Blarney
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 those.”

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 intimate electronic audience that could still experience the work of poets who had lost their hard-earned live events and other intimate 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 unprincipally supporting poets and publishers by connecting them with new audience 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.

Thorn Sullivan
Brag or Bait

Daniel Swan
Against Argument

Mark Trifilite
Four Rooms

Ellen van Neerven
Honor (yirala)

Pradeep Varathan
Inner-City Reflections

James Walton
When the Rain Forgot

Ali Whitlock
she danced in the dry scalp of your longing

Leo Wicks
Wired Instruments

Jessica L. Wilkinson
AGON

Nemo on Contributors

Red Room Poetry

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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 income, 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:

Fears of touch, fear of losing smell

Can’t wait for hugs to be legal.

Passover Seder cancelled / only 6 eggs needed

Sed as breakfast or an empty train

15,000 miles of closed borders from family

suddenly the Nullarbor was flooded with checkpoints

Morning walks are precious; cops still suck.

living the entirely darkness / of endless winds

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 — calm 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: community, 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 less, mangy cat, clumsily desexed, yawls…

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

The water draws us from corners,
brides solemn in the old god wall
and mortals fall away,
this circle a disarmed, watch
for his wallet to drop.

This is the kind of rain
— windless
walking down the street,
butt against the water —

the rain that draws great cats 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 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 eye the glimpse of paper beneath the
overworked surface. A slim transparence lights a match on
her shoe and creates seconds between the warning strokes
of light tearing up sky, before reaching it to the paper.
Smoke flies out the chimney – all hair no heat, gone without
ever leaving dust in the shading where ink might find a
place to pool. The girl knows she must not lick the negated
hearth while fire takes up the air. An old woman’s memory
it ads to the even. The moist the knees would hit the
tongue like magic.
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 met 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.

Don't worry, it'll blow away in the next wind. Then we mutually retreated from the conversation.

GERANIUMS

Alice Allan

from The Empty Show ( Rabbit's Pocket Series, 2019)

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 tired 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 realize it's a convoluted apology for spending too much time working and not enough time tending to your relationship.

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FROST HOLLOW

Zoe Anderson
from Under the Skin of the World (Recent Work Press, 2020) buy

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
in tip touch
deep time.
this stand
of trees
gave birth to trees
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 constrains
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
in tip touch
deep time.
this stand
of trees
gave birth to trees
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.
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.

EARLY

Dear B, [undated, probably 1916]

I write because there was a break in marching. We passed a picturesque, blue river—the colour of your waking eyes—and came to a lake with bodies floating in it. I hadn’t expected blue water in this wasteland. Houses are fuming. We’re at the border between France and Germany, at the highest part on the map.

There was an eight-year-old girl from the local village. Her name was Li. I spoke to her in my halting French. 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 huge explosion, but some way off, 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.

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—outside of Paris—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 War and never talked of it. Except to say, jokingly shaking his head, ‘look after the women’. I saw his eyes in pieces of shrapnel—the grey glaze that exacts
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
alphabets, 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.
Sold on fingertips-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
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
ouch range seal, range means,
he said poems and ladders
hard to lose and hymns
and I love that,
love him for that,
love will begin and end
and begin with
medieval eyebrows, merciful lips, kiss bombs…
and no amount of clozapine
will make the heart less of a gaping wet hole.
He spoke of signs, sighs 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 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 combled 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.

COUNTER THEIR SNEAK PLAYS

Melinda Bufton
from Moxie (Vagabond Press, 2020) buy here

We swing so close to cliché when we invoke the character 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: you people
sometimes believe a copy of Leaving Be plus the Marie Claire ‘career page’
will bring them to good.
Truth: a dabble in a bounty of professions hard and fast before you’re thirty
will 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.
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. In 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
beneath our rag. In 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.
Nothing much ever happens.
a rustle as if the earth
clenched its teeth
settling behind the mountain
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.
as a horse attempting to break free of its paddock,
and flailing its head madly upon becoming tangled,
skin taut across the wire.
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 each bodies are made into. There may be progression towards nakedness and a descending layer of 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 porosity 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 endless growth, whose implications could only make us uncomfortable.

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.

Tricia Dearborn
from *Autobiochemistry* (UWA Press, 2019) buy here

LEAD

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Pb

LEAD
Benjamin Dodds

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 fortressed arms something pink and rare.

Somewhere above Alabama passengers tend a covered bassinet, hushing gentle reassurance to a child she calls Lucy.

Oliver Driscoll

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 can’t it be a week 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 (Portus Christi Press 2019)
buy
If I say there is no god
I do not mean there is no god. There is no god. There is
the bound energy
of the malachite light
tossed back from the underside
of a leaf, peeled bark
of the body whose
translation
is the impossible –
inimitate, necessary.

VENUS WITHOUT FURS
Gabrielle Everall
from Dona Juanita and the love of boys (Buon-Cattivi Press, 2020) buy
I want to fall into the pit of his bed
If he was my tutor
it would make a fine
masochistic fantasy
Each of his lessons
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 desires 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 suffers 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, bruises 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?

Bouzou, 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 staccato for joy?

They say joy is fleeting, and I admit, buzzes are volatile, they’re in and out, even in second gear; they make a bedrock, and who feels sparky as the stone flies?

Joy squirmachines, and flings its rumple butterflies into cowpards.

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

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

Only the bee sews inside the flower.
OF TEN 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 girl / that surely

hair almost features it / unravelling it in thought waves

into the dark cave that would form in my heart

to those bright eyes / that is a make-believe sea

revered by shadows that are unicorn-filling

/unfurling all those litter rooms I undertake

glued-up family in the likeness of a more man

unfurling his inner lady

until the girls intrigue me to come back at quaran under the sea

a disturbance of worlds on such new waves / unfurled

in worlds exploding / like flowers in time-lapse

in it only a dream of glass or were our bodies always water

whatever an ear is an eye in an era it all comes

streaming in from some other soon

to sprinkle little stars upon us

then evaporate

as if I weren’t a given that my mind’s made up

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
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. Yeah, lucky last. I have to sleep. It’s like a plague of locusts buzzing in the huge blue of desert. Each one 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 phonebook 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 skips.

Hello, you’ve 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.
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 fuchsia. There’s kangaroo paw. In everyone’s garden 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 day. Every year pink blossom. Pollen drift in the air.
WHEN I WAS CLANDESTINE
Juan Garrido Salgado
from Cuando Fu Clandestino/When I was Clandestine
(Rochford Pres, 2019) buy here

Víctor 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, in his 103 is an antipoetic feat. I have never been devoted to his poetry, but his irreverent verses delight me. My tone is born by the nights of the “curfew.” I come from the poblaciones and never went to University.

Although I was part of the Scaffolding 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 charred on the grill of the “House of Torture of the Borgoño.”

When I was clandestine I read poems by Vladimir Mayakovsky 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 man, 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.

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 sea giving niks to its baby
And get paid like the shark dangling the baby from its jaws
I write like Bob-Nobbing
And get paid like Mary Christmas everyone!
I write like a man cumming
And get paid like asking did you even
I write like someone who knows love
And get paid like someone who totally 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 and I’m blue in the face
I write threatening it in cold lake
Thinking how funny it is
It’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 thus I go very very still
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. Find your desire to return to the origin as restless-gathering/feverish-hoarding. Honour what you conjure and recognise this as everyone’s: surveillance file-notes / letters’ correspondences’/ inspectors’ genealogies and photos/ data-card-artifacts-experiments remains. Soak up the blood. Don’t let the weight of it kill you. Find new ways to negotiate love resumed 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 compliant in their vision of refusal to be silent/oblivious 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 necrotizing through septic metastasizing’ cancerous’ action a terrorism collateral, a flight-flight-guide response; an embedded literary intervention to the ongoing project of colonialism and all its attempts to smooth dying pillows, toward something else gentle and narcotic 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.

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-high flame, alone as a Morris fountain in a winter garden except for a termite mound the same size, equally alone and seeming woody still, flame’s carbuncle shadow cast in black plaster. Then a honeyeater, bent over the orange grasses like sugarworked fire, and a burnt falcon with its cane-toad crackling: all of this before the geomancy another that smooths 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 exist formally in some place shadow-shining; hardwares owned by an American tech-bro always staring complex glances at his chopper pilot flickering between godlet and servant; he who works to amass more time through future life-extenders, who retrofit 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 soars 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, rain-drenched mailed open, reasonable it 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, unfurled,
yet the old stony smell of mould and dust, wet and dry;
satellite and join up then to now, head to groin,
to Southern Ocean, to Nirvana, to the eagle initiation
to the morning glories 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 cockatoos
 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.

BALLTANATIC
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—
Darlington shy
Darlington dumpliances
Darlington shyness
More tanned than the staves of bagpall
Scotch to the point of oldicicle
M French is lit but I’m going on a good rise?
Of the biggest
Shane Macgowan sings we are bound for botany bay through the ghost
of his real teeth
There is no IRA amercicen’s clubs in ridlenery and the Jacobites hasall
gone in for the rug trade
Ill see you in shopoosh baron bobs i.e. the amrondiments of ball
Chief/nilde dr Epiphrenon Wasseko
All the pretty trolls tournout (a tourney?) G’s welding of Whees
Which Dog 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 kicks up
the saatchi dinmery
So many of them hot phantasmagoria of ancestors mini and everyone else’s
In these seconds read the deshabillage — the strip-tease of matter
A side from the middy-cow and gear Ars get the two put-zorns Angus Nag
and Linda Bagassee.
I get a Cowboy Crush on the Air Force Officer
Shopping for antiques she
Looks like Louise Brooks in High Crunched Navy Slacks
& medals
My pineal my eyeballs are busting fat!!
Car Armed Forces Fattie and Haps 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, smeared black with lid the colour of Danish china. Hard-boiled eggs chopped in salt water – slave 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, Wooloowin
the landlord sold it under a fortnight took us by surprise. we packed up and rented a place on the same street.

2. Vine Street, Clayfield
this house we liked to doze under breezes in the hammock-hung yard whilst inside kitchen chairs stewed.

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 rubbed a cheap lounge
and, like mafia bosses, happily snapped its legs of.
we circled the bedroom with its sliding
doors and mirrors to the floor. so much
still to do, but then 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.

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; when we kiss
with re-washed tongues, and I am still learning
the gentle ways to wake you.
your discarded mandarin skins harden in the half-light
that bath fluorescents,
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 wait.
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 time-dusk and desecration

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 crow the night sky above and tarmac below us. The city lights are moments off in the distance over the roof tops we float. Above the dreams of a suburban night we sneak out while my parents sleep 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 hearing 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.

1.

2.

The city lights are moments off in the distance over the roof tops we float. above the dreams of a suburban night we sneak out while my parents sleep 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 hearing 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 antennas 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, it’s 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 those streets, it haunts me now that’s why I struggle when I head homeward.
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 cells
we all get 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.
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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.
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 leads them
and this, my dear
is why I always have trouble
reaching to find
just the right volume

shelves of the library
take wing
no telling where
light leads them
and this, my dear
is why I always have trouble
reaching to find
just the right volume

Denim, leather, tinsel, ceramic buttons, polypropylene,
polyurethane, glass, Norfolk pine, wool, glue, rope, silk, silver,
diamonds, beads, tomatoes, cypress, paper, human carcass.

When the time finally comes, lay me out
in my painting smock and dungarees,
lace up my Blundstone boots,
pull ceramic buttons over my eyes and
weave Christmas tinsel (silver and gold) through my hair.

Pack an order of provisions—quail muzzle,
black pudding on smouthly 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

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

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. Hidden —
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 still 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, exclusion. 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. I jam at her. 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 her mother said, What,
you’re pregnant as well now? That same 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,
his 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 happen, 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 brother, had pocketed longing, her the lady
said, Where is that egg? — her own basket full.
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 silphion gagging in public lust wondering if we 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 muscular arms overflowing with starched tuxes we almost fell from the makeshift pews helpless with laughter

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

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 rolling
bowels-hack, 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 to ease the pleasure of not-writing become 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 that 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 (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 (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 definitive grip on either pheromones or poetry, a body is pretty obscure.
the lure of diamonds brought them initially
mangroves slink into the peatlands
chainsaw & caterpillar tractor
leaching tannins
a burning smell like no other

ironwood logs illegally cut
a tangle of weed & nothingness
the forests are burning
pollution index 2000+
peatlands burning
particles of death to the lungs

through winding road to the heart we go
a convoy of motorcyclists deep into the centre
floating in the blind
down the tree
walls of pandanus, lianas
closing in
hair damp from broadleaf spray
eyesight entering a darkness
dimmed by drip & cloud

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 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 bountiful 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, the thought if nothing goes right. She is and ever was your drama workshop friend, her teenage self haunted by demigod light — still alive somewhere and just the way she was meant to be all along.
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 heart-beat 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 sun that seeps it from the floor. A machine can’t die, dear, darling, dispose, doubt. Dirt doesn’t die (but time bleeds in water).

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


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?

Laggy: window and fence —
the tide mark grows and grows.
A creature is awake down there: gnarled and woody reptile, fallen tree.

A jaw is made with teeth, gun trained. Lisa.

We share a name, dear. We share a long boat made from wood. We’ve learned too late. Son intense bloom in the animal I.

Time drops into the estuary, where it rolls like rock.

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 ungraspable, 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, names to shout, mazes of names. An intangible machine, calling for belief, never expecting it, driving in 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 sneaks 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 sneaks 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:extension, issue, impulsivity, anxiety, sensation-seeking—this last, I love; the search for new, simple, intense experiences, and the predilection 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. (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?

viii.
I’ll dream 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?
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 current
But like a black tracker, my problems find me
They chase me down the ver si white authorities chide down brown-skin backs.
Hold me captive the way this country holds asylum seekers and taunt me
the way my abuse 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.
FIRST BLOOD: A SESTINA
Natalie D-Napoleon

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 shopping time
like a missed knitting stitch.

But her body was not hers, a stitch
of animal, a pitch 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 unkissed 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 Bones destroys 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.

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ROM COMS RUIN IT FOR EVERYONE
Thuy On

In shopping aisles
banana is innuendo
in pavement stumbles
Mr Floppy Fringe comes a-dashing
while Little Miss Good Times
sashays behind tweed
and owlish 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,
ditch at the theory of a home always
in fish net, this lover. Time

and unimpeachable occurrence. Eggs
blotted like a hunter’s moon. We kiss,
draw barbs and hooks to smoothness,
fit closer than feather. How long.

can this slow pattern – caring,
pating, forgetting – 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, smooth-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.
On instinct, the dance 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

Handheld of a vessel, the shower door shoulders on its runner, takes us inside

I face you under the hot hint 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 locker, or whether those points of reference
breakers of foam on your breast, smooth river-stones of your shoulders, shining.
wholebone of your hip – have tipped into unconsciousness, and my skin is the fish
which no longer feels the water, my senses are fathoms as used, and this is why
I scribble chart of you, haul in shoals
of dust when you yeep to why my finger
left the smell 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 macon

You pluck a poinciana, walk me through humid rain
around your childhood block. Thank you,
you say, for coming here, and the flame’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

I am in the heart of the sea

I am in the heart.
ABOUT A SUNNY EXPERIENCE
Ouyang Yu
from Living after Death (Melbourne Poets Union, forthcoming 2020)


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! Called a woman on her mobile phone. She was as evasive as ever. Lights evasive. Flash lights on the camera evasive.


WALGAJUNMANHA ALL TIME
Charmaine Papertalk Green
from Nganjungu Yagu (Cordite Books, 2019)

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
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha

We write about the blood they spt / and that honours ancestors’ memories
We write about the land they stole / and that shows they are savage thieves
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha

We write about our connection to country / and that challenges their
We write about our lived realities / and that shows they are survival
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha

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

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

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
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha

We write about racism expression / punctures in their ethnocentric balloons
We write about campaigns for Aboriginal rights / point our weapon of choice
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha
Walgaajunmanha

We write about deep Aboriginal cultural loves / and that shatter 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 line –
attitude.
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
s.O.
From Ende (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 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.
Carmine saw the /// main (tearing thru
the night) with a // red lantern, the doorout
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 — RANGZ sound – 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.
\l / R, in Ohm’s Law. Silence, tells us
a different story.
Every poem has a secret addressee. Every secret a shoreline. Mine loosen 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 end at noon means death. Your death eying 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, at what words lose their letters in winter. Lortes’ spines dismantle in my silent hand.

I hear your name in a dream of sea. Dream my hisses fall from my mouth, braced near 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.
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—(thick tires)—)
and a black one
distincted Elvis, Rhett, Hildegarde or Jett
(you got 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,
verzeihung 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.

We hurry to the café on Kastanienallee
—to sprawl in bunt chairs—
watch waffles fly past, spotting
pines of pristine Eis and strawberries.
Frozen roadside, we admite sun-rough bought
by the Dane, while sunshine
use us as lounges.

We walk on
planning a Fahrrad picnic.
Will ride home via Alex
d and the Te-Te-Tiengmen.
Will film, swerving wildly
amongst patches of guerilla flowers
coming up everywhere.

We use metho and cloth
to make Disco-Wheels' aqua bodywork
even more like stretchy hot-pants.

We rattle back on cobblestones.

We'll ride home via Alex
d and the T or then Tiergarten.
We'll film, swerving wildly
amongst patches of guerilla flowers
coming up everywhere.

We rattle back on cobblestones.

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We rattle back on cobblestones.
And paddling about
in white fisherman’s pants,
Caitlyn is beautiful,
says the sky is just like
the leaves of the chestnut
through open windows.
(Disco-Wheels meanwhile
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

Jesus, Zimmerman
when did you get so old?
Almost eighty, but the ad on Facebook for your Australian tour
down a near forty years younger – –
Bob Dylan at Budokan 1978

a place where you tried to flake 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?
Can you see me like I’m trying to start a fight
The light in here is so much brighter since I changed the bulbs
and your thoughts have wrinkles, man

Bar, 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 Jack’s
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.

Caroline Reid
from Marvel (Spineless Wonders, 2020) buy now

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we shared Winston cigarettes
a bottle of Jack’s
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
and Mum, if I’m not your daughter then who the hell am I?
I am no longer the person who fantasized 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 shape
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 Raiser
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 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 Gallifrey Earth — a time-sensitive offer. He’s trapped. At least she 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 in us! While Jasmin decays her Skithra hordes through the back alleys, we charge
Nikola’s Wardenclyffe 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.
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 soak 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 it’s digging into your heels and your friend’s smiling back at you and you know there isn’t 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
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.

My mother sits in a stone house and she burns. The house is a village in Lebanon. She 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.
GROCERIES
Kaili Saunders
excerpt from Broth (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, hoarding 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) Gall Sack
Father: French crumbs in aerograms
Mother: real v. ideal abandonment
Womb: my face before birth

He, B. (1973) Flotsam
Father: inside blue free
Mother: pink camipushprettythroat
Womb: a hat-pin, a pub-din

Method
i. I try contemporary poetry
Sugar appealed for its dissociative, so was shortlisted. but & I am sorry to say I had to reject some because of constraints of page numbers, I could make an anthology of all poems in similar style, or chance pluck permitted.
Please do consider sending other work during the next submission period.

ii. We try contemporary coupling
he: no candy of chain
my eyelids for his snakes embroidered into subtext
sex, the y of extraordinary
his omphalos, my ox tongue
the caffeine in our detail
change, the y 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 sex
Vodka pears 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. T o his avoidant attachment.
T o 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
dissimilates; flipbook fear of self. A mercy simmer cell suck slow.

Results
Me, A. (2019) "\textbf{The Dinner Party}"
He, B. (2019) "You don't have to be perfect for me to love you."

Discussion
We progress, our folio of bruises ease

空中 | 假如 i use love for
hypothetical T&C's -

\@ our next ketmo ; see I not :
r
c
i m r
r

Conclusion
Diverse appealed for its dissociative, so was shortlisted.
Honour -
I had to reject that poem because of Hinkled (f) (h) (ch) sole
(he intergenerational transmission of pheromone memory).
I will make an anthology of all armour as pluck permits
& |

as we me-he anhers for sugar,
drinkling trust on your ox tongues,
please do consider sending the why of your honey ie self ie
SUBURBAN FANTASY
Michele Seminara
from Suburban Fantasy (UWAP, forthcoming 2020) order here

You maltreated
my poor body
your savage love filling me with child
forcing me down on your filthy mattress
stinking with vile blood and roots
and
you know nothing


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.

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.

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’s 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 failures
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… above a rock
don’t throw.

Fake 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 fly.

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 was 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 fly.

I’ve had plenty of mates who’ve asked me if they can project that rage onto… all women.

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Lol. She will fly.

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
(these 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
See also: Sis Ernie Book - 1000 Terrible Things Australians
Men Have Said About Bitches (Menidith Burkmarsh and

NANCY WITH THE STAPLES IN HER STOMACH
Susan Bradley Smith
from Gladland (Recent Work Press, forthcoming 2020)

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 guns,
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 quailing of the voice. A loosening thought. Forgetting sleep. Dramatic changes in behavior, such as howling or cleaning up a room, result in the dog exhibiting attention-getting behavior: 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 shape of bridal – draped once, static, awaiting 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 in writing sessions 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 always 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 sat on a passenger seat, refusing to wait until the car was impounded. The handler informed the news that this was 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 to one’s own ears. Perhaps a quailing of the voice. A loosening thought. Forgetting sleep. Dramatic changes in behavior, such as howling or cleaning up a room, result in the dog exhibiting attention-getting behavior: 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.

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 those 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)

you : cannot : hell : crow:
not even: there has never been one
crow : more or less : than there is
now : crow funeral : crow elegant:
crow genderless : ambiguous:
scratching : crow with its bent pin
of a cry : second: swallowed:
egg spiked with indictments:
red lining : 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)

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?
A straight man at a 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.
"Artwork denudes 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 scraped knee
asphalt-kiss brought to the lips,
the taste of an ending &
just a hint of the beginning.
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,
I am right to kiss my duck 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.

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.

People said Hilary 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?

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.

"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.

1. SORROW'S A ROOM I keep for my children. I sweep it
Clear of leaves, weathered lining it and sweep it
Each day, I want it fresh there, for the room
I don't want to forget it
for them.

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.

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.

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 scavenger seagulls massed,
which grow like weeds when all men's rivers sleep.
HORROR (PLURAL)
Ellen van Neerven
from Threat (UQP, 2020) buy here

unconscious knowledge
anti-colonial doubt
instinctual complicity
loss of self-language
facial respect
racial urban ignorance
some systemic tension of eurusbox
radical interior
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 unshaded 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 blue in between, with dull and glittering 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,
night into the desert in kinds gilding
the stilledness of the unscheduled visit.

Sea remember flat earth, like dough.
Rolling tides an intake of breath,
bailing up and shaping where breakers
made natural chic in desert bay.
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 olive oil it will stop them congealing into the solid
mass that nag in the night as your reflux nags when
you forget to take your proton pump inhibitor—

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.

one. you are breathing deeper and deeper.
two. you are feeling sleepier and sleepier. your eyelids are becoming

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 tw. your dream has seeped into the soft marrow of your bones. now, it has not practically immigrated into the dilated cells just beneath the surface of your skin you are flushed pink with it. and the exhilaration hitch something like the first time he knew 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 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.
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 Lauren & I were there, she didn’t show.
We called across anyways
wrote in highway dust. There was only a little cash.
Summer knewed its blue, baboons
had been practicing... the shiki
that nurse & grit amid the dunes... the dust of death.

Our hungry cars chewed on beetles,
hopes went to shade & assimilated a passive menace.
We couldn’t approach but most likely hanged,
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 Tuscan.
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.

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

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 now is
Igor Stravinsky

IV (vii). 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

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

gap

Diana’s nervous energy transfers in balance

two palms, trembling a colour structure

pride

sweep out of balance aggravates
drive, gauze 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
to music more appetising than roses
strength of ankle, test of toe
drop lower

"Chinatown, My Chinatown"
and traffic noise on Broadway
burst

"What would he do... do?"
pushing heels into the floor

sweep

I (ii). Double pas de quatre

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

5/8
tranquillo
movement protracted

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
and them
walks around his own
nonsense    coiled & cautious
arms embellish
(a lost shoe)
a stubbed cigarette

II (ii). Gailliarde

the women reflect             mirrored precision
(a lost shoe), pique, passe
grasping 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
and there
in knees, a loosing of twist and drag get
gone among deference
to keyboard structures; play,
pulse, space age concerns
but still courtesy

Second pas de trois

(Reprise)

two men, one woman    continuity fanfare
tricky balance    she swagger 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
run and shake off that castanet snap

III (iii). Bransle double de Poitou
a high-energy day buried with atmospheric
the piano breaks through, stamping-agility, wit
she is caught mid-flight: Horoche

Pas de deux
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
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 a 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 Monocle 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 Meredith 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 Excavation, (2015), Pence (2017) and Prophesies (2018). She is commissioning editor for Westerly magazine, Ausm. 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 Bubblé Calcutt 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.

Alice Haynes completed a Creative Writing degree at the University of Wellington in 2007. She is integraged by the relationship between mental / emotional distress, and creativity. She has worked across various mental health services as a Poet Worker since 2013, and is currently a Senior Educator at the Recovery & Wellbeing College in Sydney. Alice is Co-Managing Editor with Michelle Seminara at online transnational creative arts journal Moxie.

Kevin Bough'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 Baschttir Jury Poetry Prize. She is the author of Gallery (2014), Sepiozite (2016) and Minnie (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. Managing Hunter: 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 Miss 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 newspapers. 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 Calum 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 Cotter is a poet, writer, anthology and book reviewer living in Canberra. He 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 his poetry has appeared in Canada, England, India, New Zealand and the United States, as well as in Australia. He blogs at pscottier.com.

Jocelyn Dunn was born in the UK, in 1993, and moved to Australia in 2001. Their work has appeared in Cordite, Australian Poetry Journal, Sozothil and Seizure magazine, among others. They were one of the ten recipients of the 497 poetry prize in 2013, and was shortlisted for the Marsden and Hacehtte prize in poetry for 2015. They currently live in Melbourne/Narwee.

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 anthologies, and has been recognized with numerous prizes, including the Contemporary Australian Poetry Prize, Australian Poetry since 1788 and The Best Australian Science Writing 2019. She is 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 in 2014. His poetry and reviews have appeared in Best Australian Poetry, Southerly, 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 Recite 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 Mayor Creative Writing Award for Narratives, Nonfiction, and was shortlisted for the 2019 Dorothy Hewett Award for an Unpublished Manuscript. His work has been published in Kill Your Darlings, Speeches, Cordite, Rabbit, and Real Reels, among other places. Oliver curates 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 Plurilingualism 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 Erwood: 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, Fringe World Conference (Yemen) 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 Junior 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 Fudy 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 Fan Xin Xiong.

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 Ramshock, 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, 2018); 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 Jossen and Shastra Deo: https://twitter.com/AskMe_Oracle

Angela Gardner's latest poetry collection is Same Sketches: Notes on Matter (Recent Work Press, Australia, 2020). Recent poems have been published in The Yale Review and West Branch USA, Breadloaf Manuscript, The Long Poem and Tsar in the Foxe, UK. Anon, Hecate, Rabbit and Cordis, 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 activity. He has published three books of poetry, and his poems have been widely translated. He himself has translated many Australian and Aboriginal poems into Spanish and with Steve Brock and Sergio Holan, Garrido Salgado also translated into English the trilingual Mapuche Poetry Anthology (2015).

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.

L.K. Holt’s latest collection, Birth Plan (Vagabond Press, 2019), was shortlisted for the 2020 Victorian Premier’s Award. She is recipient of the NSW Premier’s 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 loved, 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 timelion bee, a random stuf, 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 Elephant Tracks. 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 Is Becoming (UWAP), Vita the Real (UQ), shortlisted for the 2019 Prime Minister’s Literary Awards for Poetry and the 2020 John Bray Award, Brit (Five Islands Press), The Beautiful Anxiety (Puncher & Wattmann), which won the Victorian Premiers’ Prize for Poetry in 2015, and Breaking the Days (Whitmore Press), which was shortlisted for the 2017 NSW Premiers’ Literary Awards.

Published widely since the seventies, Rozanna Linder has published creative non-fiction and poetry in national newspapers, literary journals and edited collections. Her hybrid memoir Dis-Orient East Bound: A Cartoon Life (UWAP, 2010) was shortlisted for the National Biography Award in 2010. 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 Wangal land. 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 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 Internal Topography (UPA 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 (Piato Press, 2009). Conspiracy of Skin was awarded a Highly Commended in the 2019 Wesley Medal 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, Magnus, Meanjin, The Mort, Māori, Cordite, Southerly, Overland and Verity La. In 2019 she received the Hennessy Award for Emerging Poetry, the Aesthetica Creative Writing Award, and the Lintons’ Writers’ Award for Irish Poem of the Year. Her debut pamphlet, Stryson (Southword Editions, 2020), was published in 2020.

Melanie Musnaggar is a Dagej mother, writer, poet and spoken word artist. Melanie writes in both English and Dhaal about identity, family, autism and various social issues. She is also an advocate for raising autism awareness. Melanie weaves Dhaal 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.

Nanako D-Napoleon is a writer, singer-songwriter and educator from Fremantle, Australia who is currently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing. She won 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 Done Poetry Prize (2018) and KSP Poetry Prize (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 ArtMatters. 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 T o 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 including 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 non-collection is A Kinder Sea (UQP). Her debut collection Vanishing Point (UQP, 2009) won the Arts Queensland Thomas Maguire Prize and was short-listed for several awards. She has a Vagabond Press Rare Objects chapbook Soandtide (2011). Felicity was UQP Poetry Editor and editor 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, choreographed and publishing platforms.

Antonia Pope is a poet, essayist and scholar. Her poems can be found in Cordite, Mountain, Gargouille, Wastefully, Anon, 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 Pray 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 TV 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 Timed-Out Dreaming, which won the 2016 Women Australian Premiere 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, Wastelands, Micah 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 Narrm/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 Boy 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, PoemPress, 2016) and HUSH (Black River 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 Goodbyes, Crowd (Peri Pet Poetry, 2017), Loom, brick (Recent Work Press, 2019), and a bilingual selected poems in English and Mandarin, Perfectly Bruised (Flying Ape, 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.

Daniel Swain's poetry and prose has appeared in Cordite, Rabbit, Long Poaddock, 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 published by Slow Loris/Puncher & Wattmann.

Mark Tredinnick's latest book of poems is A Gathered Distance (February 2020). He lives along the Wintaungurriegi southwest of Sydney and he teaches at the University of Sydney. His other books include Bluestone Country 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, play and non-fiction. Ellen’s first book, Comfort Food, was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards Kenneth Slessor Prize and highly commended for the 2016 Wesley Michel Wright Prize. Theirs 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 has been published in many anthologies, journals, and newspapers. He has been shortlisted for several prizes and in a Raw Art Review Chapbook Competition winner. His poetry collections include The Levitators Apprentice (Publish and Pray UK, 2013), Walking Through Fenian (AISM & Catherine Proc., 2018) and Unstill Mosaics (Bayside, 2019), and Aboriginal Soloquies (Uncollected Press, 2019).

Ali Whitelock’s new poetry collection, the lactic acid in the cavel 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.

Lee Wicks has toured widely and won publication in over 350 different magazines, anthologies & newspapers across thirty countries in fifteen languages. His fourteen collections of poetry in Brief (Flying Islands, 2019).

Jessica L. Wilkinson is the author of three poetic biographies including Marionette: A Biography of Miss Marion Davies (2012), Satin 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 innovation, 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/music/virtual). 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 buses, we make Australian poetry and creative expression widely accessible.

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