

Australian Poetry Anthology

Volume 8
2020

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Australian
Poetry
Anthology

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Australian Poetry, based at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne, acknowledges the custodians and owners of the land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and all First Nations lands and peoples across the country. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

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Australian Poetry Anthology

Volume 8, 2020
Edited by Sara Saleh and Melinda Smith

Foreword

Greetings, poets and poetry lovers. Welcome to the *Australian Poetry Anthology* Vol. 8 (2020), a national anthology with a special focus on the ACT. Each year, while the spread is national, the voices of a different state or territory are showcased. Of the just over 120 poets in this volume, 23 poets are from the ACT.

In producing a poetry anthology focusing on the ACT region, we acknowledge that this place is unceded Ngunnawal, Ngarigo and Ngambri Country which always has been, and always will be, an important place of song and story, and of gathering together. We pay our respects to the elders of those communities past, present and emerging, and we commit to working with them to respect and protect this Country into the future.

The anthology opens with the voice of a poet we have lost too soon: the co-founder of the First Nations Australia Writers Network (FNAWN) and significant ACT region writer Aunty K. Her work is a provocation to think about this nation's own untruths and distortions, and the responsibility we have as story-tellers, and as people benefitting from the ongoing colonisation of First Nations people, to reconcile this with ourselves, to be honest about our roles, to tell the truth – or elevate it when it is not our own to tell. Aunty K's courage and generosity of spirit live on through these words that we are so honoured to have.

Editing a poetry anthology in times like these throws up many questions. It forces us to ask all over again what the 'use' of poetry is. As we write this, the present is already rapidly changing. As if right on time, the artists in this collection have come to respond to the call to re-examine present and past, to look for answers for the future, and to listen for deeper resonances.

In selecting poems from among the wonderfully rich set of submissions, it would have been possible to produce an anthology composed entirely of apocalypse poems. It would have been equally possible to produce one comprising only delicate, beautiful lyrics filled with yearning, attention, and love. We have found ourselves wanting to strike both notes, and the many others in between: to make a chord, however dissonant – to contain multitudes. Arguably our duty as artists is to bear witness to all of it – from the looming catastrophes of runaway climate change, epoch-making bushfires and a deadly global pandemic, to ever-present entrenched societal injustice, to the smaller griefs, puzzles, and epiphanies that enter every human life. If we ignore the big picture we become irrelevant, if we ignore the small things we ignore the beauty, complexity and mystery of what it is to exist; of what it is we stand to lose. It is in allowing us to play (and hear) many notes at once – to encompass contradictions without being destroyed by them – that the strength of poetry lies. Perhaps we can say this is one of its 'uses'.

At such times, it can be easy to allow despair to have the last say. But do not forget Toni Morrison's words: how this is the time for artists to go to work. Not just for the world we are in, but for the one we want to imagine and re-imagine and invent. After all, unhindered imagination is imperative for any transformative politics, for any creation.

Language can often be used to dissolve the truth into shards of selective information and vastly reduce our field of view. But language can also be liberating – and healing – if we are honest with ourselves; if we are able to identify these untruths, distortions, if we are willing to tell the stories. These stories are necessary for our humanity.

That is the unadulterated work of the artists in this anthology, whose poems transcend any easy categorisation or labelling. As reader, as witness, you will find these poems are not shy ... they invite you to a kind of intimacy that is deliberate and demands space, admiration, reflection, and respect.

This anthology is a gift – for our community of artists, wholly by a community of artists. If you do accept this communal offering, we implore you to sit with your discomfort when Laniyuk intricately writes of the unbreakable bond between ancestry and Country, when Winnie Dunn cleverly subverts the white saviour, when Eunice Andrada weaves through ecological collapse and divinity; to think deeply reading Shastra Deo's unfaltering elegy of fatherhood, and Omar Sakr's poem challenging what it means, in the face of such systems of oppression, to be allegiant to 'Country' – and which country.

We also humbly acknowledge that we the artists do not have all the answers. Momentarily dismissing our own wilful optimism, perhaps we really are all 'doomed' ... But, at least with art and music and poems like these – we can bear it.

With Salams – and gratitude for the incredible hard work and dedication of Jacinta Le Plastrier and the team at AP

Sara Saleh
Melinda Smith

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Poems

Wiradjuri country

1,000ks Wiradjuri country
Eagles, angels, sun bursts,
gum trees, geraniums
and a pocket full of poetry.
I travel my country,
my land,
my life,
my religion.

The bush calls me back
to the time of before.
Before tar and cement.
Brick walls and tin roofs.
To the time of Creation
where men were men
and honesty was Lore.

Wiradjuri country,
Spirit of the earth.
Red dirt, dignity.
Truth and justice.
Lore of the land.

The wind whispers
as it captures me
reaching deep into my soul
thousands of years
of memories enter my spirit
as they guide me through country.

Dignity and pride as I stand proud
before my Elders of long time past
I honour them with dignity and courage
as I walk upon my land.

I am Wiradjuri.

Relevant to the Day
(25/01/2020)

For those who require a pledge
of allegiance I ask you in return to never say “country”
when you mean the “government”

and to articulate what love means
when it is demanded. Too many say *love*
and think *obedience*. Now if I must love my *country*

are we talking the charcoal hills & rivers
of dead fish, or the people? & in either case,
if the government is busy killing what I love,

what am I allowed to do in its defense?
I have such dark dreams when I imagine anyone
hurting the woman I honey, the men

I hold in sleep, the them I adore—
it is the only time I sweeten
the edge of my knives.

Maybe the knives are votes, and maybe not.
Increasingly now is not the time
for metaphors. The sky is thick

with democracy, all that smoke—I swallow it, raw
my throat. Who knew the air
could be a danger? I guess everything

can become a hazard. It turns the world inside
out. My house is full of wasps and I run
wild into the drought-stricken kitchen

begging them to love me,
can of death in hand, stingers at their ends,
all of us saying: hold still

hold still, I'll show you
what I know. This is what we owe each other,
a declaration with limits

a love defined by (b)orders,
look at all the people in your corner,
so few, considering the world,

and all of them identifying as *battlers*—
what are we warring against
if not this country, which is a colony, still

deep in its invaded heart.
I tear down my house
all its stupid walls

and the wasps bloom out from my skin;
I wander, stung, under an evil sun among
strangers and kin who hate the mirage of my body.

Out on the streets, I ask a homeless man
if he would take this country out
to a dance, let alone pledge himself to it—

I'm kidding, I haven't spoken to a homeless person
in years and the shame of it eats my spirit,
all the kindnesses I've declared

within myself, little delightful
myths for how I savage this life
into an aloneness

home to bestial rationality—and the homeless
man says the country dances
in him, a starveling thing

transitory as any bird, it burdens
every wind with its filthy, stained wings,
its shadows haunt even the waves

which we also claim.
I walk over all that we, the once-human, claim:
the good, the grim, the legendary reefs

over the contested & unsettled past & on
through the detention camps singing, how good
how good, is this, democracy,

O to choke on its smoke,
what a blessing, what a crime, come now, pledge
your life not to grace, not to equality or justice for all,

but to this, the law, a butcher's blade, never idle.

Tais Rose

Ganngalehla (listening, knowing, feeling)

Burning camphors line the creek
and drop black seeds

bruised

into the dry bed
beside ochre still damp
from the night before.

Bush turkey,
wagun,

sweeping leaf litter across scorched earth
to her nest

between the wattle,

nanggil,

and native raspberries,

malgam,

which offer fruit and flower
to burnt camphor bodies.

*A woman's work
for Jenni*

A woman strips grass splits cane dreams the
plant the loop and stitch honours with her hands

Her mothers her aunties whisper making into
earth-fingers a sieve like a lace leaf a river fold

A basket carries child seed honey snares an eel
a scoop nets echos the bend of tree turn of stone

Pandanus wickers first light twines red desert
banded goanna burnished wood the purple storm

She dreams tradition the rising pattern of women
cordyline to songline mist falling clouds adrift

goes bush her country her body sedge rush
waratah white fig bark witnesses emu and hawk

cuts barrga strands passes into flame or the willowy
straps of the lawyercane basket its fine bicornual sweeps

its generous mouth dreams wild dog dilly-bag white-ant
creek-creature russet-sun the shape of story without end

A woman's work preserve attain share new knowledge
for women to make women to lift the mist unfurl the blue

A woman works her ochre map arid weave corella wing
sand fire water her open-cut land speaks

Note After glasswork by Jenni Kemarre Martiniello including Glass Weave Belconnen Art Centre

Animal

Why throw a pot
when you could write a poem?
Because the pot comes out of your hands,
the body leaning forward,
feet on the ground: words have fled –
you're an animal watching for the moment
her prey will show itself, your claws
drawn in, relaxed, ready,
eyes following every movement
of the earth, each shudder of grass
as it bursts from the soil,
following every moment of the tiny petals
of the blue starflower as it emerges,
of the shy underside of each petal
(its paler blue),
watching the leaves of the brittle gum swing
in the shifting air above,
following each ray of sun as it eases itself along
blades of grass –
to see how what will emerge:
how the pot will rise, its curve,
its substance a new animal –

Nature morte

Last year I acted art for you, being now nude duck descending a staircase, then man walking to the sky, then Oldenburg's giant peg. Last year you persuaded me that art would open doors, but it was never going to be true. Poised as a Morandi I wait indoors, watching the damaged world, breathing the barbeque scent of a continent ablaze. The house is filled with all you left me before you left me. Chocolates uneaten in the fridge. Negatives fixed and washed, still on the drying line. A string bag of oranges, slowly turning brown.

Three by three times through the blues

Just last Friday night I heard them,
three by three times through the blues,
tenor sax, piano, trumpet,

unrecorded, unpreserved,
a momentary perfection,
given somehow, never willed

although the best parts of a life
have always been required.
I heard each player feel his way,

cautiously at first before
the vista opened out,
the second chorus more decided,

hitting on the IV and V,
the third time through still more intense
and then the story's small denouement,

a kind of inner smile.
Three times it was the one time only,
indelible and evanescent

across the history of the stars.

Pearls

Along the coast pearls ride the breakers. I walk on a headland, test a lock with a key. "Turn twice," you said. "Ease it gently." Inside, closed shutters press like years; the house breathes; a creeper hangs berries like decorations, its tendrils pushing through eaves. And words return, which floated and sang three summers ago. I open the shutters; waves stand up as wind cuts their tops. You're speaking to me in blown syllables. Shutters bang and years collide. I assemble words, remembering wine and an eloquent pause—when words would not say it; when, skirting language, we knew our expression.

Hard New Peaches

In summer there is the cool mouth
of the marble table.

She is comfortably scratched, silent
with the whorls of Jupiter storms,

and far away
in the middle of the kitchen.

Her stone flute has a drum tongue
when we release shopping bags

into her bruised space light.
Hard new peaches spill.

Tilt

February, a cake fork fallen from the plate,
the sedate beat of bat wings
in the mango tree. We're sewn into place

with work, seams restitched at the elbow,
the slow spread of January past, fading
the improbable flight of pelicans.

Only in January could the ample shell
of a spider float from the cliff to land
at our feet on the sand; before the scooter

of March gathers speed, a second-hand offer
spruiks *wetsuit for tall thin man*: the tilt
of the earth's axis, the year tap tapped open.

Potted Colour

I look out the back window
while the world is still dark
and still still

before thought of birdsong
or movement of insects
or stirring mammals

the flowers hold their colours
like underwater purple
underwatercolour

trumpets or clams or circus tents
or crenellated pastry crusts
or stars

tinged with phosphorescence
but open as Hell
straining to drink

more blackness than the sky can provide
a field in a night
or the sea ever

unhinged
like Rilke's
like Harwood's anemones

Petticoat

Always the sound of rain.
A finger on ivory. The
spilt petticoat, jettisoned
at the last. The trail of oil, salt-
slicked and brassy. Hardly
tasting her, he retreats.
The slow unwind, trickling.
Mountain ash at the grandparents'
house – something
plucked from the mouth,
the cold rump of the
chicken, bones beneath
shiny, puckered skin;
the red enamel flesh
of chillies, the sizzle
of oil under lights,
the February
speech-making
of the grandfather – all
stuffed into his
pockets, sage and
ash, bonfire and penance.

Legs

She spent too much time that morning, inside the roar of the cicadas, cutting the legs off the bed. The cutting wasn't the problem once she'd found the curved, rough-toothed hand-saw in the shed out the back. But then she went round and round trying to get the legs the same length. The bed got lower and lower and still wobbled sharply when she sat on it. The floor was untrustworthy, so she micro-moved the bed until a position was found that suited all legs, the uneven boards and her stab at sophistication in having a bedframe low to

the floor.

Her girl-friend's dog had been out and come back. Had rolled in the rotting bagasse pile left over from our own efforts at crushing some sugar out of a stand of cane. Had tested the bed, standing four-square when the bed proved unstable, then tracked off to a more reliable spot on the verandah.

Under the mango tree, outside her window, the cane cutters smoked, held their beer bottles with elbows stiff against any masculinity impugning, inadvertent intimacy, legs braced in boots anchored wider than their shoulders, one pinching a rollie, one with his thumb hitched in the belt of his shorts. "You can put bigger wheels on it. It'll bloody rock it, mate and then it'll have legs", and that was about a ute or a truck or a bloke-associated accessory.

The cane that year was six feet tall, planted so close to the house she could lean out, wrest a stalk from the stand and warn off any bat or spider or rodent that lusted after a comfy corner in the hot, airless house.

Fajr Inertia

*Come to prayer! Come to success!
Prayer is better than sleep!
FROM THE FAJR ADHAN
(DAWN CALL TO PRAYER)*

I lie in the knowledge of my failure
the way I lie through my chance at success,
hip sunk into the mattress
blanket over my chin
staring at a yellow flower clock
with a missing plastic cover
that reads six minutes past seven;
twenty-five minutes too late.
The broken gas canister of sleep
slowly clears from my head.
I hide under the covers from
the light invading my room
but I can't hide from the fact
I'll have to live today outside
of Allah's protection

Waiting

after Shin Yun-bok

watch me repeat all requisite mistakes in the correct order turning out a scone onto a plate
knowing and not knowing it will stick while clothing spirals and dries to the sounds of firmly
strung wood
and
then,
the breakening having thus occurred,
I started to smell burning rubber and it fills me up like a heavy fuzz connecting my nose to the
back of my head and so I

focus myself on a tree stump or lily or slow-moving ceramics in the cast-iron breeze
and press down, hard, the contours of my thumb and forefinger while my heart
beats and *pulls* at my ears and so I sit

watching sunlight enter her face through gaps in the leaves as she closes the door behind her
and mouths a prayer for her daughters.

Specks

they throw their money onto his blood
the rich ones exit through the entrance

she hit me from behind but i managed
to miss the brick wall & keep on flying

he asked 'is it tomorrow or yesterday?'
then played peek-a-boo with her heart

we're crying our tears into a rising sea
the guardians of confusion scope it all

words kiss words so you pocket them
in the long run you hope you can walk

The heart is a muscle

He has lain the toy of his heart
on the road ahead of him. He cannot tell
what it says to him. There is only the pounding,
the thin, persistent tremor by which it is held.
He has turned and turned the heart,
felt the brush-strokes of its rhythm
and still he stalls. Becoming it – there is no-one
but himself to take it on. He has learned
how the heart of each living thing, weighed
against his own, is barely different.
He would give, by his wish, the heart he has
to the days he is in, and die
having nothing to bury. Heart, he says,
may I shape your bright blood into all
these hours. In his chest, the muscle
feels older than it was, its pulse pushing
on his lungs, and he travels the road
he is on, the sun
a little lower in the sky, his chance
written, written in the dappling
of the poem inside his eyes.

The Lifeguard

I'm scanning the pool thinking about Jesse James
as the lappers lug up and back, their wake riding over

the lane ropes, spilling into the wet deck grates
where all that excess energy runs, returning

to the balance tank, a dark reservoir beneath us
rumbling through my toes and feet. I like to stand

on the lid as the swimmers dive in unaware
of that churning well, their force seeping back

to another pool, unseen, unheard, only felt.

*

And in that movie there's Jesse James
drawing nearer to the end, stepping onto thin ice
in a heavy cloak, mumbling to Charlie about death.

He sweeps the floor with a black, gloved hand
staring into the other side, shooting at the ice,
begging it breaks—a man fabled, vile, resigned.

But the water doesn't take him, death won't come,
his wounds refuse to heal, while a cold-water fish
returns his gaze from the freezing river below.

*

Sometimes my lifeguard mind wanders back to the time I took up
swimming, that straightforward thing done daily while I came off my
medication. Where is my depression now? In some dormant place
I govern? Every stroke brings a swell of relief that allows me to take
another. That swells rolls on and spills away so I return to the pool again,
wiser for knowing what good living does, knowing my illness remains.

*

And there's Jesse James in that famous scene
laying down his guns, standing on the chair before
the picture frame that so urgently needs dusting.

He brushes the portrait of a shadowy horse
as Bob takes rickety aim, Jesse facing the glass,
waiting patiently, watching the reflection.

His head slugs forward, smashing the pane,
and into a new frontier, where the animal
that his spirit fed will forever be fed to him.

*

So I'm on that lid, scanning a pool coursing
with our goals and grief, with the hopes and crimes

that move us, charging the haul that whips
an unlit tail in the chamber, repaying our volume

in secret. Neighbour, there's another world.
Stand here, wait a moment. But they exit flushed

and panting from all they've spent on loan,
passing by me guarding this life, and after

I ask them: *how did you go?*

Marker 108

What I remember now might be
insignificant or significant.
I can no longer tell.

This was, for me, the locus of a vision—
the image of a figure:
an old man returning to his country after 40 years.
The trip he made, from Jingxi to there,
was only 40 miles.
Yet they were difficult miles
filled with mountains and streams.
And this old man (I imagined)
came with the sun behind him
emerging as a shadow
into this site of origin.

I have a video taken crossing a bridge with blue railings.
Below me is a stream, and I narrate
'This is Lenin Stream' and (tilting the camera)
'This is Karl Marx Mountain.'
The stream is turquoise. The mountain grows thin trees
entangled in vines like an unkempt beard.

The bridge led to a path led
to a sign that pointed
to Marker 108 where
(disguised under the name 'Gia Thu')
Ho Chi Minh was met by cadres
and taken to Coc Bo, a cave in the limestone
mountain like a black mouth in a cliff face
with the roots of a tree rappelling down to meet its maw.

A sign outside the cave reads:

Twenty years ago in this cave the party
developed a strategy to fight against
the white people/westerners/French
and to enlist the people in the fight
to have a beautiful country today.

Inside the cave are three wooden planks arranged
on low limestone pillars.
The sign affixed to the wall reads
'The bed where Uncle Ho rested and worked.'

There are other signs:

(on a limestone stalagmite)
Karl Marx statue.
(next to Lenin Stream)
After working hours Uncle Ho used to fish here.
(in front of a bamboo grove)
Bamboo garden, planted 1961.
(in front of a tree)
Ho Chi Minh used the leaves from this tree to make tea.

I entered that cave, that tomb
through a thin channel of stairs
cut into the rock and falling away
into a black that was blacker than my
imagination until
before I could flee
a dangling bulb triggered
showing me down and down.
In the base of the cave,
in the cool and still, with limestone that
sucked the sound of breath away
I tried to feel something.

So this, I would think, is where Ho Chi Minh slept
So this, I would think, is where Ho Chi Minh worked
and ate, and planned, and made tea.

I was performing belief
and revelation.

When I emerged from that place
and sat on a stone path
a woman emerged
from the brush, as if
from a breaking wave,
carrying a bundle of
sticks on her shoulders,

I thought
that was something.

Buonanotte

a man at a further table, talking,
reminds me of a family friend
who's long since dead : as if he's
some sort of resurrection or
embodiment : as if he's some
animated reminder : a note or
footnote : a prompt : the café's
crowded : rowdy : & will be
for a while : for tonight : for
the next few weeks or months :
a young couple gets up from
an adjacent table : then another
young couple gets up from
another table : though they leave
through different doors :
one with no past : perhaps :
& one with no future :
who's to say : quiet city : here :
at the bottom of the world :
a man coughs : then goes on
talking to the man beside him :
a waitress clears the tables
that the couples just vacated :
a man out at the streetside
smokes a cigarette : & gestures
with his hand : his face animated :
his eyebrows raised : if you ask
about tonight i'll refer you
to the details : the way a woman

at the next table grips
the one leg she crosses over
the other : the way the waiter
has a blue cloth tucked
in the pocket of his jeans : the way
a streetlight flickers : round
as a planet : ghostly : hollow :
the wine specials : *pinot grigio* :
prosecco : a *shiraz-sav blanc-rosé*
blend : because it's all
in the details : as they change :
the moment precise : &
the moment slipping : a few
new patrons replace the old :
but the tables are emptying :
& this too will pass : this
night : & others like it :
that might be argued into an era :
or an age : you were part of it
tonight : for this one night :
this showing : you played
your part : you mumbled through
your lines : then bowed out :
on cue : unprompted : stepped out
into the evening cool :
with no nod to the audience :
no knowing nod : no wink : no one
was watching : you folded up
your paper : & quietly you went :

24 February 2020

West Terrace and Hindley Street

Traffic gripes like a stack of invoices. At the lights
 a bag of empty Coke cans wrestles an old man for his scooter
 and wins. The Adelaide Symphony plays Café:
 variation on diminished funding. A blotchy baby's
 pram jostles ours. A pot of beer
 leans blearily against a mural. Rain
 drops in. We duck into a bookshop's
 hush. Tiger lilies prowl. Nudes lie.
 The pram wheels squeak. My baby plays
Oh My Darling Clementine for a dark German.
 A book asks politely *Are you left eyed?*
 The cracked sky blisters into blue. We revolve
 onto the street. Doorways steam. Galleries sprout.
 Maple leaves freestyle. Young men
 become beautiful. A pierced lover's crewcut
 is cleft, blonde brain, brunette brain.
 Chic cafés chrome. Construction bangs on
 about why it's justified. A stick figure
 pleads for three dollars for a hospital-baby.
 Skaters scribble on the sky.
 The air is freshly squeezed,
 lime, jasmine rice, sun,
 the fringe flopping down into the eyes of the mainstream.
 I could hang with the literati, dye my hair, take a lover.

As we pass the pokies lounge a woman
 lays her head down on the bar,
 her nicotine-yellow hair fanning out
 in a riddle of roads less travelled.

for whom the red ticks

i walk through the valley of convenience
 every time i write
 something
 they change it
 when i photocopy i think i've
 made it
 colour
 but it comes out black
 on white
 my colleague fact checked
 my work
 it was all red
 ticks
 who red ticks
 no question
 marks
 they told us not to research
 each other so i didn't
 look into
 him
 no one got in trouble > which is great
 i chew at my job
 i don't care > i just acknowledge it
 my contract
 is starch and white fish
 cured to resemble
 the leg
 crab meat
 i find it in my local convenience
 aisle- cold
 favourite -type then print
 the red ticks for thee

Better angels

NYE – Northbourne Ave, Canberra

New Year's Eve, and the stars shimmer
above the famous lake, as smoke clears
from the inland capital's ritual fireworks
and midnight's revellers start the journey home.
Then a young man appears on a wide avenue,
as though from nowhere, his face and torso flashing
like an apparition in the headlights.
Now he's lunging at the lines
of dangerously hesitating cars,
ignoring a crescendo of horns –
shirt-fronting oblivion.

We each have our reasons.
I hear the voice of mine falter –
'only bad things happen quickly' –
but before I swerve and speed off
like the others, you insist
and we stop.

Witnesses would report a young Caucasian male,
head shaven, muscled in jeans, swaying
and now pushing me away as I try to coax him
between the menacing cars and blinding lights
toward a stand of eucalypts, marooned
on a traffic island, dividing the rush of the road.

Here, in their wash of night shadows,
his eyes seem luminous
and his face looks child like
as he stares straight past us,
seeking a way through the ghostly trees.

And I'm afraid of the ice coursing through his veins
of what he might do next
of a 'good Samaritan nightmare'.
And I want no part of this stranger's reckless rush.
And I love you for your kindness, your bravery,
but I'm angry that we're here –
out of towners, for pity's sake,
stranded in the dark, talking him down.

Now police headlights illuminate
the towering eucalypts,
like a parade of phantoms.
And slowly, he registers the denouement,
backing away through the strewn bark,
as officers wearing latex gloves
quickly overpower him.

Spreadeagled against the van –
later, they would report a 'reasonable belief' –
with his demon's face jammed and his spent eyes
flooding in the blue constabulary light,
it's as though his darkest angel
had climbed too far and fallen,
wingless, under the care-worn stars.

Or perhaps his better angel
had in truth long gone,
as if this night was not of its making.
For we each have our murderous journeys
and when midnight tolls its terrible bells,
we all have our reasons.

Magpie Hill

From sunny Magpie Hill see
Distant mountains soft and comfortable
The mountains are the same grey-green
Glooming the background of Mona Lisa.
Blue emerging within the green calms thought
And action though it's much sunnier
Here than in the painting and the misty bits
Are the heat haze eucalypts ooze sweating summer's
Fine air, not trapped behind half a metre of bullet-proof
Glass like poor old Mona Lisa. The children
Free as they will ever be fly the blue swings, clamber
A tall climbing fort and the wooden voodoo horses.
All day and night you might ride a wooden horse
Wait for earth tremors and watch the moon
Its movement imperceptible until you see
The moon floating the other side of the sky
And think, *yes the moon has moved.*

TURNING

Canberra, 1971

End of the honeymoon
we drive down a straight avenue
the city condensing from fog

Slipping back under the cowl
of carefree habit
is no longer an option

Houses cling to cliffs
a pruned tree grows
new leaves

A sign reads *Free Bricks*
but they are freer than we are
smooth-mortared together

Turning circles within circles
we take the wrong spoke
drive miles through sage green

backtrack into deepening pink
frail flower of beginnings

A Pebble for the Quiet Place

Now with all seasons damaged under our savage dominion
it's strange to think seven people drowned here
that water once flowed with such force
down this culvert between greenhouse cubes
of midday silence, cubbies adrift in the quiet
slides with hands in their pockets.

Elsewhere, the future rears
on haunches of rare marble and parquetry.
Its attendants show you reconstructed offices
with their quaint typewriters
an ingenious system for sending documents by tube
ornately framed portraiture of our various pasts.

But don't be fooled: every city is really two.
You think you are familiar with these streets
that they ask nothing of you
but until you have come here
you have only been acquainted with the first,
its shared and gifted future.

At lake's end, suburbs' edge, secreted from the hubbub on the terrace
glimpsed from the approach to the town centre
dropped like quotation marks
the elderly use on greeting cards for emphasis
these small places have been raised from dailiness by a silence
that even stops marsupials from grazing on the centre lawn

around which so many bricks placed in a wall mention 'home':
home the map incised
on smooth marble records where settlers' cottages
became the lake that honours them.
The sandstone stele calls the children home
from the water. *Home* for those who would never find it

painted on poles in the shape of a boat tethered
to the safer swell of the grass.
We would have known you
except for the casuarinas' deference
that sets you apart. Absences, yes, but in reminding us of loss
our home is made in the second city

its memories enacted through these shapes:
the smooth sides and beveled edges of a large black block
push our gaze outwards past the lake's perimeter
as settlers watched for cloud massing over the basin.
A tall stone breaks the tilt of afternoon sunlight
into a shadow that follows the watercourse.

The stonework's slope compels
the line of sight from a father who looks up
from the picnic blanket where he's sitting
to where his daughter stood up a moment ago
the way people look up
when something huge is falling from the sky

Canberra Nara Peace Park

i.

Pastel words fill teacups and creep into the spaces between sentences. Above the rooftops, there is a whisper as petals unfold. A distinctive 'pop' as the buds burst into flower. On the shores of Lake Burley Griffin, they eat and dance in mauve light. A watermark stretches across the sky joining mountain and water. On borrowed landscape, the breeze touches the petals of the sakura. Paper-thin, they fall like confetti. A shower of pink blossom. They are gone.

ii.

Indigo stripes a sky of blown glass over the garden. Conversations skate across the glacial stasis. Picnickers raise glasses of sake, promises floating on the pellucid liquid. In the emerald hush, the pine tree spreads itself out like an enormous evergreen cushion; a bonsai version of the misty mountain. Beneath the textured clusters of pine needles, the branches are supported by bamboo stilts. The father says to his child, 'When your legs get heavy, I will carry you.'

Puffins

Because their painted-up faces, less parrot of the sea clown-like or harlequin than concert pianist or symphony conductors in Mondrian dresses and sensible shoes. Because their portly strangeness ageless inscrutability, kaffeeklatsches and teapots of sheer bluff, black cape and eye-shaped ghost white, face. Agitprop mimers with stubby wings; because a chick is called a *puffling*. You are unable to understand my fascination with these

dorky birds, comic at best; on signs here no puffin!

At which I giggle, every time (really it does not get old) (with me), at which you shake your head

four hundred wingbeats a minute! A puffin blur....
Because *beauty is always bizarre*

because puffins have such a thing as (as we call it) *a low-profile walk*, no huffin just puffin *passing through* or, in guarding the burrow, stiff and straight measuring steps, a parent waiting past curfew or a sentinel. On the Russian coast, *Toporok* or *small axe*, which leaves me with a sad dear feeling like watching a kid (you perhaps) pretending to be so tough. Even though this kid (me perhaps) had nothing to do with its naming, was not aware of any of this

whole other world. But of course it's all relative. to a smelt a puffin beak is an axe. Unlike other birds, puffins don't regurgitate. Their hinging beaks will carry many small fish crossways like I might hold a fistful of pencils in my mouth.

Note * "beauty is always bizarre:" Charles Baudelaire. *Baudelaire: Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, qtd. in *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, edited by Rosemary Lloyd. Cambridge UP, 2005. p. 134.

Anthropocene poetics part 1

My dog dies.

(Actually not my dog, but my friend's dog.)

I'm an unreliable narrator (already).

Maggie Nelson says that she hates fiction, or most fiction, or bad fiction:

fiction that purports to have no agenda,
but has already decided the structures anyway,
there's no way out,
the outcome decided,
delusions trapped inside no discourse.

i don't want to write bad fiction but –
I don't purport any truth,
any kind of truth-telling,
there are no cold hard facts here –
just disruptions of space-time-mattering.

i want to find a way to write,
through this blocked tongue as *our world of loss calls for radically reworked forms of attention*.

(i didn't write *that*.)

it's from a book called *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*.

we should all read it together sometime.

maybe in my garden, i just redid the back section with my mum last week.

everywhere we looked there were more plants to pot,
more weeds to pull out,
more stones to arrange, but-
see my love,
can't you see how i distracted I am?

can attention be reworked?

can words rebuild trust?

or cities cracked and broken from the remains of human debris?

"Remains of human debris."

That's that literary device where you say the same thing in two different ways.

It's overexplained,

exploited,

manipulative perhaps.

(Doesn't mean it's bad.)

Maybe catastrophising a little.

Maybe that's language?

Maybe's that's the trap?

Maybe my hands are big enough though? For all of this?

I can hold yours in them, or a stone, or the hundreds of lemons falling into my backyard.

FKA

Her name is Mud
last of her kind
an icon
AKA Red River Giant Softshell
Shanghai Softshell
Swinhoe's Softshell, Yangtze Giant
also known as Oscaria swinhoei
pig, soup, turtle, ghost

she lived in China and Vietnam
she no longer comes from anywhere
she was one of four, then two
then one of none, a symbol.

She is what cannot be
whittled to a point
she wants to be more
like the cosmos in which
she once swam

but wanting is a human concern
best left to the hungry.

She wishes she could be
something other a statistic
representative of what is coming
what no one yet mourns.

She needs nothing
that can be provided
she has been the largest of her kind
alive for 90 years, a starlet, and bound.

You're crying now
her paradise an empty pond
cathartic enough, blurring your eyes
to a crisis that needs more than tears.

For her, pain is over
the gate is open
her job done.

Her name
is the Sixth Mass Extinction
glaciers, forest, buildings, man.

the island rule(r)

for Okunoshima (Rabbit Island)

dusty trail stretches
forward and forward and
no amount of squinting
with hand-shading-eyes
can determine its length.

sun spotlights: a slumping fort
squatting stale and crumpled
in the distance. you sit exhausted
and knobble-boned
on flat rock, tailbone twingeing.

and like mirage they appear
as hasty miracle
in your line of sight: from ravine
of rustle-foliage a kangaroo muzzle and copy-
body twitch quizzically
jacked hind quarters
nudging forward with
step not hop.

the rabbit king you awe-whisper
eliciting a snarl-like grunt.

*((if you get on your knees
in the dirt will you be forgiven?))*

I'm sorry you say
holding up palm
~~dewy with sweat~~ *I didn't know*
anything else was here.

head cocked like loyal dog
with small ears flexed.

anyone, I meant
((anyone))

Note

The fossilised remains of the world's largest known rabbit, *Nuralagus rex*, were found on the small Mediterranean island of Minorca in 2011. The 'Minorcan King of the Rabbits' was six times the size of most rabbits today and lived three to five million years ago. As per 'the island rule,' small animals often grow larger when living on isolated islands without predators. Okunoshima is a small island in the Inland Sea of Japan – presently, hundreds of feral rabbits call this island home.

The inside of a cow

This is a place untouched by the clean face
of the moon. We are not so different, she and I.
Complex and contingent, we float between subject
and object. No longer just one, we are arrays of bodies,
landscapes for the species travelling with us.
Vibrant matter, we carry worlds within worlds,
our boundaries porous, the microscopic other
redefining our grammar. Our singular is plural.

It is dark. It's dense and industrious. This rumen
a metropolis for microbes – bacteria, protozoa
and fungi all cohabiting, a collective enterprise
fermenting the green of the fields, cracking
fibres into short chains. Fatty acids. Proteins.
It takes time and a return ticket. Rumination –
such a perfect word for considering the world.

The honeycomb of the reticulum.
The leaves of the omasum.
There's an organic theme
to life
down here in the dark.
Water is filtered away
and finally,
the abomasum.
Enzymes and acid. The final stage.
Energy. Gas. Milk.
Microbes sustain her, feed her,
that vast raft of inner life
the fuel keeping her metabolism alight.
Carbon dioxide. Methane. Shit.
The microbes give, then they take away.
Nothing is free.

Her blood is rich,
caseins clinked into chains.
Rushing through ever narrowing vessels,
they squeeze from blood to lumen,
tributaries gathering flow
until milk pools
in the pink lake of the udder.
Lumen, the light within,
clean face of her internal moon.
She is the sunlit grass
and the dark metropolis,
the individual and the populace.
My plural self is a desert island.
She is a whole ambling world.

venusaur

gorging on summer, clustered like cars, humming outside the power plant
 when we left the tunnel i swear it was like marmalade had been spilt
 across the valley, red ochre vibrating in the warmth, we passed
 a pasture bumper to bumper with them, chortling as they
 work, reaping ultraviolet victuals, each ray bent to-
 wards them in a ferric pull, sum total of a pure
 ecology telescoped into a flower, and dad
 reckons they chew up whole epochs
 of energy in the time it takes us

***** to change tires, but they pay *****
 ***** us no mind as we sputter *****
 ***** back to the road, lost *****
 ***** in a soft reverence *****
 ** ***** for those gentle *****
 ***** sun-feeders *****

 ** ***** *

The morning fog (A Golden Shovel after Kate Bush)

is sweetest at the Tropic of Capricorn, the
 colour of lemon chiffon cake, and just as light.
 It might begin with a ringing of hands, it might begin
 with a single step. It's capable of taking itself to
 the streets. Unblighted by African tulip trees' bleed,
 the palms look as if they're about to begin
 to take flight. Vehicles' steel appeals to
 the atmosphere. We, too, are aerial now. We needn't breathe
 momentarily. Where does it end, where does it begin,
 this enlightening thing unfurling its whorls. Even to
 rusty furrows it's inclined to speak.
 Subtleties emerge as if soaked in—what-d'you
 -call-it?—developer, but slower. Though we know
 we look before and after, and pine for what
 is not, we alight on the *I*
 of Horsfield's Bushlark widening to *We*, its love
 of day- and night-time melody and mimicry, and I ask you
 crave nothing save the song and wing-heeled better
 nature as brightness wheels around the mountain now.

Note 'we look before and after, and pine for what is not' is from Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'To a Skylark', 'you crave nothing save the song' is from George Meredith's 'The Lark Ascending'; in 'The morning fog (a Golden Shovel after Kate Bush)', the last words of each line are from the first verse of Kate Bush's song 'The Morning Fog'.

If you were here

The coming down of the Magela
after the first storms,
we chased that front of water all day.
It surged slowly,
calm in the surety of its fulfillment
trickling unevenly into dry spaces
filling hollows, spilling, collecting
pushing the debris of the Dry before it.
The hot sand gasped,
giggles of bubbles escaped
as the water soaked deeper.

Beetles dragged their sodden carapaces
onto the island havens of your legs
the swirling froth tickled your skin
you laughed and rolled in the rolling flood.
The swell of water
gouged the sand from under your hips
rolled you roughly along
dragging you underneath the paperbarks
the luscious wet warmth
tangle of sand, water and your hair
your grazed knees.

In the stone country
a taut pod explodes, kapok floats
king fisher dips into dark pool
the coconut smell of rock fig
Yamitj calls out from the escarpment
yams grow
the waterfall drops, stops, falls again
Black Walleroo leaps the gap.

Laughing
sucking mango juice
the perfume of pandanus fruit
the gurgling cackle of a Koel
pursued by her mate
golden-eyed frogs on lily leaves
flying foxes vibrate
then fold their silky wings.

A thousand whistle ducks lift and turn.
If you were here I'd make love to you.

bonsai

Frequently I pause at a regenerating patch of bushland seeded
 with surface soil from a not far distant forest and guess at the identity
 of sapling blue gums turpentine stringybarks coachwood
 angophoras acacias all less than a metre tall imagining the full grown trees
 that I will never see while nearby in his backyard Dave scissors
 leaves trains limbs to bonsai replicas of full grown trees imagined
 but will never be just as greatness may be thrust on men
 by circumstance the bonsai trees have smallness thrust upon them
 it's why they fascinate like dwarfs in royal courts but what disturbs
 about the would-be-giant *Ficus religiosa* rooted in its inch of moss and gravel
 and no larger than a weed is had it reached potential
 it may have had a Buddha resting in its shade from the shock
 of his enlightenment just as remarkable the stunted wind-swept
 tortured forms of bonsai pines their ascetic lives spent on the calm
 and sunny two square metre garden bench in Dave's backyard
 a creative space so strange I wonder did God feel much the same
 creating at his bench all living things but I dare not linger
 in this arboreal surgery for fear that bonsai love or madness might invade
 my mind so I retreat to the patch of regenerating bush
 relax breathe fresh air among the saplings freely stretching to the sun

instead of finding water

I divine juice from a yellow stone

fruit my forgings habitual without the silver

nitrate needed to mend my womb

I am ancestor

of dandelion

and microplastic

enough radiation to birth

more chemical soil

where we tumble

burp play alive

I suppose a life after mine

will still be a life though

to whom

will I describe the delicate sugar

of mangoes or

the exact way to strike
the fullest part of a watery fruit
to hear its age
I am a forgetful maker
leaving my coy futures
in the corner to spoil
I was going to make the bed
I was going to make myself
last

Seneca, 'Omnia tempus edax depascitur'
('Time eats everything up')

trans. Paul Magee

Time eats everything up—it snatches it all
from the root. Nothing's for long here.
Rivers lose heart. The beach is desert.
Exiled, the sea. Tallest mountains fall.
Why chatter? The giant sky's beauty
will burn to a cinder again. Suddenly
not as punishment but law everywhere
death insists. And away with worlds.

Late and Soon

Do we love one another enough

yet?

Last night I walked down to our supermarket
through a tunnel of gentle rain

and every person rushing by me was another world
of difficulty, and difference.

I did not stop them, did not put out a summoning hand
and mention

ice caps.

I allowed their streams of consciousness
to pass through me.

Why worry them

yet?

Soon enough is soon. If they are not worried

now

they will be worried

soon.

And if there is nothing to worry about
we are sweet

squatting on a mushroom
that won't go

boom.

A mushroom that goes boom

is an olden times behind-the-eyes

nightmare.

All this time

I have been pondering
the wrong storm.

Ha ha ha ha ha

ha ha.

Climate

It comes and goes, this cold drop

A sheet draped over panic, not delicate

Not even the wall of water in holiday snaps

Over magnificent falls will smother the burn

It's a drowning, of sorts, but much slower

A slow reveal of devastation

Saltwater rising, lapping at new school shoes

Ash scented sky landing on ribbons in freshly brushed hair

It pushes at my tongue, I take the sourness

Of forests aflame and translate for you

Lungs filled, voice like gravel

Brackish water stings, but not as much

As when I sweep damp tendrils from your smooth brow

Dam-like, withholding the truth of the day

So that you can skip to school with your backpack

Filled up with all I have promised you

Looking forward to the small cupcake in your lunchbox

Baked in preparation the night before

To sweeten the fall.

When the first rain comes

it is pathetic.

Thin, patchy the phlegm
of an old man, worn out
with coughing.
Unproductive.

Where was this two weeks ago?

Now, a burnt land
sops it up. Trickles it to the creek
with disdain. Even the lake is
flaccid, flagging, foul. Fire weary.

Rain – this pathetic latecomer, has the temerity to
crawl, into colorbond carcasses of homes, softening
asbestos walls splintered into myriad pieces of
'70s coastal modernism, to layer rust over

the remains of cars, which pissed out
their aluminium in a gust
of heat
when left alone, parked on
the street, in the garage, alongside the pile
of bricks which was the side of a house.

“Too late to leave” – has no meaning as I piece
together our steps on that day with the remains of fire’s
tracks. I should read its path, but I have no
Indigenous connection with country. I never learnt fire.

Much to my disgrace. And this rain will wash over
tracks, too soon a blush of green will obscure
the fear
until the wind picks up iron roof slabs, balanced
delicately, a child’s school project, folded steel cardboard

over a brick laundry of the house next door. The once
roof creaks and groans each opportunity it gets, taken
by a glance of breeze. These are:

ship’s noises in a disaster movie, just before she sinks
drowning the crew in a flood of water which
crashes through the scorched wound
which was the hull.

Frost Hollow

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

she was born in the crisis
and she cannot chose 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
this place
its tip touches
deep time.
this stand
stood here since-
each tree reaches-
back
to the land
here, whole,
cold, crowned
with snowgums.

26.01.2020

The bush, after burning,
smells sweet.
It's quiet – no birdsong.
Limbs lie entangled on the
ash-floor.

Sweetness. I don't know
how to mourn,
how to lay the trees to rest.
After burning,
only rocks and sea hold
their colour.

Ship sails were confused for
bird-wings –
revolutions of sails and bird-wings,
open to the sky.

Incense sifts
from hearths of red-hot
tree intestines, blessing
ankles, knuckles, hips.

The Succession of Forest Trees

*I am striding on over the fact that it is the earth
that holds our mark longest, that soil dug never returns
to primal coherence.*

Les Murray, 'Toward the Imminent Days'

April days become stretched,
and in the forsaken sports stadium at Pripayat
the forest, sewn by irradiated wind,
is deep-rooted now in the pitch, and faintly felted.
Dark buds of maple shake off cold
and new leaves force the last of the old from the oaks.
Rich lichens brocade the silent grandstand.

Drone footage shows wolf eyes flaring white
in the supermarket carpark at night,
brown bears sunning, unconcerned,
on crazed tennis courts,
poplar and aspen prising roof tiles,
rutting bison, necks arched for the roar,
and highways thatched by convulsing vines.

The rotting benches of the stadium
are soft with mossy boils, glistening.
In the city park a rust-blistered Ferris wheel
grates against its stillness.
Tailings of snow lie about, cadmium-white.
Our tilling is everywhere, incoherent,
untrivial, primal as appetite.

Note Pripayat, Ukraine, is in the Exclusion Zone abandoned after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

The Earth Will Outshine Us

after Elisabeth Cummings' 'Arkaroola' (2004)

She's not there now, nor are you, though
some scenes still lodge in your bones.
Wherever you look there's a story edging
the next. Her brush dazzles the text into

lines, into steady and broken passages
and notes of bellow and lore, heavy in
the slanting. You hear echoes of things
said, you see a mirage of heady motion,

as if it's the erosion of earth in time lapse,
the light exposing the rise of dryland teatrees
down by Wywhyana Creek, to the grass trees
up by Sillers Lookout. As if this is a lesson

in seeing all your years vibrate against one
another, the peaks and scatterings, even
the cracks awash in the pleasure of rampant
cadmium. Yet the earth will outshine us all.

And out from the flood plains of Lake Frome
(the white glare of its granules), a falcon
maps the valley and sweeps above the dots
of spinifex, your eyes primed for the swoop.

Resurface

Snow gums drawl like roll-your-owns,
they sag from lips: granite boulders
countless mouths of the buried.

A lean feral dog offends the bush.
Trucks rumble subsoil with their horizontal logs.
Road crew smoko and expletives crack like ice.

Their great stiff-bristle brooms stammer
at the gravel, and boiling beads of bitumen
skitter across the junction's surface.

Cold and wet, sun and moon stare down
the sky's rifle barrel, and the smoke
hangs where it was exhaled.

So cold a stubbie ex-esky is capable
of warming hands, while the smoke, like the town
forty k's south, gradually dissipates.

This is no place for pausing to consider.
The day is overtaking us, and back in town
the kids are being driven to their destinies.

A wombat ambles across the line-marker's dream.
The road dozes right on through us.
The trucks never stop bringing in supplies.

Long camel necks

Llamas graze calm in a flat green space
deep within the steepest peaks of Machu Picchu.
All the tourists aim phones and cameras

including me. The llamas don't seem oppressed
by the weight of history, looming tonnes
of ancient grey-brown stones.

"The llamas are here to make the tourists
happy," our guide tells us when I ask.
They do! All the tourists are grinning

including me. "And cut the grass?"
He shrugs. "Not so much."
But look at the llamas!

Long camel necks, tousled dreadlocks,
lush long-lashed eyes. We focus,
turn our backs on the rocks above.

Black-throated Finch

You have new notifications your connection has been reset please pay on time to avoid incurring an appointment with your therapist need to get in touch press crisis or if you prefer experience the virtual lifestyle at our integrated platform page does not exist your call is important to us black-throated finch while you're waiting on a scale from economic downturn to commercial application how many times a week do you eat microplastics want your doomsday claims deposited instantly into your account simply connect your overall wellbeing directly to unverified drone footage scientists have discovered a link between state sanctioned fake news supplements and found by an early morning jogger network errors don't let an issue you feel strongly about affect how likely you are to recommend mass migration to your family and friends do you want to tag black-throated finch democracy has recently updated their story if you need to adjust your inbox attention span algorithm turn it off and then back on again your data will be kept deepfake speaks out about sustainable beach retreat and today issued a statement denouncing the rise of swipe right groups in the autocorrect parliament thank you for holding black-throated finch sign the petition to ban screen time carcinogens left behind on irreversible timelines top ten symptoms you may have seasonal trade war fatigue official trailer will surrender to police but denies that love scene had any impact on the decision to open a new window on my morning routine don't miss the latest embedded biometric to problem-solve your eventualities diet be right back black-throated finch change the way you integrate important face recognition hacks the minister for personality disorder was today found guilty of talking points and sentenced to wait thirty seconds before a new version is available to download sorry we missed you black-throated finch the strategy facilitator blamed regulation failure on a series of tweets that had been sent from a device that has never been connected to the electromagnetic agenda in the next fifty years artificial intelligence may overwhelm our capacity to report as inappropriate what these nineties heartthrobs look like now enter your promotional code to unlock your identity income assessment too long didn't read black-throated finch media personality resigns over self service thoughts and prayers restart your inner turmoil to install important click bait updates sickening details have been revealed about how to decorate according to your star sign have you left it too late to maximise the mistakes we're all making when it comes to gut bacteria members get automatic access to the glitch mute block delete black-throated finch.

The A to Z of all breakages

Accordions break, announcing the death of all *flonflons*. Bubbles break or burst. Condoms break or tear. Days break. Effigies break. Figures break down. Guns break, though only when made out of plastic. Hitmen breakdance on beds of hoses. Images and their reflections break apart. Jukeboxes break down. Kinder Surprises break or smash. Lace breaks or frays. Marriages break up. Negotiations break off. Omens break army recruits in. People break down, break off, break up; sometimes they have a breakthrough. Quills break. Records break. Spells break and stories break off. Trust breaks—even when irrevocable. Umbrellas break. Viruses break out into deadly *nouvelles vagues*. Words break, especially with the sound off. Xylophones break as surely as do band aids, garters and suspenders. Y-fronts occasionally break wind and that's when you think a man has been killed—but Man is ok, and that's the key thing, the A to Z of all breakages.

Sleep

The fabric of sleep
descends like a drunk paw,
turns off our lights,
offers mouth-to-mouth oblivion.

For a while we can pretend we're like stars-
that we don't reside here anymore,
between impossible grindstones
and the birth-death quandary;

We drift weightless as falling leaves,
over silver-scaled lakes;
sprout fins and tresses and
transform to moon-mirrors

until consciousness
drops its arsenal,

hauls us to sharp wake
like a premature delivery-

child's cry,
wild cat's yawl,
angry door slam,
thought's hook,

or the midnight
texting
of a faraway drunk

and

we are re-exposed under
the ticking clock
of the latest crisis

as an

endangered species,

like stars,
small blossoms
and rest.

Miroslav Holub or 7496

Miroslav
I'm reading your poems
peering at them through the frosted pane
of translation
trying to hear your voice
muffled by static of another language.

I need to know more about who you were
the world that made you
the timbre and cadence of your Czech tongue
the syntax of Bohemian tales
that haunted your dreams
Slavonic rhythms
buried in your sombre songs.

More than meagre facts—
your 1923 birth-year
Plzeň your birthplace
metropolis of beer and cars
that in 1938
woke to find the Third Reich
a stone's throw
from its walls

your death
thirty years after the Prague Spring
your renown
as pathologist, immunologist
and poet.

Your poems map the pathology
of the century
its pity and horror
and boost
the immune systems of our souls.

A minor planet
7496—an outer main-belt asteroid—
is named Miroslav Holub
in your honour.

Time traveller
7496 is now daily witness
to our planet's pathogens

its miracles
of resistance.

Bad sky at night

Leave your beating lame words into limping verse.
Look up! Westwards there's a mess of evil tidings.

A threat of storm rages ragged from the south
into clear sky, shining dead ahead, above the trees;
while nearer, pale skeins catch the light, sail on,
as though no stark catastrophe is near at hand.

Anti-aircraft pom-poms are fading to the right: like
a lone plane broke away for the last patch of sky,
its flimsy wingtips wagging semaphore as it ran,
silhouetted, through the gauntlet into receding light.

The vanishing tint of gold, or maybe apricot, has leached
from the radiance; all that's left is a pewter undertone
and streaks, like you've dragged a brush of bluish-grey
dry across wet silver-white, or the other way around.

It's the sort of scene they print on science fiction,
evoking perilous lands a long way from our star –

that's what it does to me, looking through cold glass,
as empty as if I finally had landed, but on the wrong world:
shipwrecked on a planet, where black rollers break forlorn
and I stand one out like a violin against the crash of brass.

Saint-Exupéry flew reconnaissance just above the reach
of German guns, above Arras, dreamy for lack of oxygen,
almost in love with the shells that bloomed about his plane,
and lived, to fly across to near Marseille, and disappear.

That would have been a night like this – knotting the noose
around the neck of day, too tight to make a break for light.

On First Viewing 2001: A Space Odyssey

Unlike my siblings and cousins
who stand outside a Melbourne cinema
in May 1968 complaining about confusion,
I am silent.

The psychedelic racing, sliding, tilting
kaleidoscopic shafts of light, blossoming,
melding galaxies, auroras, filaments, globules,
many-coloured landscapes, frozen
screams and blinking eyes
all makes sense.

The stargate journey ending in a hotel suite
of French architecture and austere lighting,
the alien zoo-laboratory where Dave Bowman
puzzles perspective from age to advancing age
as he settles into solitary luxury
all makes sense.

The fourth appearance of the monolith, a dying
Bowman stretching out his hand towards it,
the birth of the Starchild, its enigmatic gaze
as it floats vast above our Earth
all makes sense.

I know nothing of Michelangelo's *Adam and God*,
of Homer's *Odyssey*, and this doesn't matter.
The film opens me to origins, purpose, mystery,
a gaping monolith teeming with stars,
a silence I can plunge into,
no stranger now.

A First Approximation

To learn something of the world, a scientist
glued hog's hairs to an ant and stretched its stride
and on another ant, humanely shortened its legs,
and the first ran long and could not find the nest
and the second, short, and gave theirs up too soon.
It seems that ants are always counting steps, measuring
progress, but the same cannot be said for horses, which
when reduced in height, quickly languish, and
when increased, totter, but do not find their way home.
So the lesson, such as it is, must be confined to ants,
but that's nothing to what the ants learnt of themselves,
never knowing if they would burn out their hearts
in travelling beyond the world they knew, or whether they
would fall short of every challenge, fail their purpose
centimetres short of victory. Find what you wish of
metaphors for humanity in this, the lesson is narrow,
as most lessons are. Whatever we are counting, whatever
steps, whatever tape curling in our heads, we will not
know it, it will take some entity, some assistant God, poised
with tweezers or a pot of glue, to show us how we count.

Ominous Dawn

Lebanese Civil War circa summer of 1976

Sheltered
in a chrysalis
my tender self of six
could not fathom what was to come.

An ominous dawn shows its face.
In its shadow, my mother's dark brown eyes:
they hold an anguish unknowable to me.

Havoc grips the streets; I clutch my puppy.

We flee to a biblical Aramean land
as ancient as a man once nailed to a cross,
as ancient as all those slaughtered
to avenge or re-crucify him.

For those who remain behind
night summons monsters and demons.
Crescents and crosses clash—
victory is crowned with a parade
of severed tongues and ears.

A new black dawn mantles its sunken prey.
Torn asunder, I emerge—
a butterfly in a burnt forest.

The Physics of Self

Quantum entanglement posits
That two or more objects may
Exist in reference to one another,
Regardless of space & time.
my doctor calls it complex post-traumatic stress disorder
says disassociation instead of liberation
says *flashback* instead of *memory*
says *then* instead of now, here, *always*
Every me is tired.
/
“I don’t want to do this Khalto”
“Can you believe this girl?”
you are here,
Surrounded by Possibilities.
And baby girl
a Possibility isn’t something you, having had, throw away.
It’s a fruit, bite in, swallow the flesh and the rind, the complete bittersweet experience.
Why do you wear your sorrow like a chain?
dragging
always stopping just before the finish line...”
/
that wave function duality
Schrödinger’s health,
unseen, unacknowledged.
Ubiquitous repression of worldly cruelties
You turn to a friend and say:
fam, I’ve got a joke for you
yeah?
when do you know a black woman is struggling?
She Laughs
at her funeral of course
There are eulogies encoded into your DNA,
trauma has no time limit and recovery is a myth.
/

Wellness maybe choice
but access is a myth.
the punishment must fit the crime,
the audacity of demanding life.
After all,
human rights are a lie
applying to those we see human
Never Forget
health care systems are war zones too.
/
Once a psychologist told me that I was trapped in a cage of my own memories.
To leave the past in the past and focus on the here and now.
Some wars have no borders, they obey no time zones
Now, here, *Always*.
Every me is fighting.

Aishah Ali

My name is:

Rolled out of tongues cigarette-tight,
or cradled uncomfortably,
rocked back and forth,
like it is crying
child,
like it is inconvenient to carry,

My name is:

baptised in the bellies of those who are brave
enough
to say it
loudly.

My name is:

Meals in imperialisms mouth
a lunchbox

compartments of language, culture they taste and tattoo
when convenient,

My name is:

Questions/

Curiosity/

Caution/

My name is:

two strangers
meeting like magnets
collapsing
into
each
other
like airplane seatbelt,
how the consonants 'click'

My name is:

ice-cream
In the mouths of the people I love,
soft and full,
a dance between diaphragms,
melting of mouth,

My name is:

dripping
melody.

My name is:

more demand than daughter
under the roof of my
mother's mouth

Aishah

leaves her tongue

as if it is anchor,

as if it is hook to this household,

as if I am paperweight

my name is:

mail in letterbox,
but,
do not return to sender,
I am more unfamiliar with these letters than you

are

Don't Ask

my popo says don't ask popo says
 a man she thought was Jesus told her the meaning of life
 at the bus stop shelter wall busted
 nubby bits of glass all around
 he punch-marked her ticket and said
 god surely loves you too

what did he mean popo? she said, don't you know by now baby
 she said, your sort – my sort our sort
 we don't ask they don't tell
 you just know and he told me
 god surely loves me too

what he meant was what she thought he meant was
 all the no good men the no good luck
 the nobody ever done right by her life
 the mis-car-bortion she never told-a-bout
 but he knew the poor baby
 eyes all open fresh bloom
 she was married at sixteen it was the war
 they sent the girls little girls little women
 to homes in town away away
 kept away from the jungle fighters
 the ones left behind breast legs wide open
 don't ask and they won't tell
 she was sent away
 she said, last lucky thing to ever happen to her

from between her legs spilling fresh blooms
 what to do with all the blooms
 do she do with all these red red blooms
 don't ask they won't tell
 stanch the children stanch all the children
 a girl a girl a girl a boy a girl
 a pig a horse a donkey a prince an ox

my mama says don't ask mama says
 a man she thought was Jesus told her the meaning of life
 at the bus stop shelter walls busted
 twisted metal all around
 he scanned the barcode on her ticket and said
 god surely loves you too

what did he mean mama? she said, don't you know by now baby
 she said, your sort – my sort our sort
 we don't ask they don't tell
 we just get on with it and he told me
 god surely loves me too

us chew the table scraps cause our jaws tougher kind
 us don't go past high school kind
 us send money to send our brothers to college kind
 did you know god was an architect?
 mama wanted to be an architect too
 make forests – skyscrapers but not women's bodies'
 breast legs wide open designed for what?
 we don't ask they don't tell
 our sort gets on with it and
 god surely loves us too

i became the kind of architect mama said to be
 i say – i don't ask – i say when is it my turn?
 they say oooooooh
 so you're god's gift to the industry now
 but all i was asking for was what
 the boy the boy the boy the boy already had

don't ask mama says don't ask popo says
 they're poaching eggs in the lunch-room
 turning tea into roses
 they say don't get too big for your britches now
 they say you get called up when they want you now
 they say don't you know by now baby
 we don't ask they don't tell
 now go back to the end of the line

i ask when is it our turn?
 i ask how do we get a turn?
 i ask why girl girl girl boy oxen?
 i ask how to stop this red bloom spreading?
 i ask how do i know when god loves me too?
 i ask how do i know god surely loves us too?

Pālangi Boy

God's gifts are everywhere,
I see them all in a White boy.

Matt is the son of a pastor,
and I know teachers of God are born
to pass the message of His son,
who cleansed us with flesh and blood.

Jesus Christ looks just like Matt
in all the Bibles I have ever seen.
Even in the lea fakatonga translations,
all blond-headed and blue-eyed.

I know God has made Matt to save me
from the muck and mire of being Tongan,
from the foul and filth of Mt Druitt,
just like his ancestors.

Human

I was in grade three.
I sat beside a pale boy with eyes coloured like all the oceans he was yet to cross
I sneezed.
With shock that electrocuted every assumption swimming through his 9-year-old body,
He gasped.
"I didn't know Africans sneezed."
I laughed.
He laughed too.
It was at that moment he realised I was like him.
Human.

Ridley College, O-Week, 1992

roped to a tree / tinned spaghetti / s p l a t t e r e d / on your face

the trough is full / rancid bits of food / in grey-beige water
you are hoisted / baptised

oat
fl ing
/
s ing
ink

you purse eyelids / compress lips / pray nothing enters

an ox tongue / is slithered / on your forehead / cheeks / mouth

they 'ask' / to borrow [redacted] / you submit
to make friends / or no enemies

at the end / you must guzzle / alcohol
rip / your

n /
a /
m /
e /

off your chest

Chinese Silence No. 107

after Timothy Yu, 'Chinese Silence No. 10'

after Billy Collins, 'In the Room of a Thousand Miles'

I hate writing about what I'm imagining.
I happen to be waiting in a sitting room
full of anthologies of Chinese poetry
and no English translator.
So I will imagine the Chinese juniper trees
and their small, nervous leaves.
I will pour myself
a cup of Coca-Cola
or Coke Zero
and imagine that it is oolong tea.

My imaginary readers hand these poems back to me
with real groans.
They want to drill a real hole
in my imagination.
They suggest I imagine some
inscrutable Eastern mysticism
or do a Google search
for "hot Chinese girls".
I ignore them.
Instead I return
to my vinyl albums.
I imagine the future of the Chinese,
Kevin Rudd calling them ratfuckers, their polluted environment.
I visualize a phoenix rising from the grease-splattered kitchens of Chinatown in Melbourne,
gliding over the Chinese Museum, spitting on Little Bourke Street.
And then—don't tell the Chinese—
I smile into my Diet Coke
and in the manner of the Chinese masses
imagine myself spitting profusely
into a spittoon
a river of saliva resembling
the clouds on the cover
of John Lennon's *Imagine*.

raised on:

1. *D-dar nadifa* ⁽¹⁾

my parents wanted *d-dar nadifa*
they'd fight over it

dad would blame mum for not having it
but his study was always a mess

it was their way
of telling each other

they felt
out of place

that one or the other
were responsible for this

Mum's nudging 90 now
alone in Canterbury

a perfectly clean unit

2. *Aljotta* ⁽²⁾

the time for fasting & preparation
reflection & self-examination
is when Aljotta is most popular
in Malta morsels of fish
in stock rice & tomato
with heads of garlic after which it's named

lent is for going without
though that's not what this soup is about
Hippocrates preached that garlic was good
& the pious Maltese knew that we should
fast for forty days on Aljotta
then feast on fried rabbit (with garlic) at Easter

3. *Il Baħar* ⁽³⁾

your death leaves mouths of angry
foaming whitecaps

Daqqa imbaqbaq
Bir-rghawa f'ħalqek ⁽⁴⁾

the storm lingers a decade
leaves a mirror in its wake

slick
Tranquill bhaz zejt ⁽⁵⁾

our chats and books
on Sundays

helped me survive oceanic swells
Southern Ocean Tasman & Bass Strait

you and me in the white-matter sea
two hobbled healers

bet you still miss the Sliema front
where you were sure to meet old mates

4. *Ruhi* ⁽⁶⁾

every time I left home unaccompanied
& again when I got back

& every time I now visit & again leave
my mother will kiss my cheek & say “*Ruhi*”

which could mean:

my child
my love
my soul
my dreams
my followers
my breath
the air I displace
everything I leave behind

I do know what she means

5. *Prayers to St Christopher to help me find the words*

nistiq ngħidlek kemm inħobbok
Imma m’ghandix il-kliem fil-lingua tiegħek
u lanquss naf ngħidha bil-Malti ⁽⁷⁾

Notes & translations

1. dar-nadifa: (Maltese) a clean house, a well-maintained house, one fit for decent people
2. aljotta: Maltese garlic soup (with fish)
3. il Bahar: the sea. Written in response to my father’s poem by the same name. Quotes in Maltese are from Gaetan Briffa’s unpublished poem.
4. Daqqa imbaqbaq / Bir-rghawa f’halqek: sometimes angry / foaming at the mouth
5. Tranquill bhaz zejz: as still as oil
6. ruhi: multiple meanings which are listed in the poem
7. nistiq ngħidlek kemm inħobbok / Imma m’ghandix il-kliem fil-lingua tiegħek / u lanquss naf ngħidha bil-Malti. :I’d like to tell you how much I love you, but I don’t know the words in your language and I can’t find the words in Maltese.

You wish Jakarta runs in your vein like it does in mine

You wish Jakarta runs in your vein like it does in mine. Its stroke-inducing warmth
high-voltage love, lovers tasting each other’s curse under the

coal-powered, state-owned mistletoe? Oh you might be a person on your
own until you meet Jakarta to whom this servitude is overdue. A ten-century

old kid approaches you wearing half-skirt, half-pants. A rehearsed shame,
believable gaunt, asking for a plate of anything that either prolongs life

or has MSG on it. Everybody knows they always mean the same thing
so long as you blow prayer into it: *bismillah*. By the name of

God. Oh this specific God—*bismillah*. Say it only if you are the majority
or at least pretend to claim this version of God, this glucose-filled Javanese

blood. I know, I know. They have a name for it: muscle memory. I ask Jakarta
if she has a middle space that isn’t class, isn’t bracket of wage, a note between

major-minor, a compound of non-belongings, soul version of Lost and Found?
She has none of it but I am welcomed to stay in the crook of her cleavage down

there, *down there*, untenured, but a place nonetheless.

Armpit

You knew that you loved her when you noticed
 the smell of her sweat gone from the sheets
 that garlicky saltysweet frying-onions scent of home
 peeling back layers of memory as though fresh
 from the wet season when the monsoon rode in
 on booming troughs from the Indian ocean
 when it would smell like wild passionfruit

You remembered the parched summer nights
 when her armpits smelled like seaweed
 and the damp winter nights when
 fear and snow and darkness rushed in, assailant
 to the cold that allowed her so little sweat
 she could almost erase it completely with pomegranate roll-on

Still, you burrowed into the pit of her arm like a louse
 scurried into the cavern beneath her shoulder where the fuzz grew
 a few soft, fine hairs, bursting like broken fibres
 holding fast to your love like roots

Onkaparinga

Driving through Onkaparinga on an autumn afternoon
 I remember the first time I saw this word:
 On ka par in ga—the loveliness of it—
 printed neatly in my school project
 on Australian wool production...
*I am a girl from an island of steamy sunshine where no one
 has ever needed to wear wool*
 But I copy down these woollen facts:
Sheep are sheared once a year
Wool is scoured in baths containing water, soap, and soda ash
Carding removes residual dirt and other matter left in the fibres
 Our dining table is strewn with snips of coloured yarn,
 pictures of merinos in dusty paddocks
 and samples of fuzzy fabric from Onkaparinga
*I am a girl from a land of coconut trees and rice fields
 where sheep are non-existent*
 But I learn to savour these cosy words:
*shearing, grading, scouring, carding, spinning, weaving,
 worsted, twill, bobbin, fleece, spun yarn, jumbuck...*
 They fold around my new heart—warm and snug
 as a plaid rug (pale blue and pink) woven in Onkaparinga.
 Today I discover that Onkaparinga
 derives from the Kurna word,
Ngangkiparinga (The Women's River)
 I wish that I had known this—over four
 decades ago when all that mattered was the fact
 that this country rode to prosperity
 on the sheep's back and Onkaparinga
 was the place of looms and blankets
 and my project had to be perfect because
 I was not...
 I wish I had known that my love for Onkaparinga
 (those splendid syllables)
 was really a love for *Ngangkiparinga...*
 I wish that I had known this
 because wool still prickles my tropical skin
 but I am a woman who loves rivers...

Abduction

She is cooking walleye for supper
intent on making fish familiar to my birthland,
minute by minute she becomes my other mother
and I become the baby, learning without choice.
She calls me, 'the daughter I wanted to have'.
I shape my words to fit her vowels, rehearse the lines
to walk the new planet of strange gestures
that I'm told mean love.

Her backyard isn't concrete holding a Hill's hoist
of damp sheets, it is pine trees, a hammock, a pier
leading to a lake called Gull, and a pontoon.
I sit on an iron-sleeper at the edge of the pier
look out to the stretch of ever-blue
imagine toddling towards the horizon
each new step becomes her accent
until our voices are married.

Across Gull Lake I hear
the sound of the solitary loon's
haunting call
'Come to me, come to me...'
my heart flies back to Melbourne
'Come to me, come to me...'
I am running, running as fast as my little legs
will take me, back to the brick house
with the concrete yard,
safe for me to play
skippy and knuckle-bones.

Culinary Interpretations

there is rage, passion,
misery, misogyny,
abuse, misery,
unbalanced diet
in gloomy landscape
heather
the moors

warm wine and gingerbread, heating spices, cake,
cold wine, sugar candy, more wine, crusts, remnants of breakfast, goose bread
sits on the table for an hour, milk, water and gruel, tea, more crust, sugar and milk
leads to poor gut health
too little serotonin production

Joseph ate well
toasted oat cake and a
quart of ale.
he survived the story.

Heathcliff was a lost Chinese princeling
good with money
took over two properties

he looked like an angry Keanu Reeves
if only Nelly was more experimental with her cooking
And if only the English liked rice as much as they did tea
[complex carbohydrates regulate your moods]

tragedy could have been avoided had the promise
of apples been fulfilled.

Phlegm: a love poem

I'm reading Maggie Nelson
occasionally stopping to cough up phlegm
in some indeterminate post-fever stage of the flu

she's living on a canal with a junkie boyfriend
or that's how I read it

the poems might as well be called 'no good will come of it'
raging despair oozes out of them
toxic as the canal's stinking sludge
or my almost fluorescent yellow-green phlegm

I hack
'Spit,' says my mind
I spit out on the tissue
'Good girl,' I say out loud

I learnt this

my mother, not big on emotion or touch,
excelled at sickbed ritual

earlier tonight I was telling my girlfriend
(scavenger of sleep, getting what she can between my bouts)
how it calmed me as a child, calms me now

the bucket by the bed in case you were sick
the towel laid cross-wise on the bed underneath you
in case you didn't quite get to the bucket
its strange comforting roughness
the smell of disinfectant
when the bucket came back fresh

then I instructed her in percussive therapy
another thing I learnt from my mother
it breaks up the phlegm

she pounded me on the back as I lay angled off the sofa
head resting on my forearms on the ground
up/down from the waist to the top of the shoulder blades

then helped me back onto the sofa
where I lay sweating
while she looked on with patient palpable concern

I notice we get on better when I'm sick
she less defensive and kinder
I more vulnerable, less autocratic

at night a Buteyko technique I found on the internet
eases the coughing
to begin, you take a breath
and hold it 'till discomfort'
the aim is to create *air hunger*

lately I'm learning to tolerate
the right kinds of discomfort
to honour the hungers my mother discounted

Maggie tells her boyfriend
it's not the content / I'm in love with, it's the form

how can you separate
a slender torso, small breasts, their exuberant nipples
a clitoris that is a chameleon to the tongue
now rampant, now indiscernible
somehow melded back into bone
from the love, the rightness
the great goodwill

her habits with time which are mine with money
no planning
then blaming the shortfall
on some unexpected but perfectly foreseeable circumstance

her face turned to me on the sofa
its energy and joy
dark circles under her eyes
because I've been keeping her up at night
coughing

what's your bodypolitik?

After Rae White

new msg: what's ur bodypolitik
and is it a margin ?
i kno a fair bit about liminality n the post-internet condition
having read foucault & foster wallace
(ur f*gness//tr*nsness a desirable thing
according to late corporate capitalism) //

new msg: what's your bodypolitik
and does it weave between the sheets
a defiant thing equivocating
rabbit in hiding
from the audience of the hat ?
[i read something about being too laden with language
to fashion signs with new signifieds
when you are the signifier] //

new msg: what is your "bodypolitik"
does it dance
and will it dance for me ?
are the veins of it strung out
in threshold space
between definitional inexactitude and pithy tweets ?

is ur politik
an ampersand
(if ure waging war w the full force of your trauma) ? //

new msg: are you that boy-girl
scowling from beneath world-weary eyelids
an eviscerated carcass
rotting meat for gulls
clinging death-like
to the mantle of your
membrane ? //

new msg: if you give up the gig of evasion
denigration throw-me-under-the-bus
contortion of my feminism
we can be friends

or "neuro-atypical enby b*tch"
perhaps you'd like to articulate
discombobulate
gimme your dworkian butlerian
kristevan view of determinism in 1000
words or less
or, let me put it this way: r u too mxg*ndered
to take ur torch to the bureaucratic capital ?

@McDonalds would like to make a complaint about the 'gender-neutral' drive thru guy who
was like obviously just a v confused man??

new msg: is this shoneys?

new msg: heya! was just wondering...
(for research purposes only)

what's ur

One hundred years at the marriage table

I

each night a turn of the key
a pair of best china plates beef with onions
golden syrup spooned thick from the tin

mechanics mastication gas light

each morning dressed and salted
the bright body of the creek bed leached

dead empty

II

quiet light machine whirr
something unrecognisable in a bowl
the white tomb of the kitchen cold

dinner alone in separate rooms

salted caramel fennel heads intentions
each night composting

test pattern fixed

Midnight Lover

You shouldn't set foot in my home
at midnight, Handsome man!
My nightwear is dishevelled,
as are my bedclothes, and lust.
Everything is rumpled.

You want to know?

Come in the afternoon – if you must come.
We'll have coffee together and talk, and laugh;
I'll water the plants in the veranda, with your spoon
you'll touch
the heart of the mug;
the clinks will stir my soul.

My husband will appear
to ask "Do you need more sugar?"

Saying "No thanks," to him, you can tell
the coffee-mug
all your untold stories:
with every sip you take.

When you leave
there will be a hailstorm somewhere
in this town.
I will read the coffee grounds you've left behind
furtively
so that no one knows
We could spend all our coming afternoons

this way, couldn't we?
If you bang on my door at midnight
I swear by the Lord
We will become a story ourselves
of a room of lust!

Burn me,
But don't set my marriage
on fire, darling!

A Clean House

Cleaning up dog vomit, I wonder
if I really am a dog lover.
A lover of anything. The vomit
an improbable brown only found in hand knits or
in the kingdom of fungi.
It's grounding.

The sleeves of my robe retentively rolled,
I ask how Shoukei Matsumoto,
or the other monks in Kyoto,
would approach this task.

*The earthly dirt
that accumulates in the soul, poisons your mind,
manifests as a dirty room.
Wipe your floor and see
when you polish the floor you shine
your heart and mind.*

Cleaning up vomit reminds me of marriage (mine)
and suicide. Anyone
who'll tell you what's going on
in someone else's marriage is idle, and probably lying.
It reminds me of the time in my marriage
when I had asked,
please,
no new puppy

I was your first violin, and you mine, soaring
above the corps.
But what goes up....
The solo dissolves into the mass.

It reminds me of suicide
because that has its domestic aspect too.
Easy to dismiss,
perhaps,
when you're not the one on your knees,
who still has to live in that town,
ask for the bond.

The body, toxic
spasming
ejecta.

Something reptilian
knowing only
to void.

In Jissoin, there is a special word for the floor
polished to a lustre enough to mirror the surrounding leaves –
yuka momiji (autumn leaf floor),
yuka midori (green floor).

Eight hundred years of polishing,
cotton socks,
monks on their knees.
We don't polish the floor because of dirt.

Like an old time detective, scenting
Prunus amara in the air, announcing –
“Cyanide”, I smelt the bitterness.
“Someone had to clean up.”
Thought how love can turn,
not to less love, but disgust.

Apokryphon

Midnight dream. The bed swims below a roof awash
with the rid remains of hags and queasy clocks.

On the stead a pair of hungover jocks. The guests gather
all over again. The wedding canopy's lid

is quilted with cartoons in black pen, pastels, and prints
of exotic family trees. Invitees lavishly grin, some of them weep.

A leering urchin passes, waltzing with a broom. Curtains
part, discreet. Soon the speeches will start, the blackening sky

and canopy refill, umbrellas are crisply arranged.
The marriage of pride and gloom. All manner of vows shall be

exchanged, while the uninvited clutter about in a forbidden room.
No tickets please. On the lawn, a slightly familiar singing

among contorted trees, a plinkle of glasses and a clunk of plates.
Eyes crawl everywhere, looking for links. Sex and seduction

colonize the air, it's a cocktail turn: he's itching for some
fingerfood, she scans for drinks. Wait, is that the celebrant

pushing the gates, wearing her tinny sprinkle of professional joy?
Her golden tresses, the way she flings them, gorgeously. Oh boy!

(Among the rhododendrons, behind the drive, a churl wrestles
with a virgin's brief, watches her arrive. Maybe now

the reception can begin.) But the celebrant isn't: she's merely
another guest; rumours fly. The sated couple from the bushes

remingle at the rotunda, offer each other the rosy eye.
On the balcony a tipsy-curvy secretary strips. The midnight dreamer,

disabused, notes how it really is clothes that naketh the woman.
She vanishes behind a vase. Everybody sips.

I lie Down

At night I lie down
and dream of love,
wrapped tight
in the muscled arms of men.

On crowded railway platforms
men with olive skin
smile at me with green eyes.

In low-lit back streets
men in linen suits
pass me messages,
written on café napkins,
stained with red wine
or is it blood?

A man with hair alive
like electric snakes
passes close to me,
touches my elbow, then
stands in a doorway waiting,
his breath on my neck.

Men stamped with tattoos
of skulls and knives
whisper in my ear words
that can never be understood.

Love is a perilous country.
Innuendo lurks everywhere.

I still remember the orange sunlight
scorched in strips across white sheets
and your limbs arranged

an impassable mountain range,
the humid air carrying promises
of kisses more articulate than words

Each night I lie down expecting.

Law-Woman

She came from dust, our Law-woman.
 From desert heat and endless plain, she was made from smoke and rain.
 She came from Dreaming and held our Law.
 She did her business at night where Dreaming is living.
 Speaking with Spirit-people, she moved – spirit-shaped and formed.
 Kept dead-men things in her Magic bag, that no one but her looked upon.
 – Things sacred.
 – Things secret.
 Law-woman kept our Law safe.
 Law-woman kept herself clean – no lie dressed her tongue.
 When her waters broke, her child was washed in dust and made clean.
 Law-woman was quiet, she didn't scream when he was born.
 Law-woman was quiet when Police took her son.
 She didn't call up war.
 She didn't sing-up her Brother, Storm
 Her feet stayed still. She didn't dance-up her sister, Ghost-wind.
 Instead, Law-woman sang her own death.
 And Death came.
 Law-woman's son arrived before she returned to Dreaming.
 "Got some thing for me, Mum?"
 Law-woman's eyes smiled her answer in tear.
 Her smile turned still.
 Law-woman!
 Law-woman!

Poet's Note My Nan was a keeper of our Law. She was solid, and did never speak out of turn. She did not speak about the Law in jest, or threat. She held it safe to herself and for us. She was a good Law-woman. When her time came to pass into the Forever, she didn't trust any that the Law would be protected as she had protected it, for her traditional culture had ceased being practised. Rather than risk any corruption or violation of the Law at the time of her passing, my Nan took with her the secrets and the sacred back to the Dreaming.

and then

in the deep moisture of a subtropical night in August / we both know / it is
 time for our bodies to meet / as we clean our teeth / I rehearse my breathless fear /
 that you will be weak / that your skin will be clammy / that you won't reach me / yours
 is a body I can't read / it is closed and enclosed / in presupposition / in warnings / in
 social quarantine / I fear / that the story of this night will be / that I love you but
 lovemaking is merely endurable / yet I can't keep my hands off you / as we slide into
 sheets and the creek pulls darkness over its sleek / uninhibited progress and you touch
 me like / reaching the sun on the other side / of the earth you are all right there / surging
 to the surface of your thin limbs / you kiss like wild ginger / pushing itself against the
 moon / your touch is like / depth charges in / open ocean / a soundless / booming /
 over and over / it is still felt / in my depths / right now / years later / where I try to trace
 the imprint of us / in a language / tainted by horror of sickness / tainted by saviours
 with other agendas / than the pure thundering desire / that leaps over my tact as I
 forget / to love you tender but press / your light frame with my full weight / as I consume
 your sweat / your salt and vinegar exudings / and your sweet tenacious breath / I /
 climb toward / you / hand over hand / wrapping your DNA around my wrist / making
 my way along your genetic chains / seeking out a language that is worthy / of touching
 your body / when all our words have been spent / on the ways that you are incomplete
 / when it tells me you are ailing / emaciated / hunched / infected / and my pleasure
 says: English, you're drunk! Go Home! / and all my nerves and organs rise in fury to
 inscribe / this passion upon its absence / here where our bodies meet as equals / here
 where you pull away gasping for air / where infirmity and eros have the same / oceanic
 eyes / where language leaves us to this / slow stroking of white curtains / over our
 bodies / at dawn

Carla

Once, when I was a kid, I told my parents I wanted to cut my hair
Cut off the long blond hair tied in braid
Keep it short
People will think you're a boy.
You look nice with long hair.
You don't want short hair.
They've always been so sure
as long as I remember
they've been scared

One time, we went for a walk in a forest
I wandered off, got really lost. I thought they'd be so upset with me
Pink skirt torn, flower pattern covered with dirt
Took ages to find my parents again but then when I did
they thought I'd been with them the whole time.
Didn't even notice what I'd done to my clothes.
I think they were scared because they were lost too
Or were they scared of me?

My parents think that to be a girl you have to look a certain way
They say it's for the best, that I'll understand
One day

My parents always try to think ahead
They imagine things that might happen, and then do things to stop the things that might
I've never been so good
Sometimes, I try and imagine the future they imagine for me
but I always just end up lost, back in the forest

I find it hard to imagine because I know that to be a woman you don't have to look a certain way
I think they know that too but
they're scared
of the power of the woman who looks different and is comfortable with herself

So they never told me that
A woman isn't the parts of her body but the strength inside her

Instead they told me that
This is what you'll want, one day

One day
I cut my hair
Cut off the long blond hair tied in braid
Kept it short

Told my parents

If I change my mind
At least my hair will grow back
One day

Note In 2016, in the family court case *Re: Carla (Medical procedure)* [2016] FamCA 7, a Queensland judge allowed for the sterilisation of a 5-year-old girl, Carla (not her real name), based on gender stereotypes and erroneous medical information. The judge further ruled that Court authorisation was not necessary for such procedures, condoned medically unnecessary surgeries undertaken two years prior that 'enhanced the appearance of her female genitalia', and failed to recognise the investment of her clinicians and parents in the reinforcement of Carla's gender following those previous surgeries.

Once Upon A Time

I get to know Alana
she wears leopard print dress
and flaming red nails
she plays the keyboard
in broad daylight
to fight off the blues

We talk about girly stuff
skin exfoliation
hydration mask
hair tossing
and stiletto heels

She tells me about Alan
in corroboree
he wore coloured feathers
and ornamental coverings
he painted white and red bands
across his chest

Alana doesn't go to corroboree anymore
she cannot bear to see herself
in Alan's persona with
bare chest and hairy body
she misses her mob
and the land

It is easier to talk about
the Summer makeup trend
balayage hairstyle
slimming corset
and hot pink toes

On finding Charlotte in the Anthropological record

We meet on the surface of a photograph, as a fish and bird might meet in a lake, at a point of sky and the water's plane. Charlotte, in a book called *The Aborigines of Northern Victoria*, sits jade-black on earth, wind disarranging her hair. Trees obscured by falls of campfire ash. Her nudity is covered by a blanket. I don't know if her breasts are hanging, if her thighs bear designs or marks. A needlework of scars crosses her chest, repeated dots, like patterns on a goanna's back, like rain spat by goannas into dirt. Soon constellations will appear over branches, on this night of ninety years ago, this never-again night— and she asks me: "Where did you go girl, with your made-up history, your ever whiter babies?" This is what remains, a record of relatedness— scars to hold the memory of someone precious after they've died. We begin by cutting skin— rub wounds with gum and ash, black ants to cauterise the flesh. I remember them telling me: don't worry, this blackness fades with each generation. Charlotte is a map of a Country stained by massacres: Skull Creek, Poison Well, Black Gin's Leap. A geography of skin and land— maps for the returning, for those who speak only a murderers' tongue, whose songlines are erased, who consulted departments of births, deaths and marriages, who stood beside rented Toyotas, clutching photographs, in a hundred remote communities, asking strangers "Do you know my family? Can you tell me who I am?" This moment, an old light is crossing the boundaries of emulsion, and I say to her— Charlotte, Grandmother of my Grandfather, I am Judith, and these are my scars.

Laz

Transparent Mkadikadi: avian breaststroke, lily of the valley ovary.
Nipple darkening to the centre, shining sister bicep trickled with text
swipes river's true mouth; her surface, her quantum diamond. *Tinkle*

over ulnor (paw) and gone
from life. 'fatal anti-transgender violence' shot into the skin. Shining sister,
follow the seasonal rains; take mosh naps in your mother's collar, 'neath us.
Our eyes are traps, shaped like buckets. Uncatalogued, as we are,

dipping in the earth's true mouth, her river, her work. Once, our father god
sliced them up – our buckets –
left them to the catch – the sun fucking winter lazily, lost in its own heat,
not seeing the patriarchy roll up
in a navy Mondeo, hand out the window
mixing the egg white of our eyes with powder, drunk with power.

Skullcap encrusted, diamond smiling into the sun unseeing. Scalp mirror
in a manic albedo feedback loop. Wearing black hoodies in summer
denotes a hollow and from depression pooling,
can begin to run. Shining sister
throw your buckets at the dirt on the sidewalk, do not mean to create
a river in the gap between slabs but do.

The, once page, transgender bicep
as paddle as lure for lily pads, as vessel
for the liquid raz, the sometimes diamonds and for blood. Shining brother,

you are the richest habitat on earth. The transgender masculine
washes his feet in the ankle deeps. His image in sun
a pater, soft eye peeled for venous lily root
that he would make sacred and show. In our eyes is a scent,

and those who know us drink it, before moving. They leave with our text
on the tip of their nose and in the carr-fen sweat of their arm pits. We will fall
and find rivers, and die and form diamonds. We wear us between our tits,

bouncing and hooked in midst of a fling. Hang from the branches, we do
just to drop. We drink and are made from river, and how we lie
depends on the width of shade and if we brought our dysphoria hoodie.
Once, our father god grated the flesh in our eyes

into snow, deaded our pollen in one glorious shake. Pissed the grief water
into snow, headed back to machining. Didn't reckon that we'd harden after death
didn't reckon there'd be rivers

Incarnate

I'm reading *Four Reincarnations*
by Max Ritvo, the book
an unintentional bequest
by my friend,
the poet Ramon Loyola.

Unlike Max, Ramon was evicted
by his body from life suddenly,
unexpectedly. He left like you leave
your home every morning, intending to return.
Stepping out, his soul shed
all but what barely exits, leaving behind
just those earthly accretions which others might find useful:

a library illuminated with notes and creased corners;
his own poems—lodged like touchstones—in our minds;
the sacred relics of his recyclable organs, all
circling out there in the world of others,
a generosity of thought and flesh reverberating
through space/time.

A papery vein burst in Ramon's brain
and out tumbled his full bounty of jewels,
each orb a revelation of pomegranate seed
quickenings on our tongues.
We come as supplicants, scavengers, curators,
to feast on his cryptic frieze.

And now, within the fragile bubble
of my own body/mind
as I divine Max Ritvo via Ramon Loyola,
I glimpse both poets coil
—like silver koi linked head to tail—
in the glistening chain mail of my poem.

PAGES OF THE CALENDAR

Who knows what will happen tomorrow, or who ever learned what happened yesterday?
my years were lost here and there, in rooms, in trains, in dreams
but sometimes the voice of a woman as night falls resembles the farewell of a part of life that
has come to an end
and the days you lack, oh February, perhaps they will be returned to us in paradise —
I think about the small hotels where I scattered the sighs of my youth
until in the end no one escapes, but where would they go anyway?
and eros is our mad hope in the face of the impossibility that one person may come to know
another —
Lord, you have treated poets unjustly by giving them only one world,
and when I die I want to be buried in a pile of calendar pages
so that I might take time with me.

And perhaps whatever of us remains will lie by the edge of our path:
a small forget-me-not.

Echolalia

I was told you were too small, but they were wrong.
I felt you expand
and I made sure to reinforce your bones with love.

I promised that I would never make the mistakes that Thetis made
because I knew every inch of you
and I could bathe you in the river Styx with my own hands.

There was a garden inside me,
grown just for you,
where you could return to
and hide
under petals and snow.

They tell me it will feel like this for a while.
Colder mornings,
empty frames.
Lighter body,
heavy heart.

I can't accept that you were simply
too small for this place,
because I could map places you are missing
for days
and days
and days.

Mirror in the Mirror

The child psychologist is	kind.
She says <i>fathers are close to their</i>	<i>daughters</i>
<i>and your ex isn't ready for this</i>	<i>diagnosis</i>
<i>so we'll take it slow</i>	<i>with him.</i>
How long's she been taking it	slow with me?
She says <i>it's about</i>	<i>acceptance.</i>
<i>You have a rose and all</i>	<i>you can do</i>
<i>is help her become the best rose</i>	<i>she can be,</i>
<i>but you can't make her into</i>	<i>a lily,</i>
<i>no matter how much</i>	<i>you want one.</i>
I say I never wanted	a lily.
She says, <i>it's like those two-way</i>	<i>mirrors</i>
<i>in interview rooms; she</i>	<i>can't see you,</i>
<i>can't tell her thorns</i>	<i>have you torn.</i>
<i>You must meet your girl</i>	<i>in her world,</i>
and so I probe	every brick
in the garden wall,	looking for
the sprung mechanism, the hidden	entrance.
I sit on her bed and listen to her	play cello,
thin arms, fine hair, cut	in a fringe,
a reflection of me	at eleven,
but what passes	between us
is Handel and the theme from Star	Wars.
Weeks later, I announce I've been	practicing
Arvo Pärt's	duet
for cello	and piano.
But she packs her bow	away,
the score slides down	behind her bed.
The kind doctor talks cognitive	gaps.
I don't say I'm the one with	needs,
and what I need is my girl to	play
<i>Spiegel im Spiegel</i>	with me.

New Reactive

The figs have come in. You open your eyes.
It's day. Some canvas flaps in ribbons.
You'll need a ladder. You aren't dreaming.
No livestock dead in the dam. Vines spool
around gas pipes on the roof the upper
-most figs canopy. It's day. Milk in a bowl
aids your sleep. You aren't dreaming. Motorbike
song. Everyone wears white linen on ladders.

The sky fat with sugar gliders. Light
rips the canvas more. The figs have come in.
You open your eyes. No test results true
none unburned. You aren't dreaming. It's a real
hole in the heart. Wing gusts urge your father's
face: harshen against revelation. Ripeness scent.
Don't step to the danger rung with sparkling feet.
Reach. Hyperextend your shoulders.

You're a millionaire in a blimp full of coins.
You're a Gatling gun. You're not memory.
You stand how angels on trees stand. It's day. Harvest.
You aren't dreaming. You open your eyes.
Ladders remind you of your father.
It's day. You utter your first words as they
were recorded on the white of a photograph.
Ladder. Aerial.
The figs leak milk into a bowl. It's day.

east of then

everything took longer,
purple rhymed. there were lots of
them. we lived in small windows.

I'd bump into walls, drop cut-
lery. toward the singing
air, spooned bodies in salt lakes,

our thoughts left spiral bound. we
were better without soap. spe-
cies of cloud our undoing

Orichalcum

I don't know what will happen to my body
 afterwards, but I want to return
 to the reservoir outside our hometown
 where we caught catfish in the summer,
 my father close to kneeling
 at my feet. The tender press of his thumb
 against the skin beneath my eye, the tear
 there. Clumsy fingers cradling the curve
 of my skull. The catfish thrashed in his free hand
 and I did not realise the reach of the sunlight
 was critical.

The last time I saw him, my father stood
 as he stood in the brook-bed: tall like the Victory
 of Samothrace, ruin braced
 in the shadow of his back. In the water I looked at him
 as we look at the things we've lost:
 the crag of his brow, smile mapped clear
 in the crook of his cheek. Cartographies
 of silence. The way he sank down
 as if struck. The catfish, violent
 with panic in the naked air.
 Alive and gold.

Into Our Thin Rivers

My father dies in the night
 That afternoon he said to us 'get me out of here'
 I know this is what the doctors have done
 It's called pain killing
 The next day we go to see him
 His face is colder than I'd ever imagined

My mother dies at an hour I'm not told
 It took less than a year
 She floated on a general anaesthetic
 up a river I'd never heard of
 into a small room
 where at the end she could say nothing

As a child I remember them covering my face
 and the ticking machine that was also a river
 a dark delta land full of birds
 I remember its ether breath
 I sometimes still smell it in my dreams
 I wonder who decides to turn it off

Dementia-Deep

My grandfather's smile
At the handsome shore's
Crooked geology...

Goblet
Biceps of blue make face in the middle and
Gulp!

Today,
Those-days,
These-days –

Crayfish
In the wishing well.
Glittering, beyond

One-thousand years'
Mast of Huon pine –
Girls and boys

Time-dive
For the beautiful
Wake...

Sea birds glide
Upon the forgetful
Breeze...

My grandfather
Gathers
The pocket watch

Of his birth –
Memory,
And the wish,

Behind the wand of the sea...

Nanna's place

a beaded doily for the flies
glass louvres and lino floors
tea leaves in an old square tin
the dark varnished clock
its pendulum swinging silently
a springy 'boing'
strikes the hour without argument

time passing as it should
albert as present now
as when he stood lathering his face at the mirror
or left his warm imprint in the kapok mattress

daisies struggle near the front gate
bobbing their heads in the breeze
ants march in procession across
the path below the empty letterbox
she still says no news is good news

Transitional: 4 Perspectives

I.

ear fur chipped eye whisker pink-brown bald patch pressed
foot tender leg hard nose shame scent loose stitch close
cold worn hold quiet safe chest feel body view nub home
shoulder cheek tight tessellation loose stitch red ribbon split
true touch nose give slight favourite I am you and you are

II.

“from one thing to another”

“modulation”

“passage”

grip, from a pitched howl a gift
my older sister spreads into
reality wrapped in a woollen
blanket safe adventure season
fires travel over oceans, float

III.

some special object sitting on the end
of the piano *addicted to such*
a wooden step knuckles *against anxiety*
the pores around my nipples sweat, contract
when deprivation threatens I lose the rabbit
search party turns up an ear, an eye, four legs and a tail
in the pocket at the back of the driver’s seat
now hanging by the ear from the mouth of a cheeky dog
now pegged by the ear to the clothes’ line after a rough cycle
waves and waves of fear I clutch the rabbit’s foot *truly ‘not-me’*
passage to calm sailing *can be at peace*
and fear again in fire season always rolling a thin string *it is not*
an hallucination waves and waves of subtle disobedience
starvation marriage fails falls the rabbit *may persist*
kept close and never *gradually decathected* onto a high shelf
I am the rabbit who must hold
herself *the substance of illusion*
channelled into *art* or else (*very shy about this*)
the hallmark of madness

IV.

the purr I shut out eyes
of voices scent between the ears
fall back lose weight on the chest
neither internal nor external

Note Italicised words in part III from D. W. Winnicott's 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena: A study of the first not-me possession,' *Psyche* 23.9 (1953): 666–82.

Claire Gaskin

same purr

different cat lands on the bed
same abandonment different person
here in a room full of my mother's death and a vase of water
Antigone's death doesn't bother me as much as her being confined in a cave
don't move they say as I go into the tunnel
if a group of crows is a murder
what is a conference of cardiologists
when the hole is closed will I still write poetry
maybe I'll do paperwork better
six petals radiate five flowers of commitment
yellow stamen heart
I say to my cowering mother
you have the right to make yourself safe
story is the blood seeping through the bandage over her eyes not Oedipus'

A love letter

I want to get my hands on you
to break you open
disassemble the facades
peel the layers
the muscles guarding your heart

to dismantle you
'til you are more than two pillars
of polarising emotions
that conceal
the real
about what you feel

yes
I want to turn you inside out
to see you ecstatic
to let go of that emphatic tone that you use to communicate
'til those screams locked within your rib cage can escape
'til you cry when you need to

to dismantle you
'til you evaporate the masks that made you
so brutal
that you crush the seeds beneath you
yet so brittle
that you can't let yourself fall or you will shatter
so brave
that you will fight against any threat
yet so broken
that you can't see that sometimes
you are the shards of glass that split the soles of our feet

see I want to dismantle you
'til you are who your mother tried to raise
until you rain compassion over those you overshadow

I want to see you emancipate you
from the shell that manipulates your every move
the voices that say you have more to prove
to strip the buff from you
strip the man spread
spread your secrets on the table
'til you are able to claim the soul beneath this frame

yes
strip the walk from you
the lean from you
the rough from you

dismantle you
'til you are nothing
but
the man
in you

Wellspring in Alfacar

*An archaeological excavation chanced upon by accident
— 1 October 2016, Alfacar (where Lorca was shot?)*

The Physics professor takes my hand
and we descend into the earth,
ochres and shadows grainy
with histories known yet unknown.
The sun descended way ahead,
as had the others never met

but maybe here, here: aqui

in my ear, their possibility
whispered by the linguist — esperanza
translated into hope urging on
the archaeologist, voice clear as air
but no *comprendo* his science in Spanish,
so the linguist perseveres as we descend.

Hear, hear the layers of tierra:
first, imposed earth, reddish
diggings for a soccer field,
then natural earth, a little darker,
and deeper down a new stratum
almost white surprisingly — I think of bones,
then the main hole, darkest brown

large enough to curl up in

for the night — but I'm a stranger here,
so tread softly, tenderly and
listen with equal tenderness
(as a mother does to her singing child)
to this translated possibility: this could be it,
the well. The referents are here.

Hypothesis, or wish, or longing:

Let them be here. Presumptuous,
I've descended into the archaeologist's
heart, as I translate his excavation.
My language fills his hole,
singing over his science
(or a mother's singing child).

What is the tune of longing?

But I'm a stranger here,
the professor, the linguist, the archaeologist
understand — and wish for me to understand.
So they translate, translate,
but the shadows are fully descended now,
I can't see their faces.

It is their breaths I understand.

Comprendo: breaths, little notes
against my skin, into my ear
circling the square hole, softening angles,
arcs of air connecting arcs of histories
of griefs known and unknown
— perhaps how a mother sings
back to her singing child:

Silencio ahora, querido, y escucha.

So the square becomes a sphere,
a whole note spun into ovum of the earth
fitting us all in: Fernando the professor,
Encarni the linguist, Javier the archaeologist,
and Merlinda, Magdalena, Reinis,

all listeners now — and all named

unlike the others we have yet to meet
if they are here, here: aqui
in this well, this wellspring of histories
of the desaparecidos from a war as long ago
as a longing, perhaps soon to be found:
hear them breathe again

into our ears, our lungs,

so we can find how the living and the dead
come full circle, all tender now
with each other, with those just met,
might never meet — I wonder how
one finally meets face to face
with a longing, so I ask

the archaeologist about his heart:
How does your corazon cope
with this job? So he tells the story
of how once he unearthed a skull
while a sister waited above ground,
hoping, hoping *this*
is mi hermana.

From his eyes, water wells,
his heart excavated out
in the open. But he could only offer
his science: the long awaited skull
was not her sister, and yet, and yet
she begged: *Let me, please,*
embrace it anyway –

suddenly we're all embraced

aqui, aqui en el corazon
of a sister brother father mother
singing back to a beloved singing back
the breath of the living to the dead
welling up from the deep
and singing back, singing back:

Silencio ahora, queridos, y escuchan, escuchan.

AIDS BLANKET, National Capital

Spread in full view
of the War Memorial
it seems at first to
make some kind
of sense, a new

and tribal guilt
the amber and sequins
glaring at a pelting
-down sun, the
techno-music spitting

But you are unprepared
for the mystery:- the catch-
throat walk
along the cloth
to the edge of the world

We could have been
more careful, those
of us who did
not die
out so early

It was a mistake
like so many
names, so many
others; the needle
goes in easy

So many names
A blanket for the earth
a soft gesture
of hardening tears
A skin to cover the wound.

The electoral hour

So long ago, one might remember
with a dramatic sense of the act
the colonnade on the hill, a just cause

and citizens beaten back in the rain.
But it was just a mild night with a heart of stone
and a young cop keeping steps to himself.

Then and now, you could argue the angles
on Ryan's guilt, but the last calculation
was political to the hilt.

No commute, no sky exclaiming fire.
To make an example only required
the hubris of platitude and power.

Are you comfortable in your own skin?
Worthy of any tweet today –
shave, shit 'n' shower.

Note The Victorian Premier, Henry Bolte, led the executive decision not to commute Ronald Ryan's mandatory death sentence for murdering a Pentridge prison officer. Asked what he was doing at the moment of Ryan's execution in February 1967, Bolte replied, 'One of the three Ss'.

The Somme

Listening to the late wind coming in, its hard
voicings through the hardly-opened window
like a low, distorted echo of what once meant

more, moves and reminds me of grandad's tight-lipped
recountings, come equally distanced and difficult,
of his days at The Somme, mustered up through all his age.

How he forced them suddenly to be, eked them
through a narrow gap in long shut down things.
I knelt at his feet, him sat in his soft chair

leant forward, as his words ran out, lived again, stumbled
across the room and fell into stillness. Rare freaks of meaning,
summoned then gone. The bloke next to him in the trench

slumping forward, his forehead shot away; another turned
to talk, both cheeks opened up, the stub of a cigar
with a perfect hole though it dropping from his mouth.

I felt a sombre closeness, his fate borne openly
but full of an awkward conscience. I wonder if that was why
he flicked the drying-up cloth at me, later, in the kitchen,

the sting of its end on the mottle of my bare calves,
its whip-crack of speed and suddenness, the ruthless,
precise aim below my school shorts, only a laugh

coming from him; another way to get back at what got to him;
the uncompromising arbitrary fall-out of everything; the random
legacies. "Don't tease the boy," my gran said from the sink,

her eyes full of sorry, sending him off, then turning back
to the dishes, a slight shake of her head left and right,
shutting the window sash to stop the draft coming in.

Malevolence

smiled at me,
lifted me up,

tied my shoelaces,
winked my way.

Let's go fishing, he said.
You carry the bait.

And I went,
bent on adventure,

obediently following,
not knowing.

A Useful Body

1.

I crawled from couch to kitchen
when I stayed home sick from school
afraid a man might look inside
and know I was alone. It was the 80s
in America, kidnapping fashionable
and there was my young, pliable body,
the milk cartons, a single shoe in the street
I thought belonged to a missing girl.

2.

At school in an empty room
a boy pushed me to the ground
said *this is how you do it*
humping his heft onto my body.

His jeans rubbed against mine.

I memorized the patterns in the ceiling.

When I told the teacher who told my parents
and the boy had to say he was sorry
he became my guardian for the rest of year five:

I was so grateful because it meant
that no one could mess with me
anymore.

3.

I'm still scared at night, rarely ride
my bike in the dark even though it's three years
since that man jumped in front of me, my bike light
blinking all over my body while I cowered in the street
(the tram stop / the evening cars crusing by)
– he said he was going to rip me in two

(and I was so grateful
that he didn't.)

4.

Once a man broke into my home
and put his hand between my thighs
then climbed out my bedroom window.
Probably one of your friends said the cops,
the beer bottles from a party we'd had
guilty as my thighs.

5.

Such a useful body, magnificent
but sex can be a problem.
Once I was messing around with a man
who I told to stop and he tried and tried
and it was a challenge but eventually he stopped.
Why did you have to play with me like that?
I should've asked him the exact same thing.

6.

Last night I was at a party celebrating the success
of a group of friends and I posed with my arms around two men –
there's him, me, and cleavage one said as we looked at the photo
but I don't remember the image on his phone, it's hard to know
what I remember, but I remember telling a male friend about it
hours later, drinks later, and he moved the collar of my dress
to better see my cleavage.

7.

My daughter is a gymnast, can climb a rope faster
than her two older brothers using only her arms,
legs straight out, pointed toes.
She has such a magnificent, useful body.
She'll be ten in October.

How to be a cop in a TV series

Slip on plastic gloves,
 quainter than condoms
 ditto fat balloons over your feet.
 Brood, broodily and even more so
 as if you're Norwegian (which you should be)
 and view the most interesting body
 left with a message in its jaws,
 a fleshy post-box of gloom.
 You must be divorced; apply immediately,
 or your ID will read Insufficiently Divorced
 (but as you're probably screwing the suspect
 this means very little, to be frank.
 Frank was the murderer, in series 1.
 He left gorgeously poetic bits:
 ears and guts and sundry eyes,
 and was your long-lost twin.)
 Oh! The gloom you will eat!
 The hotdog wrappers in cars
 strewn like saucy poems!
 And then, somehow, you find out
 where She Is Hidden,
 and drive there alone
Without Backup,
 ignoring every other TV show ever made,
 and something called Procedure.
 You save her, are shot, and bleed,
 modern day saint,
 and return to your lonely flat
 after checking yourself out from hospital
 far too early, in the doctor's opinion.
 Order a pizza.
 Shut the fuck up.

Prayer for the girl who is not a feminist

May you never have cause to become one.
 May low-cut blouses invite only sun.

May no-one mistake your figure for your worth,
 no fingers force their way up your skirt.

May you never have to guard your glass—
 wake up groggy, grow up fast.

May your neighbourhoods all be well lit.
 May you never go through with it

just to be polite. May your high heels click
 quickly through the car park at night.

May your make-up not thicken to cover
 a nasty bruise from a boozy lover.

May your pay cheque never be so low
 that you cannot leave when you need to go.

May you fail to find your mother's pain
 folded quietly in the linen press

and guess which man you love is to blame.
 May you be skipped by statistics.

May your friends escape the cars unscathed
 and all your daughters come home safe.

Life Water

Monocarpic seed pods
fall in detonation as we view
the life cycle of the flower
in woman years,
how she is quick to be
beautiful and then gone,
how we have learnt to feel ok
about this one small dying

Spoon-fed soil until
a small girl,
I step into the acidic
hydrangeas with purpose,
scrape all the dirt
from under the rug/my fingernails,
pour life water from a guilt-rusted
watering can, after 5pm
into the shallow grave of someone
not bloomed yet

See how we have grown her,
collected her
but do not bury her,
do not mourn her,
or fear the numbers in which she falls,
cut her at the neck and hope
someone more
lovely emerges
knowing full well that
seeds set when the plant fears
it is dying

Skin dried
like paper daisy,
I sit with roots curled
in a living room vase,
hoping someone will come
turn the water on gentle
fill me up
or think me pretty

Some women are known
to survive
under the right conditions,
fold into smallness
like the camellia buds
I picked and peeled,
petal by pink petal
uncovering my own place/power in this
one small dying

When a woman I've never met asks me to post a photo of myself feeling beautiful

I turn, frozen at the window, looking out
 as lorikeets feast in the shedding trees, bare limbs quivering
 in the slightest breeze. A screech pierces the wisp-streaked distance,
 shriller than mine before I learned the value of numbers—the first teacher
 who instructed me in perspective when I told him about the shoe
 -print blooming on my pubic bone, the yell
 -owing fingerprints budding on my adolescent breasts
 and he said *worse things can happen*. He should apply
 for a job online, where I learned that moderation means
 less-than-average-values and lowest common denominators
 after repeatedly opening the window to streaming images of a man-
 I've-never-met's private parts in various stages and guises of climax
 which does not apparently warrant reprimands—my bad—*worse things can happen*
 but I already knew the value of estimating distance, a lesson I had learned
 from another teacher in those youthful bruising years—
 calculation never my strong suit. In the comments after my
 newspaper articles, I learned the immeasurable lengths of free expression,
 and its unplumbed depths in the thread at the end of a blog entry,
 where I finally learned the answer to the question that had stalked me
 since fourteen—via a strangling string of invective
 like the red mist spraying the windows of the
 London double-decker as two girls learned
 there is nothing amicable in divisory numbers,
 sick words spitting like the blood from their pummelled
 noses and split lips, like the screed that had spilled
 from the fingertips that pulled the trigger on six
 peace-seeking women in a Tallahassee yoga studio—I wonder
 if someone stood over their bleeding bodies and told them
worse things can happen. Nobody had so counselled Jyoti Singh
 on or before the day that 84 minutes of hell ended her life on a South Delhi bus-ride.

So when a woman I've never met (but have known online for years)
 asks me to post a photo of myself feeling beautiful,
 though I am aware she went offline several months ago after
 protracted harassment, you may understand why I might pause
 and close the window—my fingernail catching on the square
 of black tape covering the unwanted and
 unwelcome lens—as I watch all the rules
 I thought I knew and understood
 screech into the infinite wisp-streaked blue.

Porcelain

'porcelain' and 'china' are not the same thing
 china is softer than porcelain, can be cut with a file
 and while china is opaque, porcelain
 is always translucent

I think these facts in someone else's bathroom
 this party is not the right place to talk about
 how women have been making
 delicate things for centuries
 and how most of their handiwork
 never reaches museums

and the party is loud
 and porcelain shrinks during the firing process

maybe if I was made of water and clay
 I would stop trying to shatter myself
 knowing my weakness was almost
 delicate enough to be beautiful

I read that when under compression
 porcelain is nearly as strong as steel
 but it is not resistant to impact
 so a good grip is highly recommended

standing at the stranger's sink
 I hand-paint myself like porcelain
 outside, the party is loud with hands
 that do not know how to be gentle

The Bride Who Became Frightened When She Saw Life Opened

After a painting by Frida Kahlo

She hasn't read a book in seven years
 he doesn't like the light on
 if she gets in before him he says nothing
 she could read all night
 but the thing is he's in bed by nine
 every night every night she has
 something to do she folds their washing
 in three piles on the kitchen bench and once
 he's passing through and it's on his way
 so she asks him to take one pile
the kids' clothes put them on the bed
 that's all she asks he wouldn't have to open
 a cupboard or a drawer
 but he refuses another time
 she's peeling potatoes and stacking dishes
 and showing Sonya how to tie a shoelace
 in a double-knot she asks him to take the rubbish
 out but he says no why should he?
 she's closer to the door and she says
 for the first time ever about anybody
I hate you to the window
 as if she's talking to herself or talking
 about the weather and she goes back
 to peeling the potatoes.

Country

When I was a child
 I believed I could speak to the wind
 And that if I asked respectfully
 Then I could influence
 The way the breeze
 Pushed or pulled through the trees
 And that the wind held
 A specially affinity
 With this
 Little green eyed girl

I later learnt that my family
 Was born of the land and the sea
 And that as Larrakia people
 Our language, songs and dance
 Are part of that Country
 Our bodies
 A physical manifestation of the
 Spirit moving through that land
 Our words gifted to our mouths
 From the very earth on which my people stand
 And that we do speak to the wind
 And that Country
 Speaks back
 A soft sigh on the sea singing

Daughter, can you hear me?

I'm ashamed to say that sometimes
 I can't always hear Country's call
 Caught up in the day to day
 Hustle and bustle

Too many people
Get out of my way
Turn up the TV
Close the blinds
I can't remember the last time I saw the sunrise
Or fall
But still my Country calls

Dad says Country is crying for me
Longing for my return
A piece of a puzzle
Out looking for the larger picture
Searching for a place to belong
Or to be a part of something bigger
Cus said Country's crying for me

She can hear it
In the rain
But she called just to say
Another baby came today
Wish you were here

They built another shopping mall
And cut down all the trees
Billawarra
That's our black cockatoo
Had to fly away and leave
Then they tore out our mangrove
And leased the port to the Chinese
Drilled into Darrawa
That's our salt water
For the gas company
Cut out our homes and
Built a base for the US navy

And now they're coming
With giant machines
Newspapers saying it'll
'stimulate the economy'
Think of all that money we'll have
When we frack the NT
They're coming for our Countries
For our spirits
And our identities

And right now,
As we speak
The Djab Wurrung are defending their sacred trees
As VicRoads waits to bulldoze their ancestors' legacies
A legacy of resilience
A Country crying for its children
Remember sis
Listen past their lies and their bullshit
Your Country is calling
With a cry on the wind

Daughter, can you hear me?

Note Laniyuk's poem 'Country' was first published through online publication Djed Press.

hallways

you pace out to the State hospital and school hallways are tunnels from pristine logic between acts points of arrival antimetaphysical	your relationship in the hallways of every the enlightenment's space to think or departure and entirely precise
in rooms are static or it is not by their proximity history is about the medici villas with hallways rumours and cash	objects and people their presence is intentional this is signified to the hallway who controls hallways were stented for transporting
on hallways seem believable lead somewhere other than people need hallways the problem not enough hallways step away ruined face	science fiction depends to make spacecraft because hallways the infinite to survive places with Bentham's Panopticon was where else does the guard from the inmate's

it's always there champs his glint of hands always live in a room which turns out as the louche dream you never quite get there aren't you running down this endless hallway to your manager or bald tyres and when you're wheeled in an emergency is a funnel for the present always a hallway	where a madman axe or gun or just the bare and doesn't your lover at the end of a hallway to be the same length you're having late every morning where you gasp apologies for your sick child to theatre the hallway tense isn't it you run down in nightmares and even now hangs of your parents' so you see self towards the bathroom
your childhood photo at the end hallway your little when you trawl in the dark	

The Housing Bubble

domed by
 attic-ed by leaked on by
 showered on by decked by handled
 by chaired by tabled by binned by boxed
 in by glassed by fenced off by defenestrated
 by stonewalled by sandstoned by stepped on
 by floored by door-stopped by rendered by
 terraced by hounded by eavesdropped on
 by gaslit by tapped by boarded up by
 moulded by shut in shut up by
 shut down and out
 by
 blinded
 by
 laundered
 by
 polished off
 by

at the coalface

psych invaders. oxy-parochial. oxy-moronic. hobbling doublespeak through terra nullius.
 ipso facto terror australis. soon to never be. at best always seem. intransigent. unforthcoming.

minds deliberate. mouths indifferent. overblown snippets of a love-sworn killjoy deity. fusing
 fiscal saga. pristine free will. brittle heavens adrip with acrimonious clarity. or sanctimonious

alacrity. at times. both. polished operators. rough-and-tumble warriors. working hard up
 against the flow. up against the hydra-headed glow of yesterday's comings. and goings.

the unequivocal rightness of all things wisdom-tuned. etched in wonder. gold-leafed
 silhouettes of dynamic mystery. infallible mastery. never a wrong chord struck. base

thought emancipated. false hope eviscerated. but a steady loss of light. muting of song.
 the earth slow-turning in its heavenly rotisserie. burnt offering to the immigrant saviour.

what pitch the heart's fate? what measured rapport? slow-twitch? slow-drag? slow-kiss
 of sandpaper lips? mouth bloodied to artless famine? with god. time-share lone ranger. hungry

as a hard-on. wide-eyed. of tremulous delight. his eternal load. orthopoetic. omnidirectional.
 an emotional floodgate ever-readied for closure. his presence. absence. one and same.

where has it led us? playing blind man's jizz-bang? grime is deceptive. unyielding. streaks the
 four winds. leads sleepy garden paths on to bully-boy heartache. hard line duplicity. toxic end
 game.

and yet. he who has ears. still calls for self-denial. self-recomposition. the will to rain sensuous
 metaphysical blows. down on merciless skies. shape metacognitive truths. in airy melodious
 chime.

the courage to drown. featureless. in smouldering grief-riddled cesspools. lighten up. you'll be
 delivered. kneeling. distraught. at the mouth of your obsolete cave. weeping. individual.
 names.

Mr Pizzle (from 'three for Canberra')
(at the nation's capital, in a state of arousal)

Modest and Shy boasting again
(firm of country solicitors)

every day, invisible – a man
is fulminating, it's to high heaven

kind of opening up there
makes anyone inarticulate
is at the beer frothing
all in his hat, a big horizon

burns up the forest
runs rivers dry, must be love

poor diddums in his baby socks
and cannot even knit

stuck in his finger
and pulled out too late

how I love a doom like this
done slowly, slowly done

the quarantine quandary

decrepit debt has more than doubled
from a psyche-active point of view
occupied and out of service
this is becoming a quiet carriage

are we yet machine learning
exponentially dog
-mas of data trailing libertarian
oppressor's neutrality is often
not enough

the government in-for-a-structure
too brittle to shake we are all
awed-in-airy's spiralling market

jump in anywhere the ocean claims
no point to a fixed address

whatever the size of the stimulus pack
a pollie or a grand prix jet
shredding a cloud from climate and virus
rattles glass to impress

as the planet goes into recess
you can write a line to yourself
you can plank on the floor to endure
prioritising health
strengthen your core while playing chess

you can tighten twists of your memory route
you can swoon crater or order your shroud

if you feel ignored past convalesce
just think of the ocean
constantly
changing the blues of her dress

For Whom the Road Tolls

No crow ever starved
on an Australian country road.
Sacks of broken macropod
do the mar-soup-ial mash,
sidelined wallabies and fouled roos
impastoed by rigs untimed to mercy,
pasted to puree by Cherokee and Prado
on chundering holiday. The knockback
of an audition too harsh to pass,
headlit and panelled off the show.

From dusk to dawn some keep it together,
before peak hour's bistro mincer,
in game of statues, a frieze of bones.
Coat of arms, cutlery crossed,
chins jut sweet as gentle Mussolinis
addressing the barre of the midway;
sugarplum fairies slipped asleep
in a ballet, ears to ground, listening
for the train that caught their tutus
in the teeth of a pelting liquorice zipper.

2.

Lollipop girl shoots smoke at the blue,
chews a bored cud as the two-way
statics like a dying blowie doing donuts
on its back. 'Ok, go'. Traffic grudges
to a cortege forty, in respect of roadcrew
and the law, not the sunbaking wombat,
a fat German knees-up on a Phuket beach.
The corpse pink zinked with an 'X'.
Someone, it seems, has time for this,
to unction the dead with aerosol
and rifle the pocket for a wriggling peach.

'Your ma won't be home tonight.
Silly muddle headed thing went chasing a root.
Now she's pinged. I said "don't die for a treeline".
No, watch it Blinky, Skip and Fiver,
don't wanna make little Dot cry
for a caramello koala. Slow fauna
get greased. But how do sprung-tendons
be so dumb, so flightless a feather?
Foxes have holes, birds have nests,
but the son of man don't get no rest
in his sooling skin of chrome and leather.

3.

Tally ho! Let me count the slays.
A fantastic skulk stitches the Hume
from Goulburn to Canberra,
bushy vixen flush from the box,
guttled rabbit in a freerange feast.
Quick seamstress could Caesar a stole
for a giantess by Cooma.
Monaro Highway a Gulf War scene
of vulcanised meat and rubber,
like the Iraqi army fleeing Kuwait
down the turkey shoot of a black straight.
Budda-Budda-Budda!

Finer dainties gone for a song –
dandelion puff of a finch,
Kooka and Pie par for the course,
Rosella sauce for the burst
sausage of a Blue Tongue.
Ringtail's fresh dead eyes
kindly twinkle to road reflectors
on a pea soup night.
Whole of Tasmania a jerky strip of Devil.
Guy I knew creamed an echidna.
Prick punctured a tyre.
Most Pyrrhic victory ever.

You could stew on this faunacide.
But more soft toys
where these come from.
Proof is in the pileup
at the roadside diner, as helium crows
float from the cross of a human shrine –
plenty more of us, and all – as murder
gravies the wailing wall
and the odd black bird blooms too soon.
Though most learn to time their bites,
and that when you sup with a B-double
use a long spoon.

Helga Jermy

Minor domestic emergencies

on condition of anonymity the glass breaks its silence. little
shards all over my dual national allegiances while wondering
what to wear for Albo's disco. fast cooking and oven fat
catches a flare of my self-doubt and burns the afternoon's silent
recriminations. the walls have inched in like inhaled ribs while
we wait for another byelection citizen saga but it is a chance to
meet and greet a finely opposing minister whilst engaging in
cultural necessities such as bidding for misogyny speech tea
towels. the canapes are delicious by the way. and the wine
is a speech away from fresh highway upgrading while the
famous DJ looks for a knob on the deck to turn down the
background fuzz. so many hi hugs synchronised air kissing and
oh there's Justine. Tony is in town too. carrots not onions this
time. all tastes catered for. posters. pop up party palaces.
theories attaching social cellular strobe lit junkets to diffused
spin and high hopefuls. the climate is a vacillating political
compass point. hands in pockets to counter the corporate
advertising splurge of those who dare to challenge; he whose
face has shone marrow-like in cascades of comic con. this area
is full of pumpkins and glass houses. this soil rejects pink eye
potatoes but tolerates tall poppies and their beguiling opiate
contradictions. we have tin in our bowels, a seam of tough
extracted minerals, a stream of door-knocking volunteers well-
seasoned to the quick getaway. there is an aggregated churn
in the loam. there is a hint of dissent in the state led ranks
as we lurch into federally funded devil in the small print
deciphering the treachery in minor revolutions. seven more
weeks of blitz burgers. Albo has us dancing to flame trees as
we stand by her and the room is a cup half full of pinot grigio.
there is such reassurance in the sound waves of spun soul. the
drive home is a scattering of domestic possums out for a free
feed avoiding truck wheels. red-eyed when caught in the
headlights. i wish i'd had three hundred bucks for that signed
misogyny speech tea towel. oh, the irony in the washing up.

Penalty Code

To shop is reserved for family
(with limitations).
Leisure activities are reserved for
Sundays at church (or the pharmacy).
Red tape, further
Red tape.
Further, when consumer preference is to shop
employees, over time, should converge. And the employees' time
is important, further
the importance of employees, further
the importance of business, further
do these employees know differences? Between
Sundays? It is not thought to.

The parties called. So: a doctor of business, commerce, economics,
business economics and commercial business, and
relationships. Expert evidence was
employed which critiqued reshuffling activities. The direct
connection identified primary positions, and was not
persuaded. A [redacted]
accounting firm report thought foot
traffic of particular interest; to have regard to ordinary
hours and the retail extraction award and: a
direction to work! Further, over two casual
employees reported
"no* real** problem***"

with Saturday interferences. There was insufficient
Sunday data. Half in five, some of eighty-two
were untroubled. Further, they're only minor
difficulties. Further, about a quarter or just
over a third or almost more than half but fewer-or-more-than one
in five responded "workloads". Further, the manner sought
was informal and so
further
over one quaar.t e r period of [unspecified],,
,,further,, fu, rthe, r fwc fwa fwcfb [2017] 1001.
further unprotected action and a
very s.ubstant.ial di.sa.bility is not
entirely volunt'ry. Further, from the English Ed.ition of 8888
we will be acknowledged and, further, the
sale time for the labourers is
merely, further, a counterpoise to
the existence of employment.

Hobb wa Thawra – Love and Revolution

Sara Saleh

Never forget where we're from
or whose shoulders we stand on. Sister
you are a map of people and places
a river moving people to places.
We honour ancestry
we are our teta's memories.
We don't need permission
we're the difference between sight and vision
follow tradition and forge our own stories to share.

Candy Royalle

They call me a prophet
which shows how desperate we are
to believe in something.
I am no conduit for those gods
I can't see – see this.
We connect through humanity
shared stories
7 billion bodies and beating hearts –
to create our own destiny
we need peace for that.

Greed is not in our nature
they teach us – not rocking this failure.
Now we're strangers
worshipping the dollar
in danger of becoming
our own slave drivers.

Surviving enough to be pit against us
every form of 'ism'
a fuss to distract from the fact that you and me

We are pure love
Pure love
We are pure love
Pure love
We are pure love
Pure love
We are pure love
Pure love.

Note from the film *Love & Revolution*, Director/Producer: Jacqui North, Writers: Sara Saleh, Candy Royalle (RIP), 6 mins/Australia/2020. Director/Producer Jacqui North commissioned Sara Saleh to write the poem and complete the film Jacqui set out to make with Candy Royalle. Copyright: North Productions, 2020.

Publication Details

Prior publication details are as provided by poets with requests made to all poets or their representatives to send any previous publication information.

Zoe Anderson, 'Frost Hollow', appeared in: *Under the Skin of the World* by Zoe Anderson with illustrations by Helani Laisk, Recent Work Press and Ampersand Duck 2020, and *In Your Hands* anthology, Red Room Poetry 2020.

Eunice Andrada, 'instead of finding water', appeared in *The Lifted Brow*, Issue 43, 2019.

Maryam Azam, 'Fajr Inertia', appeared in her collection *The Hijab Files* (Giramondo, 2018).

Stuart Barnes, 'The morning fog (A Golden Shovel after Kate Bush)', appeared in *Griffith Review 66: The Light Ascending*.

John Bartlett, 'I lie Down', appeared in *The Arms of Men* by Melbourne Poets Union (2019).

Merlinda Bobis, 'Wellspring in Alfacar', appeared in *Accidents of Composition*. Bobis, Merlinda. Spinifex 2017, pp 100–103.

Jenny Blackford, 'Long camel necks' appeared in the poet's collection, *The Alpaca Cantos* (Pitt Street Poetry, 2020).

Henry Briffa, 'raised on:', appeared in *Rabbit 30*.

Jarad Bruinstroop, 'Black-throated Finch', appeared in *Cordite 95: Earth*.

Gayelene Carbis, 'The Bride Who Became Frightened When She Saw Life Opened', appeared in *Muse*, Canberra Arts Magazine.

Ken Chau, 'Chinese Silence No. 107', appeared in Ken's most recent publication *15 More Chinese Silences* (Blank Rune Press, 2020).

Jennifer Chrystie, 'TURNING', appeared as 'View' in *Poetrix 30*, May 2008.

Jennifer Compton, 'Late and Soon', appeared in *Going Down Swinging* in December, 2019.

Angela Costi, 'Abduction', appeared in *The Blue Nib Literary Magazine, An Astrail, Poetry from Australia & New Zealand*, 2020.

Judith Nangala Crispin, 'On finding Charlotte in the Anthropological record', appeared in *Scars*, the 2020 Newcastle Writers Festival joanne burns Microlit Award anthology.

Amy Crutchfield, 'A Clean House', appeared in *The Poetry Review* Vol 108:4.

Tricia Dearborn, 'Phlegm: a love poem', appeared in *Cordite 57: Confession* (Keri Glastonbury, ed.) and also appears in Tricia Dearborn, *Autobiochemistry* (UWA Publishing, 2019).

Shastra Deo, 'Orichalcum', appeared in issue 6 of *Pressure Gauge Press*, which has since shut down.

Es Foong, 'Don't Ask', appeared in *Cold Mountain Review*, Fall 2018.

Holly Friedlander Liddicoat, 'RICHARD MERCER LOVE SONG DEDICATIONS', appeared in *The Lifted Brow*, issue 41.

Kathryn Fry, 'The Earth Will Outshine Us', appeared in *Westerly* 64.1, 2019.

Andrew Galan, 'for whom the red ticks', appeared in *Rabbit Poetry Journal 27 'TENSE'*.

Lou Garcia-Dolnik, 'what's your bodypolitik?', was first published in *PRISM International Issue 58.3*, 'Sprawl', Spring 2020 as second runner-up in the 2019 Pacific Spirit Poetry Prize.

Jane Gibian, 'Tilt', appeared in the *Canberra Times*, 5 March 2016.

Kevin Gillam, 'east of then', appeared in *Best Australian Poems 2008* (Black Inc.).

Maddie Godfrey, 'Porcelain', has been previously published in *Scum Mag* (2017) and Maddie's debut collection *How To Be Held* (Burning Eye Books, 2018).

Rose Hunter, 'Puffins', appeared in *The Malahat Review*, no 198, Spring 2017. (Canada)

Ella Jeffery, 'hallways', appeared in *Dead Bolt*, Ella Jeffery's first collection of poems, published by Puncher & Wattmann in June, 2020.

Helga Jermy, 'Minor domestic emergencies', appeared in *Cordite Poetry Review's* 'Domestic' issue, 2019.

Jill Jones, 'Into Our Thin Rivers', appeared in *Meanjin*, Vol 78, Issue 3, 2019, and subsequently in *A History Of What I'll Become*, UWAP, 2020

Laniyuk's poem 'Country' was first published through online publication Djed Press.

Tasos Leivaditis, 'Pages of the Calendar', trans. N N Trakakis, will appear in translation in an upcoming publication with Smokestack Books. The original poem appeared in Leivaditis' posthumous collection, *Autumn Manuscripts*. Permission to publish the translation work has been obtained from the poet's grandson and literary executor, Stylianos-Petros Halas.

Earl Livings, 'On First Viewing 2001: A Space Odyssey', appeared in *Eureka Street*, February 2020.

Bronwyn Lovell, 'Prayer for the girl who is not a feminist', appeared in *Southerly*, Vol 79.1, 2019.

Steph Lum, 'Carla', appeared in *YOUth&I*, Issue 1 (2019) ed. Steph Lum.

Scott-Patrick Mitchell, 'This is Keeling', appeared on the Coal Creek Literary Award for Poetry Facebook page.

Audrey Molloy, 'Mirror in the Mirror', appeared in the poet's collection, *Satyress*, Southword Editions.

Lizz Murphy, 'A Woman's Work', was a finalist in the UK's Aesthetica Creative Writing Award and appeared in the *Aesthetica Creative Writing Annual 2016* volume.

Frances Olive, 'Hard New Peaches', appeared in *Meniscus 7.2*.

Thuy On, 'Double bind', appeared in *Myriad* magazine, and also her debut collection, *Turbulence*, UWAP 2020.

Anita Patel, 'Onkaparinga', appeared in her collection, *A Common Garment*, by Anita Patel, Recent Work Press, 2019.

Aunty K Reed-Gilbert, 'Wiradjuri country', appeared in *Australian Book Review* in 'States of Poetry – Series Two – ACT, 2017' and subsequently in *Us Mob Writing*, K Reed-Gilbert, S Faulkner, B South (eds), *Too Deadly – Our Voice, Our Way, Our Business* (*Us Mob Writing*, 2017). Aunty K's poem 'Wiradjuri Country' has been included with the permission of her family.

Lorin Reid, 'Life Water', appeared in *Baby Teeth Journal*.

Candy Royalle and Sara Saleh, 'Hobb wa Thawra – Love and Revolution', is from the film *Love & Revolution*, Director/Producer: Jacqui North, Writers: Sara Saleh, Candy Royalle (RIP), 6 mins/Australia/2020. Director/Producer Jacqui North commissioned Sara Saleh to write the poem and complete the film Jacqui set out to make with Candy Royalle. Copyright: North Productions, 2020.

Michele Seminara, 'Incarnate', appeared in the 2019 ACU Prize for Poetry chapbook.

Alex Skovron, 'Apokryphon', appeared in *Contrappasso* (April, 2015).

John-Karl Stokes, 'AIDS BLANKET, National Capital', was published and spread out in front of the relevant War Memorial in Canberra, Australia and was part of a travelling live performance at a recent theatrical presentation out of that city.

Jessica Wilkinson, 'Transitional: 4 Perspectives', appeared on the Red Room Poetry website (2019).

Dugald Williamson, 'The electoral hour', appeared in *Social Alternatives*, Volume 39: 2, 2020.

Contributors

Kaye Aldenhoven lives in the wet-dry tropics of Northern Australia. For years she lived in Kakadu, World Heritage Park, and her poem in this volume expresses her love for this country of sandstone escarpment, great wetlands, monsoon storms and 40 000+ years of continuing tradition of indigenous art and creation beliefs.

Aishah Ali is a Law and Political Science student, spoken word poet and writer. She has performed all across Sydney, featuring at the largest poetry slam and writers events including Sydney Writers' Festival, the QVB, ICC, Sydney Jewish Museum and has been published in the *BPS Anthology 'The Resurrection'*, *The Dirty Thirty Anthology* Vol. 2 as well as *ABC News* amongst other forums. She is currently developing her first poetry collection as a recipient of the Westwords Western Sydney Emerging Writers Fellowship.

Cathy Altmann's first collection, *Circumnavigation* (Poetica Christi Press, 2014), won the FAW Anne Elder Award. Her second collection, *things we know without naming* (Poetica Christi Press), was published in 2018. She is a Melbourne poet whose poems have appeared in journals, anthologies and on trains. She holds a Masters in Creative Writing on poetry and cancer, and teaches English and Latin.

Athena Anasiou is a lawyer living between unceded Gadigal and Jerrinja lands. She is interested in love, protest and transformation.

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 events and festivals including You Are Here festival, Poetry on the Move, and the Queensland Poetry Festival. Her first poetry collection *Under the Skin of the World* was published in 2020 by Recent Work press and Ampersand Duck. She is also one of the organisers of Slamboree, the world's best scout themed poetry slam. Zoe comes from Canberra, which is Ngunnawal country.

Eunice Andrada is a Filipina poet and educator based in Sydney, Australia. Her debut poetry collection *Flood Damages* won the Anne Elder Award (2018) and was a finalist for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Poetry (2019) and Dame Mary Gilmore Award (2019). She has performed her poetry on diverse international stages, including the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris and Sydney Opera House. In 2020, her poetry will be exhibited in the Museum of Sydney to accompany the photography exhibition *A Thousand Words*.

Cassandra Atherton is a widely anthologised prose poet and a leading scholar on the prose poetry form. She co-authored *Prose Poetry: An Introduction* (Princeton UP) and co-edited *The Anthology of Australian Prose Poetry* (Melbourne UP, 2020) with Paul Hetherington. Her books of prose poetry include *Exhumed*, (2015); *Trace* (2015); *Pre-Raphaelite* (2018) and *Leftovers* (2020). Cassandra was a Visiting Scholar in English at Harvard University and is the recipient of national and international research grants and awards.

Maryam Azam is a Pakistani-Australian writer and teacher who lives and works in Western Sydney. She graduated with Honours in Creative Writing from Western Sydney University. Her debut poetry collection *The Hijab Files* (Giramondo, 2018) was short-listed for the Mary Gilmore award and the Anne Elder award.

Magdalena Ball is a novelist, poet, reviewer and interviewer, and is the Managing Editor of *Compulsive Reader*. She has been widely published in literary journals, anthologies, and online, and is the author of several published books of poetry and fiction, including, most recently *Unreliable Narratives* (Girls on Key Press, 2019).

Stuart Barnes' first book, *Glasshouses* (UQP), won the Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize and was short-listed/commended for two other awards. From 2013–2017 he was poetry editor of *Tincture Journal*. His poems have recently appeared in *Plumwood Mountain*, *POETRY* (Chicago) and *SCARS: An Anthology of Microlit* (ed. Cassandra Atherton). He's working on his second collection, *Form & Function*, and a novel.

John Bartlett is the author of three novels, a collection of short stories and non-fiction. His poetry has been published in Australian and overseas journals. In June 2019 Melbourne Poets Union published his chapbook, *The Arms of Men*. In 2020 Ginninderra Press will publish a full collection of his poetry.

Shelly Beamish is currently a PhD candidate researching how poetry allows trauma to speak.

Jenny Blackford is a Newcastle-based writer and poet. She is winner of the Thunderbolt Prize for Crime Poetry (2017), the Henry Lawson awards (humorous verse, 2014, 2017) and ACU Prize for Literature (third place, 2014). Her latest collection from Pitt Street Poetry is *The Alpaca Cantos*.

Merlinda Bobis is an award-winning writer with 4 novels, 6 poetry books and 9 dramatic works. Her awards include the *Christina Stead Prize for Fiction*, 3 *Philippine National Book Awards* and the *Steele Rudd Award*. Her latest poetry book *Accidents of Composition* was Highly Commended for the 2018 ACT Book of the Year.

Henry Briffa, a Melbourne Psychologist, was highly commended in the 2018 Queensland Poetry Festival Emerging Older Poets Mentorship Award. In 2019 his chapbook *Walking Home* was published by MPU & he undertook a residency at Bundanon. His poems have appeared in journals locally & overseas. He has read at venues including La Mama Poetica.

Jarad Bruinstroop is a PhD candidate at QUT. His work has appeared in *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Westerly*, *Cordite* and elsewhere. He was short-listed for the 2019 Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize.

David Bunn is Melbourne writer who worked for Australian trade unions for 40 years but now has retired. He was joint winner of the Gwen Harwood prize in 2012 and has appeared in a previous *AP Anthology* as well as anthologies associated with the Montreal International Poetry Prize. He also paints.

Geraldine Burrowes' poetry has been twice shortlisted for the David Harold Tribe and the Helen Anne Bell Poetry Bequest awards. Earlier poems were shortlisted for The Judith Wright Poetry Prize and Highly Commended in the Venie Holmgren and Tom Collins prizes. Her collection, *pick up half under*, was published by Rabbit.

Gayelene Carbis is an award-winning writer of poetry, prose and plays. Her first book of poetry, *Anecdotal Evidence* (Five Islands Press) was awarded Finalist – International Book Awards, 2019. Gayelene teaches Creative Writing and EAL; works as a Writer-in-Residence in schools; and runs Poetry/Creative Writing workshops.

Anne Casey is an award-winning poet/writer, and author of two collections published by Salmon Poetry—*out of emptied cups* and *where the lost things go*. A journalist, magazine editor, legal author and media communications director for 30 years, her work is widely published internationally, ranking in *The Irish Times*' Most Read.

Ken Chau is a Melbourne poet. His collection *Possible Lyrics for Chinese and Western Pop Songs* (Bendigo Publishing, 2015) won the Vox Bendigo Fyffe Prize. His most recent publication is *15 More Chinese Silences* (Blank Rune Press, 2020).

Jennifer Chrystie has poems in *Blue Dog*, *Quadrant*, *Cordite*, *The Weekend Australian* and *Best Australian Poems* 2012, amongst others. Her two collections are *Polishing the Silver* (2006), commended in the FAW Anne Elder Award, and *Weight of Snow* (2013). Her new collection, *Poetry Pond*, is due at the end of 2020 or early 2021.

Paul Collis is a Barkindji person. He writes poetry and prose. He teaches Creative Writing.

Jennifer Compton lives in Melbourne and is a poet and playwright who also writes prose. Recent work has appeared in – *Antipodes*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Going Down Swinging*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Scum Mag*, *The Blue Nib*, and *The North*. Her work has appeared in *Best Australian Poems* 2004, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017, and was included in the anthology of Spoken Word, *Solid Air*, put out by UQP in 2019.

Angela Costi has four poetry collections including *Honey and Salt* (Five Islands Press, 2007) and *Lost in Mid-Verse* (Owl Publishing, 2014). In 2010, she worked in Japan on an international collaboration funded by the Australia Council for the Arts, involving her poetry and Stringraphy Ensemble. Her essays about this collaboration and poetic text, titled *A Nest of Cinnamon*, are published in *Cordite Poetry Review*. Funding from the City of Melbourne COVID19 Arts Grants has enabled her to work on her poetry manuscript: *An Embroidery of Old Maps and New*.

P S Cottier has had two poetry collections published during the time of the virus; *Monstrous* (Interactive Press) and *Utterly* (Ginninderra Press). She lives in inner Canberra, where there are more cockatoos than people.

Judith Nangala Crispin is a poet and visual artist, of Bpangerang descent, currently poetry editor of *The Canberra Times*. She lives in a farmhouse near Lake George with her family, two cats, a fat labrador and a dingo she rescued from the desert. Judith has two published collections of poems, *The Myrrh-Bearers* (Sydney: Puncher & Wattmann, 2015), and *The Lumen Seed* (New York: Daylight Books, 2017).

Amy Crutchfield is a poet living in Melbourne. Her work has been published in *foam:e*, *Westerly*, *The Age*, *APJ* and *The Poetry Review*.

Nathan Curnow's books include *The Ghost Poetry Project*, *RADAR*, *The Right Wrong Notes* and *The Apocalypse Awards*. In 2020 he's working with Kim Anderson to document the COVID-19 crisis for an upcoming exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ballarat. He is also the current judge of the Woorilla Poetry Prize.

Natalie D-Napoleon is a writer, singer-songwriter and educator from Fremantle, Australia. Her writing has appeared in *Cordite*, *Griffith Review*, *The Australian*, *Writer's Digest*, and *Meanjin*. She has won both the Bruce Dawe Poetry Prize and Katharine Susannah Prichard Poetry Prize. Ginninderra Press released her debut poetry collection *First Blood* in 2019.

Tricia Dearborn is an award-winning poet, writer and editor. Her work has been widely published, including in anthologies such as *Contemporary Australian Poetry*, *Australian Poetry since 1788*, *The Best Australian Poems* and *The Best Australian Science Writing 2019*. She was a Poet in Residence at the 2019 Poetry on the Move Festival, and a judge of the 2019 University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize. Her most recent books are her third collection of poetry, *Autobiochemistry* (UWAP, 2019), and *She Reconsiders Life on the Run* (International Poetry Studies Institute Chapbook, 2019).

Shastra Deo was born in Fiji, raised in Melbourne, and lives in Brisbane. Her book, *The Agonist* (UQP 2017), won the 2016 Arts Queensland Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize and the 2018 Australian Literature Society Gold Medal.

Zowie Douglas-Kinghorn is an unwelcome guest and settler on wadjak boodjar, the country of the noongar first nations. Zowie has published writing in *Island* magazine, *The Lifted Brow*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Voiceworks* and *Meanjin* online. In 2018 she won the Scribe Nonfiction Prize.

Tug Dumbly is a poet and performer. In 2019 he was short-listed for the Newcastle Poetry Prize, and long-listed for the Vice Chancellor's Poetry Prize (for the second time). His first poetry collection, *Son Songs*, came out through Flying Islands Books in 2018.

Winnie Dunn is a Tongan-Australian writer and arts worker from Mt Druitt. She is the general manager of Sweatshop: Western Sydney Literacy Movement and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Western Sydney University. Winnie's work has been published in: *Sydney Review of Books*, *Meanjin Quarterly*, *The Griffith Review*, *The Saturday Paper*, *SBS Voices*, *Southerly* and *Cordite*. She is the editor of several anthologies, most notably *Sweatshop Women*. Winnie is currently completing her debut novel as the recipient of a 2019 CAL Ignite Grant.

Amy Edmonds is a passionate reader and writer from Perth, Western Australia. She completed a Bachelor of Arts (English Literature) at the University of Western Australia in 2007 and currently teaches middle primary where she is dedicated to cultivating and encouraging the new poets and authors that come through her classroom.

David L Falcon's work has been published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, various anthologies and literary journals. He has performed his work at Varuna, NSW Writers' Centre, Poets' Union Venues, Radio Station 2NBC; and the Live Poets' Society. His work has also been featured in Red Room projects, *Eureka Street* magazine and can be found online. A collection of his poems is due for publication this year.

Toby Fitch is poetry editor of *Overland*, a sessional academic in creative writing at the University of Sydney, and organiser of AVANT GAGA and the poetry night at Sappho Books in Glebe. His most recent book of poems is *Where Only the Sky had Hung Before* (Vagabond Press 2019) and he is currently working on a manuscript called *Sydney Spleen*. He lives on unceded Gadigal land.

Es Foong is a poet, spoken word performer and flash fiction writer living in Melbourne. Her poetry has been published in *Australian Poetry Journal* and *Cold Mountain Review*. Her poem was highly commended in the 2019 Woorilla Poetry Prize. Her audio works have been included in the Melbourne Spoken Word audio journal *Audacious 4*.

Holly Friedlander Liddicoat has been published in *Cordite*, *Overland*, *Rabbit*, *Southerly*, *The Lifted Brow* and *Voiceworks*. She edited poetry for *Voiceworks* and the *UTS Writers' Anthology* and was shortlisted for the *UTS Writers' Anthology* Prize. Rabbit Poetry published her first collection *CRAVE*, which was shortlisted for the 2019 Mary Gilmore Award.

Kathryn Fry has had poems published in various anthologies and journals, including *Antipodes*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Not Very Quiet*, *Plumwood Mountain Journal*, and *Westerly*. Her first collection is *Green Point Bearings* (Ginninderra Press, 2018). She lives in Belmont, NSW.

Andrew Galan has been published in *Solid Air*, *Best Australian Poems*, *Rabbit* and *Baby Teeth Journal*. He has featured at events such as the Newcastle Writers, Red Dirt, and Queensland Poetry festivals, and Chicago's Uptown Poetry Slam. His book, *For All The Veronicas (The Dog Who Staid)*, Bareknuckle Books, won an ACT Writing and Publishing Award. He is a member of the ACT Arts Minister's Creative Council and won a Canberra Critics Circle Award for contributions to poetry. He ran poetry slam BAD!SLAM!NO!BISCUIT! for ten years and co-edited *Australian Poetry Journal's* first volume of spoken word and performance poetry – *Spoken*.

Lou Garcia-Dolnik is a mixed-race Filipinx writer working on unceded Gadigal land. A poetry editor for *Voiceworks* and alumnus of the Banff Centre's Emerging Writers Intensive, their work was recently awarded second place in *Overland's* Judith Wright Poetry Prize and third in PRISM International's Pacific Spirit Poetry Prize.

Claire Gaskin's chapbook *A Snail in the Ear of the Buddha* was published by SOUP Publications in 1998. Her first full length collection, *A bud*, was released by John Leonard Press in 2006, and was shortlisted in the John Bray SA Festival Awards for Literature in 2008. *Paperweight*, was published in 2013 by Hunter Publishers. Her collection, *Eurydice Speaks*, is forthcoming with Hunter Publishers in 2020. She has just finished her fourth full length collection of poetry entitled, *Ismene's Survivable Resistance*. She has been teaching poetry for over thirty years and is available for mentoring.

Stuart Geddes is a graphic designer and occasional publisher, mostly of books. Stuart is one of the Australian members of Alliance Graphique Internationale. He is also an industry fellow, researcher and PhD candidate at RMIT University, where his research interests converge around the form of the book, through collaboration, emerging histories, and material practices.

Jane Gibian is a poet and librarian whose work has been anthologised most recently in *Contemporary Australian Poetry* (Puncher and Wattman) and *Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry* (Hunter). She was awarded a Varuna Poetry Flagship Fellowship for 2020.

Kevin Gillam is a West Australian poet with four books of poetry published. He works as Director of Music at Christ Church Grammar School in Perth.

Maddie Godfrey is a Perth-bred writer, educator, editor and the 2020 Kat Muscat Fellow. At 24, they have performed poetry at The Sydney Opera House, The Royal Albert Hall, TedXWomen, St Paul's Cathedral and Glastonbury Festival. Maddie's debut collection *How To Be Held* (Burning Eye Books, 2018) is a manifesto to tenderness. Currently Maddie is completing a PhD on girlhood, teaching creative writing, editing *Voiceworks* magazine and trying to stay hydrated.

Rory Green is a writer and editor from the Central Coast.

Dominique Hecq grew up in the French-speaking part of Belgium. She now lives in Melbourne. Her works include a novel, three books of short stories and nine collections of poetry. *Kaosmos* (2020) is fresh off the press. Hecq is a recipient of the 2018 International Best Poets Prize.

Elanna Herbert is a born and raised Canberran. She has lived in Gundaroo, Perth and is now living in the NSW Shoalhaven. Her poetry appears in *StylusLit* (forthcoming), *Westerly*: editors desk #authorsforfireys, *Axon*, *Not Very Quiet*, *FourW 28* and *30* and *Meniscus*. Awarded a Varuna 'Writing Fire Writing Drought' fellowship 2020, Elanna has a PhD in Communication from the University of Canberra.

Matt Hetherington is a writer, music-maker, teacher, and part-time D.J. He is also on the board of the Australian Haiku Society. Some current inspirations are: 70's Robert Palmer, Wollumbin seen from a distance, and Vietnamese mint.

Paul Hetherington has published numerous books and won or been short-listed for more than 30 national and international awards and competitions. He is head of the International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI) and a founding editor of the journal *Axon: Creative Explorations*. He founded the International Prose Poetry Group in 2014.

Davoren Howard is a Victorian writer. He has been long-listed for the 2011 Montreal International Poetry Prize and short-listed for the 2017 Blake Poetry Prize.

Rose Hunter's latest book of poetry, *glass*, was published by Five Islands Press in 2017, and her next, *Anchorage*, is forthcoming from Haverthorn Press (UK, 2020).

Noemie Cecilia Huttner-Koros is a queer jewish performance-maker, writer, dramaturg and community organiser based on Whadjuk Noongar country in the south-west of WA. Noemie's practice engages with sites and histories where ecological crisis, queer culture, community-building and composting occur. Her work draws on community engagement, storytelling and interdisciplinary collaboration to explore our personal and political agency through performance. Her work has occurred in places ranging from black-box theatres (*ADA*, The Blue Room Theatre), alleyways (*The Lion Never Sleeps*, The Blue Room Theatre Summer Nights), dinner parties (*The Trouble Makers*, You Are Here Festival & Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts) and galleries (*Borders*, Spectrum Gallery – *House of Joys*, Paper Mountain).

Rafeif Ismail is an award-winning, emerging multilingual writer based in Boorloo, WA. Their work aims to explore the themes of home, belonging and the so-called 'Australian' identity in the 21st century as a refugee and third culture youth of the Sudanese diaspora. They are committed to writing diverse characters and stories. They live on the unceded land of the Whadjuk Noongar people.

Zeina Issa is a poet, translator and published columnist. Her poems, translations of poetry and essays have appeared in *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Mascara Literary Review*, Red Room Poetry and Contrapasso. She is currently working on a poetry collection of new and selected poems by Iraqi poet, Khalid Kaki.

Ella Jeffery's first collection, *Dead Bolt* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2020) won the Puncher & Wattmann Prize for a First Book of Poems in 2019. She is a recipient of the Queensland Premier's Young Publishers and Writers Award and her poetry has appeared in *Best Australian Poems*, *Meanjin* and *Griffith Review*, among others.

Helga Jermy's poems have been published in journals and anthologies including *Rabbit*, *Australian Poetry anthologies and journals*, *Cordite* and *Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry*. Poems have been short-listed for *Overland Judith Wright Poetry Prize 2015* and long-listed for *UK National Poetry Prize 2016*. Her book, *Firebird Baltic Blue*, is available from Ginninderra Press.

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

Lesh Karan was born in Fiji, has Indian genes and lives in Melbourne. She is a writer and emerging poet, and has worked as a pharmacist, medical writer, and digital content specialist. Lesh's poetry has been published in the *Australian Multilingual Writing Project*, *Cordite* and *Unusual Work*.

Christopher (Kit) Kelen, published widely since the seventies, has a dozen full length collections in English as well as translated books of poetry in Chinese, Portuguese, French, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Swedish, Norwegian and Filipino. His latest volume of poetry in English is *Poor Man's Coat – Hardanger Poems*, published by UWAP in 2018.

S K Kelen has been writing poems longer than he cares to remember. His poems are wide-ranging in style and subject matter, and are written with elan, vision and charm. His most recent books are *A Happening in Hades* (Waratah, NSW: Puncher & Wattmann, 2020) and *Love's Philosophy: Selected Sonnet-like Creatures* (Summer Hill, NSW: Gazebo Books, 2020).

Nadia Kim is a poet/writer/educator/editor living mostly on Ngunnawal Country. Her writing has been published in *Cordite*, *Querelle*, and *StylusLit* among others. Her poem 'Alessandra' was highly commended in the 2017 Judith Wright Poetry Prize. In 2019 she was a collaborating artist for The Digital Writers' Festival.

Kristen Lang's *The Weight of Light* (Five Islands Press) and *SkinNotes* (Walleah Press) were published in 2017. She won the ACU Poetry Prize in 2015 and was short-listed for the 2019 Dorothy Hewett Award. She lives in north-west Tasmania.

Laniyuk is a writer and performer of poetry and short memoir. She contributed to the book *Colouring the Rainbow: Blak, Queer and Trans Perspectives* in 2015, has been published online in Djed Press and *The Lifted Brow*, as well as in print poetry collections such as UQP's 2019 *Solid Air*. She received Canberra's Noted Writers Festival's 2017 Indigenous Writers Residency, *Overland's* 2018 Writers Residency and was shortlisted for *Overland's* 2018 Nakata-Brophy poetry prize. She is *Cordite Poetry Review's* current Indigenous Engagement Editor, runs poetry workshops for festivals such as Girls Write Up, moderates panel discussions and has given guest lectures at ANU and The University of Melbourne. She is currently completing her first collection of work to be published through Magabala Books.

Penelope Layland is a Canberra poet. She has worked as a journalist, editor, speechwriter and policy adviser. Her most recent book, *Things I've thought to tell you since I saw you last* (Recent Work Press, 2018) was short-listed for both the 2019 Kenneth Slessor Prize in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, and the 2019 ACT Book of the Year, and was a winner in the ACT Writing and Publishing Awards.

Lesley Lebkowicz's fifth book, *Mountain Lion*, was published by Pitt Street Poetry in 2019. She also works in ceramics and both her creative practices are informed by a long practice in an ascetic form of Buddhism. She lives in Canberra.

Tasos Leivaditis (1922–88), born and raised in Athens, worked as a literary critic for a leftist newspaper and achieved both critical and popular renown in Greece for his rich poetic oeuvre. His involvement as a youth in leftist politics led to his imprisonment for more than three years. Soon after his release in 1951 he made his poetic debut, and he went on to publish twenty volumes of poetry as well as a collection of short stories, winning along the way Greece's highest honour in poetry (the State Poetry Prize, in 1979). His translator in this volume is N N ('Nick') Trakakis who teaches philosophy at the Australian Catholic University, and also writes, edits and translates poetry. He edited *Southern Sun*, *Aegean Light: Poetry of Second-Generation Greek-Australians* (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2011), and his translations of Leivaditis include *The Blind Man with the Lamp* (Denise Harvey Publications, 2014) and *Violets for a Season* (Red Dragonfly Press, 2017).

Earl Livings has published poetry and fiction in Australia and also Britain, Ireland, Canada, the USA, and Germany. His writing focuses on science, history, nature, mythology, and the sacred. In December 2018, Ginninderra Press published his second poetry collection, *Libation*. He is currently working on an historical fantasy novel.

Bronwyn Lovell is an Adelaide-based poet. Her work has featured in *Best Australian Poems, Meanjin, Southerly, Cordite* and other journals. She has won the Val Vallis Award and been short-listed for the Judith Wright, Fair Australia, Newcastle, Bridport, and Montreal prizes.

Steph Lum is an intersex human rights advocate and emerging poet based in Canberra. Steph's poetry focuses on the diversity of intersex experiences. Steph recently founded and edited *YOUth&I*, an anthology of poetry, writing and artwork by young intersex people from Australia and around the world, available at: <https://darlington.org.au/youthandi/>.

Paul Magee is author of *Stone Postcard* (2014), *Cube Root of Book* (2006) and the prose ethnography *From Here to Tierra del Fuego* (2000). He is currently working on a theoretical book entitled *Suddenness: On the Composition of Poetic Thought*, and a third book of poems, *The Collection of Space*. Paul is Associate Professor of Poetry at the University of Canberra.

Jenni Mazaraki is a writer from Melbourne. Her poetry has been highly commended in The Bridport Prize 2018 and her writing has been highly commended in the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards for an Unpublished Manuscript in 2020. She is currently undertaking a PhD in Creative Writing.

Rachael Mead is a South Australian poet, writer and arts reviewer. Her most recent poetry collection is *The Flaw in the Pattern* (UWA Publishing 2018) and her novel *The Application of Pressure* was published by Affirm Press in 2020.

Tim Metcalf is a former winner and also judge of the ACT poetry awards. He is the author of 9 poetry books. He works as a GP in Bombala NSW.

Scott-Patrick Mitchell is a non-binary West Australian poet who lives and writes on Whadjuk Noongar Booja. In 2019 they won the Wollongong Short Story Prize, The Martin Downey Urban Realist Poetry Prize and the Coal Creek Literary Award for Poetry.

Audrey Molloy is an Irish poet living in Sydney. Her debut pamphlet, *Satyress*, was published in 2020 by Southword Editions. Her work has appeared in *Magma, The North, Poetry Ireland Review, Meanjin* and *Overland*. In 2019 she received the Hennessy Award for Emerging Poetry, the Aesthetica Creative Writing Award and the APIBA Irish Book Awards Irish Poem of the Year.

David Mortimer writes poetry to read aloud. His chapbook *Act Three* (2017) follows *Magic Logic* (2012), *Red in the Morning* (2005) and *Fine Rain Straight Down* (2003). His poems have been published widely, have won prizes, been short-listed, broadcast and anthologised, including in *Global Poetry Anthology* (2012) and *Contemporary Australian Poetry* (2016).

Lizz Murphy writes between Binalong NSW and Canberra ACT in a variety of styles. She has published thirteen books. Her eight poetry titles include: *Shebird* (PressPress), *Walk the Wildly* (Picaro/Ginninderra), and *Two Lips Went Shopping* (Spinifex). She is a former *Canberra Times* Poetry Editor.

Anisa Nandaula is a nationally recognised spoken word poet, play writer, educator and published author. She is the 2016 Queensland Poetry slam champion and runner up for the Australian poetry slam championships. In 2017 she published her first book *Melania Garden* and won the XYZ Innovation in Spoken Word Prize. She has performed at the Sydney Opera house, Splendour in the Grass, Queensland Poetry Festival, Women of the world festival and toured the country sharing stories of love and courage. Anisa is also the co-founder of the arts collective Voices of Colour which creates spaces for migrant, refugee and first nations artists to share their work. She has also previously been published in UQP's *Solid Air* collection.

Asha Naznin, in her own words, is an 'accidental poet' in English literature in her tiny world in Canberra, the nation's capital, where she has been the featured poet at a number of events including those hosted by Mother Tongue Multilingual Poetry, That Poetry Thing, and Manning Clark House. In 2020, her poem 'A tree, two frogs and me' has been considered as a sign at the Haig Park, to attract local community. Her poem/lyric 'Play' has been part of the 'How Musicians Work' project, three songs are about to release based on this single 'poem'. Her poems of quarantine days are forthcoming in *QuaranZINE* (2020), by Tuggeranong Arts Centre. She authored two novels in Bengali and won a literary award for her debut novel in Bangladesh. Being multilingual, her English poetry is often blended with the Western, Arabian and Asian romance, wit and melancholy.

Dianty Ningrum is from Indonesia and currently working towards a PhD at Monash University. Her work has been published in *The Scores* journal.

Damen O'Brien is a Queensland poet. Recently, Damen won the Welsh International Poetry Prize and the Newcastle University poetry competition. Damen has previously won the Val Vallis Prize for an Unpublished Poem, the Peter Porter Poetry Prize and the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize amongst many others. Damen has been published in *Cordite, Southerly, Overland* and *StylusLit*.

Frances Olive is a Sydney-based poet. Her writing has appeared in various anthologies and journals in Australia, the US and the UK, including *Overland, Cordite, Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry* and *Award Winning Australian Writing*. She completed her doctoral studies in philosophy at the University of Sydney and is currently completing a doctorate in creative arts at Western Sydney University.

Thuy On is a freelance arts/literary critic and journalist who's written for a range of publications including *The Age|SMH, The Australian, The Saturday Paper, ArtsHub*, and *Books & Publishing*. She is also the Books Editor of *The Big Issue*. *Turbulence* is her 2020 debut collection of poetry with UWAP.

Esther Ottaway is an award-winning Tasmanian poet whose work has been published in UQP's noted anthology *Thirty Australian Poets, The Australian, The Canberra Times*, journals and anthologies. She has won a Varuna Fellowship and Arts Tasmania grants. Her second collection will be released by Puncher & Wattmann in 2021.

Geoff Page is based in Canberra and has published twenty-five collections of poetry as well as two novels and five verse novels. His recent books include *Gods and Uncles* (Pitt Street Poetry 2015) and *Hard Horizons* (Pitt Street Poetry 2017). His *Elegy for Emily: a verse biography* (Puncher & Wattmann) and *In medias res* (Pitt Street Poetry) were published in 2019. *Codicil*, a mini-selected translated into Chinese, was issued by Flying Islands (Macao) in 2020. He also reviews Australian poetry extensively and has run monthly poetry readings and jazz concerts in Canberra for many years.

Vanessa Page is a Queensland poet. She has published four collections of poetry including *Confessional Box* (Walleah Press) which was the winner of the 2013 Anne Elder Award. Her latest collection, *Tourniquet*, (Walleah Press) was launched in 2018.

Anita Patel's collection of poetry, *A Common Garment* (Recent Work Press), was published in 2019. Her work has been published in: *Conversations* (Pandanus Press, ANU), *Block 9*, *Burley Journal*, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, *Demos Journal*, *Mascara Literary Review*, *Not Very Quiet Journal*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Backstory Journal*, *Other Terrain Journal*, *Pink Cover Zine*, *FemAsia Magazine*, *Plumwood Mountain Journal* and *Eucalypt: a tanka journal*. Her poem 'Women's Talk' won the ACT Writers Centre Poetry Prize in 2004 and her poetry was published in *Australian Book Review's* 'States of Poetry ACT', 2018. She was the guest editor for Issue 2 of *Not Very Quiet Journal*.

Philip Radmall's poems have been published widely in literary magazines and anthologies in Australia and internationally. His first collection, *Earthwork*, was published by Ginninderra Press in 2017, and a chapbook, *Artwork*, in 2019. He is a senior teacher of English Language at Macquarie University, Sydney.

Aunty K Reed-Gilbert was a Wiradjuri poet, elder, editor, educator and a champion of up-and-coming Indigenous writers. She co-founded the First Nations Australia Writers Network (FNAWN) and edited many indispensable books of Indigenous poetry and prose. Her own poetry and prose have been published in many journals and anthologies nationally and internationally, and translated into French, Korean, Bengali, Dutch, and other languages. Aunty K passed away in July 2019, fighting and writing to the end. The day before her death, she finished the last corrections for her memoir *The Cherry Picker's Daughter* (Deadly Dingo Books, 2019). Aunty K's poem 'Wiradjuri Country' has been included with the permission of her family and the Copyright Agency Limited.

Lorin Reid is a spoken word poet and arts worker from Thirroul, who founded Enough Said Poetry Slam and is published in the *Solid Air* anthology. She has performed at Yours and Owls Music Festival and on tour in the USA, and leads workshops & panels with The Stella Prize's *Write Up*.

Sandra Renew's poetry is recently published in *Griffith Review*, *The Blue Nib*, *Canberra Times*, *Contemporary Haibun Online*, *Hecate*, *Axon*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Shuffle: An Anthology of Microlit*, (Spineless Wonders, 2019). Her recent collections are *Acting Like a Girl*, Recent Work Press, 2019 and *The Orlando Files*, Ginninderra Press, 2018. Sandra also writes short form prose and has been published in *Shuffle: An Anthology of Microlit*, edited by Cassandra Atherton, (Spineless Wonders), 2019 and was a finalist for the 2018 Joanne Burns Microlit Award. She is included in *The Australian Prose Poetry Anthology*, (eds. Paul Hetherington and Cassandra Atherton), Melbourne University Press, 2020.

Sarah Rice is a Canberra-based poet. Her full-length poetry collection *Fingertip of the Tongue* (UWAP 2017) was shortlisted in the ACT Publishing Awards. Sarah won the inaugural Ron Pretty poetry award, the Bruce Dawe poetry prize, co-won the Writing Ventures, and Gwen Harwood poetry prizes, and was short-listed in the Montreal, Tom Howard, Drake-Brockman, CJ Dennis, New Millennium, Fish, Axel Clark, Michael Thwaites and *Overland* poetry awards, amongst others. Publications include the *Global Poetry Anthology*, *Award Winning Australian Writing*, *Best Australian Poetry*, *Island*, *Overland*, *Southerly*, *Aesthetica*, *The New Guard*, *ABR*, and *Australian Poetry Journal*.

Tais Rose is an Aboriginal writer and weaver living on Bundjalung country. Navigating the links between the state of the environment and the treatment of Aboriginal culture, the lens of her experienced displacement informs a take on ecopoetry that reflects the significance of decolonisation work in contemporary society.

Candy Royalle was an award-winning writer, performance artist, poet and activist well-known to audiences in Australia and around the world. Sadly, Candy passed away in June 2018 from ovarian cancer. Her poetry, essays and opinion pieces continue to be published widely. She is remembered by her family and the LGBTQIA+ community for her strength, conviction and passion. Her poetry collection, *A Tiny Trillion Awakenings*, was published by UWAP.

Omar Sakr is an award-winning poet from Western Sydney, and the son of Lebanese and Turkish Muslim migrants. He is the author of *These Wild Houses* (Cordite Books, 2017), and *The Lost Arabs* (UQP, 2019), which has been short-listed for the Queensland Literary Awards, the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, and the John Bray Poetry Award.

Sara Saleh is an Arab-Australian human rights activist, community organiser, educator, writer, and poet living on Gadigal Land (Sydney). A longtime campaigner for refugee rights and racial justice, Sara has spent the last decade working with grassroots community and international organisations in Australia and the Middle East. An award-winning poet and writer, Sara's first poetry collection was released in late 2016 and explores themes of displacement, migration, grief, identity, and women. Her poems have been published in English and Arabic in *SBS Voices*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Meanjin*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, Bankstown Poetry Collections and global anthologies *A Blade of Grass*, *Making Mirrors*, and *Solid Air*, an Australian and New Zealand spoken word anthology. She has performed nationally and internationally, from New Zealand to New York, and her writing has appeared across *The Guardian*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, SBS, and the ABC. She is co-editor of the recently released anthology, *Arab-Australian-Other: Stories on Race and Identity* (Picador 2019), a seminal collection of creative essays, memoirs, and poems which brings together 23 writers of Arab-Australian backgrounds. Sara also sits on the board of Australia's largest advocacy organisation GetUp!, is currently completing her Juris Doctor, and is a proud Bankstown Poetry Slam 'Slambassador'.

Michele Seminara is a poet who has published *Engraft* (Island Press, 2016) and two chapbooks: *Scar to Scar* (with Robbie Coburn, PressPress, 2016) and *HUSH* (Blank Rune Press, 2017). Her second full-length collection, *Suburban Fantasy*, is forthcoming from UWA Publishing in October 2020.

Emma Simington: Poetry burst from Emma Simington during her childhood. She writes to love and to cope.

Alex Skovron is the author of six poetry collections, a prose novella and a book of short stories. He has won a number of major awards for his poetry, and his work has been translated into some half-dozen languages. A new collection, *Letters from the Periphery*, is forthcoming.

Tim Slade is a Tasmanian writer. His poems have been published widely, including in *The Weekend Australian*, Margaret Reid International Poetry Prize (Honourable Mention), and *Cordite Poetry Review*.

Melinda Smith is an Australian poet, editor, teacher, arts advocate and event curator based in Canberra, Australia. She is the author of seven poetry collections. Her work appears nationally and internationally in literary journals and has been widely anthologised and translated. She has been awarded a number of prizes and grants for her work, including a Bundanon Trust residency, multiple ArtsACT grants, a Neilma Sidney Literary Travel Grant and the Australian Prime Minister's Literary Award. She frequently collaborates with artists in other disciplines including dancers, musicians and visual artists, and has appeared at literary and arts events all over Australia and in New Zealand, Italy and Japan. She is also a former poetry editor of *The Canberra Times*.

Abeir Soukieh is an Arab-Australian poet and writer from Canberra. She is a former Acquisitions Editor for *be:longing* magazine, a former Reader for *Frontier Poetry*, and her work can be found at *be:longing* magazine, *Not Very Quiet* and *Cordite Poetry Review*.

John Karl Stokes (writing name John-Karl Stokes) is internationally known as one of his country's most daring and interesting of writers and librettists. He has earned many prizes – in teaching, publishing or performing in Australia, Britain, Japan, France, Italy and points between:- "Truth is the most magnificent thing for a listener to hear. Truth is also to be found in the theatre". "Rhythm is all!"

Shane Strange's writing has appeared in various print and on line journals in Australia and internationally. He is publisher at Recent Work Press and Festival Director of the Poetry on the Move festival, both based in Canberra.

Thom Sullivan lives in Adelaide. His debut book of poems *Carte Blanche* (Vagabond Press) won the Noel Rowe Poetry Award and the 2020 Mary Gilmore Award.

Emily Sun lives on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar (WA). She has previously been published in various journals and anthologies including *Cordite*, *APJ* and *Meanjin*. Emily's debut collection *Vociferate* 詠 is forthcoming with Fremantle Press.

Heather Taylor-Johnson is a poet, novelist, sometimes-essayist and editor, who lives in Adelaide. Her fifth book of poems will be published by Wakefield Press.

Sarah Temporal has performed poetry at festivals and events Australia-wide. She won the 2018 Nimbin Performance Poetry World Cup, and her poems are published in literary journals and anthologies including *Baby Teeth*, *Not Very Quiet*, and *Social Alternatives*. She founded 'Poets Out Loud' in 2019, and is currently developing her debut poetry collection.

Rita Tognini lives in WA and writes poetry and short fiction. Her poetry has been published in journals such as: *Australian Poetry Anthology*, *Creatrix*, *Cuttlefish*, *Cordite*, *Enchanting Verses Literary Review*, *Eureka Street*, *Imago*, *Overland*, *Landscapes*, *Uneven Floor*, *Westerly* and *WritPoetry Review*. Rita's work has won prizes and commendations.

Isi Unikowski worked for three decades in the Australian Public Service. He has a PhD in Political Science from the Australian National University. His poetry has been widely published in Australia and overseas, including as one of the Canberran poets on the *Australian Book Review's* 'States of Poetry 2017' website.

Anders Villani is the author of *Aril Wire* (Five Islands Press, 2018). He holds an MFA from the University of Michigan's Helen Zell Writers' Program, where he received the Delbanco Prize for poetry. Born in Melbourne, he is currently a PhD candidate at Monash University.

Jen Webb is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice at the University of Canberra, and co-editor of *Axon: Creative Explorations* and the literary journal *Meniscus*. Her most recent poetry collection is *Moving Targets* (Recent Work Press, 2018), and *Flight Mode* (co-written with Shé Hawke) will be launched in October 2020.

Rae White is a non-binary transgender writer and editor of *#EnbyLife Journal*. Their poetry collection *Milk Teeth* (UQP) won the 2017 Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize and was short-listed for 2019 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards. Rae is currently completing a Wheeler Centre Hot Desk Fellowship for their YA verse manuscript *Welcome Home*.

Ian Wicks is a clinician-scientist in Melbourne, and of late, an after-hours poet. His poems on medical themes have been published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Others have appeared in the *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Cordite*, *Grieve and Cosmos*. 'The visible human' was selected for the *Australian Poetry Journal's 2015 Anthology* and his *JAMA* poems on the five senses were included in the *Best Australian Science Writing* collection for 2018.

Ron Wilkins is a Sydney scientist who has published poems in *Quadrant*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Antipodes*, *Plumwood Mountain*, *Best Australian Poems* and other Australian and American journals, and a book of poems and drawings *Fistful of Dust*.

Jessica Wilkinson has published three verse biographies, *Marionette: A Biography of Miss Marion Davies* (2012), *Suite for Percy Grainger* (2014) and *Music Made Visible: A Biography of George Balanchine* (2019), all with Vagabond Press. Jessica co-edited the anthology *Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry* (Hunter Publishers, 2016), and she is also the founding editor of *Rabbit: a journal for nonfiction poetry*. She is an Associate Professor in Creative Writing at RMIT University, Melbourne.

Dugald Williamson lives in Armidale NSW, where he teaches and researches writing and media at the University of New England. His poems have appeared in journals, including *APJ*, *Meanjin*, *Southerly* and *Westerly*.

Sophia Wilson is an Australian writer, now resident in New Zealand. Her poetry/fiction recently appeared in *StylusLit*, *Not Very Quiet*, *Ars Medica*, *Hektoen International*, *Poems in the Waiting Room*, *Corpus* and elsewhere. In 2019 she was in the top ten for Green Stories (UK), short-listed for the Takahē Monica Taylor Prize and 24 Hour National Poetry Competition (NZ), and finalist in the Robert Burns Poetry Competition.

Jia-Li Yang, Chinese-born Australian poet, works with the disadvantaged people in the community which gives her a special insight into those that suffer. An inquisitive writer that was a bit of a misfit as a child, she has blossomed into her writing.

Manal Younus is a Kurna Country based freelance storyteller from Eritrea who believes that language and stories are the very fabric of our existence.

Australian Poetry, established to bring together state-based poetry collectives, publishes the country's national poetry journal, the *Australian Poetry Journal*. The Journal, published six-monthly, is guest-edited each issue by different voices, to ensure excellence and inclusivity. It also publishes insightful, curious articles. AP publishes an annual anthology, along with a digital volume showcasing U30s and emerging voices.

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