

Edited by
KENT MACCARTER



20
POETS

Introduction by
BONNY CASSIDY

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SELECTED POEMS
CORDITE BOOKS SERIES 1 & 2

EDITED BY KENT MACCARTER
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First published in 2017
by Cordite Publishing Inc.

PO Box 393
Carlton South 3053
Victoria, Australia
cordite.org.au | corditebooks.org.au

ISBN 978-0-6480568-6-7

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Poetry set in Bembo 10 / 15
Cover design by Zoë Sadokierski
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*this is a free book
keep a copy for yourself
then send it along*

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FOREWORD

20 Poets features poetry from all the authors from series 1 & 2 of Cordite Books. It's free, and it's intended to be given away as widely as possible. The geographic barriers that can, at times, hinder Australian literature are no longer relevant, and poetry communities around the world must be enlightened by the commanding, demanding and exciting trajectory of contemporary Australian poetics.

This anthology is a *mélange* of the experimental and the lyrical, written by poets in all stages of their careers, and reflects the cultural vibrancy that fuels contemporary Australian letters.

While this anthology, including its translations, may have a once-off print run for a given festival or event, it will predominantly be distributed as an electronic book. Central to Cordite Books and its authors is the visual appearance of the work, and the ways in which positive and negative space are engaged across a verso–recto spread. Read it on as large a screen as possible, in two-page view display, to deliver the intended look of the poetry.

Each poet included here is represented by four pages of poetry and the preface from their Cordite books. Many of the publications are book-length poems, and this inclusion provides a greater context for the work. These four pages are allotted to display the range and style of each poet.

Without question, future iterations of this book will see new titles – *30 Poets*, *40 Poets* – but here we are at the beginning: you, me and the twenty authors collected here. Enjoy the work, and please seek out a print book or two if you are particularly bewitched by what you read. – KM

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps it was the pineapple-infused ale that braved Kent MacCarter to share his plot. Standing between the barrels at Abbotsford, Australia's Moon Dog Brewery, he sketched out his dream for a new branch of Cordite Publishing Inc: Cordite Books. As with his editorial management of *Cordite Poetry Review*, it would be a voluntary passion project, but Kent reasoned that with Cordite Books he could exercise a more hands-on curation than the guest-edited *Review* involved. The imprint would privilege mid-career voices, he insisted – and the books had to be good-looking.

As the beers went and came, we looked at the venture from numerous angles. Great poetry plans are often made this way in Melbourne – rapidly, with lots of loose talk and sheer enthusiasm. Perhaps they are made this way universally, in an anti-marketplace where anything is possible because the highest stakes are creative ones. The situation is certainly comparable in Aotearoa New Zealand, as Vaughan Rapatahana has explained, where small presses release a world of poetry not represented by academic publishers. In Singapore, Math Paper Press refuses to apply for grants in order to release properly diverse, uncensored writing. RD Wood has championed the collective model of many poetry organisations in the USA, because it allows the values and vision of a small team to be represented uncorrupted by larger economic forces. In Australia, where the philanthropic culture is less developed (but improving), such a model means either a constant cycle of funding applications or a constant injection of personal funds, or both. Kent was geared up, and goodness knows he'd already shown he was prepared to devote years of work to support other people's poetry; still I went home wondering if the scope and the logistics of the project could be realised.

Barely months had passed before the first series of Cordite Books was released. Natalie Harkin's *Dirty Words* became an in-demand classic of contemporary Aboriginal writing almost as soon as it was published. As well as the strong protest tradition in Indigenous poetry, Harkin's work draws on global movements of First Nations writing to address a local and personal history of racial oppression and displacement, and their obscuration by the language of government, media and historiography. In an interview with Anita Heiss, Harkin agrees that her 'writing is a kind of therapy' for generational trauma and ongoing colonial systems; as an archival poetics, it uses the public record to transform internalised grief and anger into a new public artefact.

Now, from the long view of two series completed, Cordite Books presents itself for critique as a material and poetic reality. If commercial success is a bonus to a poetically and materially well-made piece of print poetry, what are these books for? How do they contribute to the ecology, rather than the market, of Australian poetics?

Alongside Harkin's *Dirty Words*, the first series included Alan Loney's *Crankhandle*, winner of the 2016 Victorian Premier's Literary Prize for Poetry; *Aurelia*, John Hawke's poised saltwater lyrics of memory, dreams and paranoia; and Autumn Royal's carefully crafted interrogations of locality and gender in her debut collection, *She Woke & Rose*. The unpacking of a layered identity and history in Tony Birch's *Broken Teeth* was complemented by Ross Gibson's collaging of archival Sydney in *Stone Grown Cold*. From such various poetics of place, space and sourcework, this first series swung to Javant Biarujia's defiance of poetic origins. Biarujia's *From Spelter to Pewter* provokes language, whereas Jen Crawford, in *Koel*, offers glassy views onto thick atmosphere. In *Common Sexual Fantasies*, Ruined Rachael Briggs uses poetry's tendency to upset and proliferate expectations as a way of unpicking rehearsed sexualities.

The interests of the small press publisher / editor are very close to those of poets the world over: to create writing that feels genuine and

original. As Giramondo publisher Ivor Indyk has remarked:

Does indifference to the commercial pressures of the marketplace breed integrity (alongside anger and melancholy)? It must do. The attenuation, the withholding of recognition – it takes a lot of guts to live with that. I think what I admire most in poetry, and in fiction that shares the same high ideals as poetry, is its ability to talk from itself and about itself, whether anybody is listening or not.

Cordite Books tunes in and listens to this persistent ‘talk’. The books are mainly distributed through launch sales and as payment for services rendered to *Cordite Poetry Review*, though they are also sold online in Australia, distributed by the venerable Small Press Distribution in North America, and some are adopted as university teaching curricula. Any reader of the *Review* will recognise in the book series a similar diversity of authorial representation. Under MacCarter’s management, the scope of the *Review* has become increasingly transnational and collaborative. Although Cordite Books is limited to Australian work, a similar ethos of boundary-pushing is evident across its two series. They stretch out to include lyric, prose, sequence, Language, post-Language, diary, concrete, protest and found poetry, generated poems and others without neat names. *What if?* they ask.

As opportunities for emerging writers are a necessity for sustainable creative and critical ecologies, Australia’s cultural preoccupation with youth – and the frequent mistaken conflation of ‘emerging’ with ‘under twenty-five’ – can overlook the importance of poets who have accumulated decades of writing and reading, a sense of voice to be subverted as well as refined, a continuous presence without authoritative or canonical influence. Interviewed in *The Suburban Review*, MacCarter gives this advice to new poets:

You don’t have a right to be published as is, there is no *turn* that awaits you, and the editor has not made a mistake in knocking your work back – these

are tenets I discovered early on as an author. Later, as an editor, I found they remain thus ... Ask me to work. It's welcome. Oftentimes, I read a poem – no matter how its superstructure is fabricated – and, after the first go, it has me, but I don't yet have it. That's when my attentions fires.

Cordite Books tends to feature older emerging writers, or mid-career poets with debut or slow-cooked collections. In Australia, this vision seeks a niche among the omnivorous poetic stables of Puncher & Wattmann, Five Islands Press, Giramondo Publishing and Vagabond Press; the more centrist catalogue of Pitt Street Poetry, University of Queensland Press and UWA Publishing; and the strictly micro-zones of Wild Tongue, Lor Journal, Electio Editions, SOd press, bulky news press and SUS press. For international readers or those working in other writing fields, MacCarter's own survey of Australian micro-presses in the journal *Overland* provides a more extensive picture of this environment. Locally, the closest relatives of Cordite Books include the Rabbit Books series, also an offshoot of a journal publication and a single editor, and GloriaSMH, where quality design values are prized. Internationally, alongside Math Paper Press in Singapore, Cordite Books finds comparison with Arc journal in Canada, Salmon Poetry in the Republic of Ireland, and Unicorn Press in the USA, among others.

Many of the Cordite Books are just pushing 100 pages, which makes them a little longer than chapbooks but adds to their fresh and potent feel, even when their contents have been honed over many years. While it may be a small press, its creative ambitions are held to account against the quality of editing and production of small and independent poetry publishing, nationally and internationally. Cordite Books retains the intimate scale of publishing into which Cordite Publishing Inc. was born as a local broadsheet in the late nineties: the books are neat and stylish, but there is something of the handmade about their contained length and production. All watched over and typeset by MacCarter, each series has been uniquely visualised by its designer. There is an ethic

to the way that MacCarter and the Cordite team take editorial and aesthetic care and time to repay the risks that poets like Harkin and Claire Nashar take in their work.

Nashar is one of a few emerging writers in the Cordite Books catalogue, but *Lake* represents a significant debut gambit that demonstrates MacCarter's focus on mature poetic risk-taking. Published in the first series, this quasi-concrete long poem constructs an elegy for Nashar's grandmother. She aligns the book with the necropastoral: a poetics that sees human and more-than-human death coalesce in place. Nashar is aware that her work's celebration of settler matrilineal identity harks to that 'reserves of inner strength' passed between generations of Indigenous women; she approaches this through her equal attention to her grandmother's living, working and resting place of Tuggerah Lake. The estuarine lake is a 'reserve' of custodianship, colonial spoliation, family meeting, tears, species resurrection, ashes. It is also an outlet: a more subjective work of 'therapy' than Harkin's writing, but a space in which

“screaming”

fills a page of its own. From heaps of feeling as well as research, Nashar sifts out an astonishingly refined work. Its traces of punctuation and redacted expression are minimalist, yet they suggest that which exceeds the book.

MacCarter's curation extends *with* the poet's vision of their work, rather than imposing upon it. The second series of Cordite Books, for instance, features Tanya Thaweekulchai's *A Salivating Monstrous Plant*, which was first written for performance. By containing liveness within a book, Alison Whittaker feels that the poet and the publisher challenge 'the reader ... to read it as a text independent of, but also partly a record of, Thaweekulchai's body and performance.' The result is a spiky tension between the abject organism and the static page, played out between

prose and poetry, and reflecting the titular subject of the sequence as it ‘bubbles from deep within the chest, travels along the air tract and presses against vocal cords to carefully scratch a way out of its throat.’

A number of the titles in the second series work with the irony of their materiality. *Attn: Solitude* by Mez Breeze wrangles Breeze’s well-known *mezangelle* code into ‘packets’ fit for print form. Like *A Salivating Monstrous Plant*, *Attn: Solitude* is a ‘record’ of live work, in Breeze’s case delivered digitally rather than bodily. While Florian Cramer identifies the texts as ‘streams’, Breeze’s own Dickinsonian allusion to ‘packets’ is not lost on the reader who perceives a tradition of experimental women’s lyric poetry within Breeze’s texts:

`_femmeage_inv(r)e(cu)rsion_ – 2011-07-22 11:39`

`*drop_boxx[y]ed+alt[ernate]
*issuu|me:square[d]u[e]
*broke-N+dum[my]bed_dpwn.`

Like a leetspeak interpretation of Dickinson’s dashes, Breeze’s work interrupts the page conceptually as well as linguistically and spatially. Eye, hand and sign are being speedily updated and charged. This ‘liveness’, rushing or ‘streaming’ into finished print belies the anonymous space of code – that is, semiotics – with the beating heart and voice of a body inside the page.

As with Nashar’s *Lake*, Anne Elvey’s poetics demand that the limits of the printed page respond adequately to the complexities of an Australian life. Elvey’s *White on White* marks a turn: mid-career, Elvey’s style begins anew in this collection, which goes deeper into her sustained concerns with ecology, theology and kinship. Breaking from the largely lyric mode of her previous collections, *White on White* produces a searching, self-reflexive glare that complicates the privileges

of the white (poet's) voice. For Elvey it is an essential task informed by critical whiteness, which is a vehicle to bring the settler poet back to the first fact and recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty and its expression. In Elvey's poem 'Prelude to a Voice', the text is rotated 180 degrees. While this bucks the reader's optics, it also reflects the conceptual work of this collection: comfort is not sought in the so-called landscape format. Rather, Elvey redacts words and lines, corroding an imaginary poem until it gains weathering and porosity. Then:

Magpies proposed what multiple
voices might dwell in a thing like truth.

In Elvey's work, the lyric tradition has not been fully set aside, but it tries to find a poetic mode of responsibility that notices the sovereignty of the ground it describes.

Cordite Books champions voices that put themselves on the line. Like Natalie Harkin's *Dirty Words*, Jeanine Leane's *Walk Back Over* channels 'vast reserves of inner strength' inherited from Aboriginal women, and continues 'to pass that on [as] a powerful act of activism'. Forging that strength into poetics, the collection includes a broad range of mode and voice, from dramatic monologues to fragmentary list poems and direct protest lyrics. The tone of the poems is often bitter yet energetic, and Leane sequences the collection to counterpoint this with notes of pride and beauty. One passage of the poem 'Evening of the Day' reverberates both exhausting sorrow and pulsing life:

Sitting alone by her window, somewhere
in that extra shaft of apricot sunlight,
days after the winter solstice
against a cold pink-streaked sky she thinks
she sees the child I was running
towards her.

As Ellen van Neerven remarks, Leane ‘does not drop her gaze’. The single paratactic sentence above unspools a whole history, told in colour and image. The enjambment of the penultimate line morphs the poem’s voice from third-person observational to embodied first-person. That ‘extra’ shaft of light suggests something beyond the bounds of this poem: a future and a reserve of strength and vitality.

Alongside Thaweeskulchai, Breeze, Elvey and Leane, the second series of books features the critical long poem *False Fruits*, by Matthew Hall, plus Omar Sakr’s sharply aware and purposeful lyric commentary on sex, masculinity and colour in Australian suburbia, *These Wild Houses*. Worrying at a more internal environment, Derek Motion’s *The Only White Landscape* mines the isolation of the writing life, and finds some alliance with the regionality and confessionalism in Broede Carmody’s *Flat Exit*. Kris Hemensley’s long-awaited *Your Scratch Entourage* renders decades of immersion in both the act and the conversation of poetics with melancholy and epiphany; while the eminent hybrid Chris Mann wrings the language of media and demotic parlance until it squeaks.

Series 1 & 2 of Cordite Books are sympathetic containers of voices that are already changing and trying out their next life. As anyone who has published their writing knows, the perfection of the finished work is short-lived; held for a moment within the publisher’s timeline is the author’s own cycle of thinking and expression, in which completion is already replaced with a sense of restless provisionality. Each of the books is framed by an author’s preface and an introduction. Of the type traditionally reserved for reprints and special editions, the introductions provide a peer’s view of the work: an endorsement by a sympathetic comrade, trusted critic or mentor. These introductions are more akin to short launch speeches than essays, although many of them provide vital and – particularly in the case of poets whose work has not received recent or deep critical attention – significant points of access, analysis and contextualisation for the reader.

This anthology frames the poetry somewhat differently to the

individual collections. It provides each author's preface alongside their work, introducing many readers to their poetics and intentions. *20 Poets* is yet another container of oeuvres-in-progress, but it is also an opportunity for each featured poet to listen to themselves talk – to new audiences, perhaps, as well as existing ones – and to gain perspective on what their work is doing, lifted from the context of its own publication event.

As well as archiving a concise selection of Cordite Books as a phenomenon, this anthology can be read as a sampler of contemporary Australian poetry in print. Representative of their cultural grounding, these poems demonstrate what the best of that field is doing, which is, according to Corey Wakeling, to 'deny easy cultural distinctions between urban and country as markers of contemporary Australian experience', and 'extend doubt for the monolithic, patriotic project of an Australian literary centre'. The following selection is concerned with the politics of being and writing in a contested, porous and globalised Australia. For many of the poets, this means the urgency of anti-colonial futures, while for others it means expatriate identity, diasporic experience and biopolitics.

Here, the selected pieces can speak to one another in a horizontal manner: freed from identification with one author or collection, and brought into a crowded, familial presence that welcomes invention, craft and memory.

– BC

JOHN HAWKE

In his retelling of the myth of Orpheus – where Eurydice is described as ‘the profoundly obscure point to which art and desire, death and night, seem to tend’ – Maurice Blanchot charts the relationship between poetry and loss, by which to desire is to necessitate, even invoke, obscurity: to confine the object of desire, along with the poet, to song; to translate life into word, and, through word, into dream. In this conception, to write is always to admit to, but also to dwell with, loss – to experience the loss of a once-loved person as a mode of living. When Nerval writes that dreams are a second life, he not only refers to the dreams we experience in sleep, but also to the dreams that arise as a consequence of lost desires, dreams perhaps thwarted by chance: of lives once meant, but never lived.

These lives often coexist with our own as lost alternatives, counter-experiences or impossible possibilities; they lie within the everyday like a subtext, or a haunting. To transmute desire into language is to erect a monument to that desire, to announce it as permanent, but also to profoundly transform both the subject and the object of desire: to confine them, in their relationship, to the monument and the tomb. Since evocation presupposes loss or absence – as Mallarmé showed – then to write is to desire something that continually slips away, and must once again be invoked in a series of repetitions and beginnings that both conjure and obscure. – JH

The Conscience of Avimael Guzman

All Peruvians are liars –Mario Vargas Llosa

Peru is not a novel –Shining Path graffiti

In grey wind where snow turns to ice, leaving no shelter,
you are murdering the woman who made you feel guilty,
who called you a *fascista*. Your fingers at her throat
you examine her pores and her pock-marks,
her teeth broken by a rifle butt
because her parents worshipped an icon of Stalin.
A high fog is breaking in the acquiescent village.
Faces carved from the hard material of nature
reveal no motives. Your hands close on nothing:
wood, weeds or water. Impossible to tell
if these people are servants to force alone
or to your foreign currency of words
translated from another language – the promise
of conquest, the repossession of forgotten land.
Your eyes fix on the face of the woman,
her ideas reduced to manageable flesh and bone.
What else could subdue them but your own
nervous retraction, making a virtue of fear.
Your tongue removing itself into black cavities,
your eyes concealed among Indians, watching
the woman's body slowly digested by insects.
The strings of your nerves drawn shrill
by the need to maintain a single extreme moment,
but that was an error, a point of mathematics:
better to proceed by denial, eating your own words,
phrases compacted and swallowed in gutters.
The fabricated voice of the journals dissolves behind you,
your carefully bound diaries left on a train
now somewhere in a distant country – maybe Russia,
the terminus, the last exit. The veins in your cheeks

crackle red, and you are outside time, awaiting
the moment of ignition. But these are autumn colours,
half-formed mountains at the edge of the world.
The Amazon running to rock. Vast crowds
milling together, resisting the pressure to meld or mesh.
At first there was anger, in the fluttering walls of the throat,
at the sight of those faces barely released from stone,
brown feet roasted over open fires.
Torturers winding back their watches
at the sign of the scar, at the hour of the sentry.
Americans with flaccid hands. The light like shroud-cloth
burning your skin. You made yourself dark,
withdrawing into the shadows of the century, accepting nothing.
You are speaking to yourself thanks to the magic
of an alien technology, which is your own,
or at least helps you belong to your time.
But how it really happens, how the same words recur
in this haphazard way outside of any system
remains a mystery. A voice speaking over the radio
mirrors your own, and you cannot break the habit
of these reflections, cannot even retrace your steps.
An insidious machine is reading your thoughts.
The woman raises her head grotesquely,
and even though you are immersed in shiny blood
there is nothing left to be offered or consumed.
The magic of cheap rhetoric is retained
like a forgotten taste, brushing your tongue.
All the things that you can touch refer to secrecy
or symbols, but is that magic any more than a good card-hand
or a huge library reverberating messages between lines of shelves?
You fear asking the simplest question
because the answer is always the same,
and the voice that returns it is the familiar dominating one –

your teacher, your master, robbing you of all will,
keeping you as a servant.

The desire to subvert yourself, to speak
in the voice of another, to knock a chaos
into this order of illusions. And when they pass over you,
these shadows distinct as faces piercing the surface of water,
what do they drag in their wake? The presidential candidate's
dream-speech delivered in bubbles of his own blood.

The desire to destroy. A selection of words
to mask your jealousy, every tentative emotion concealed.
Your arrogance the revolver in its holster.

Because there is no longer any guilty internal world,
your private thoughts lead you to a plain
where huge figures stand frozen, towers and monuments
shuttling messages into the air, light patterns
and gaudy over-obvious symbols.

There are no more images for you to touch,
only these hard prints on the eye
mistaking jungle-foliage for military uniforms.

Extinction breathes its gentle colours,
pastels of tensions released. Falling softly into a chair
you believe you are outside everything,
a light tune disappearing. At last
you become leader, compelled to speak.

But there is danger, for what have you left to confess
except constructions? The high chair, the fabricated podium,
disgust you like some story spilled at gunpoint.

You take the woman into your arms, but dark smoke
has entered your bones, and there is no remedy
but the need to continue travelling among these tortured bodies,
these trees, these flayed mountains.

You wanted to capture precision,
the insides of things, but each new word

dazzles you, is a prism of caught light,
and you are frozen in captivation.
Each second snaps like a forced door.
You have been absent from the city too long,
concealed in an ambush of riddles,
and now you are scarcely recognisable.
The clear strategies inhaled at high altitudes,
formed from clear air, are swept clean away
by your embarrassing forgetfulness.
What was the use of all the lost time
learning that you could no longer lie?
Perhaps you were only parroting
the words of a saviour, practical solutions
that carry across the seaboard
like the sound of distant gunfire.
The demagogue's beard cultivated in a garbage dump.
The priest's sash sweeping across polished boards
as prickly infection wipes a baby's mouth.
You are too malleable. A servant's hysteria
scours you with painful laughter. Lawless
your shining objects shake from the walls.
Make neat piles of them. Scrub your empty face
until it burns. Make up a story.

TANYA THAWEESKULCHAI

A Salivating Monstrous Plant began as an exploration of violence present in the act of speaking, including attempts and refusal to speak. I'm interested in the body's movements and gestures, and the methods by which our voices are included in that mechanism. The question is: how can language and the body interact to extend beyond communication, verbal or otherwise? These metaphors are about conveying sensory experience rather than symbolism, and they operate by integrating metaphor with the body ñ be it writing of the body into metaphor, or embodying the poetics of physical movements. Might the body exist outside of its functionality, removed from practical movements?

I used parts of this work to create a performance piece inspired by Butoh, a Japanese expressionist dance that responds to constraints in the movements of other traditional dance forms. Many poems were rewritten to adjust the original performance script. Hopefully, neither body nor language is favoured, and physical experiences are incorporated into textual metaphor. This embodied language can then push against what we perceive as unspeakable, and if that should fail, if speaking appears impossible, perhaps something can still be achieved in the attempts to speak. – TT

Wakes

Something bubbles from deep within the chest, travels along the air tract and presses against vocal cords to carefully scratch a way out of its throat. In that moment the jaw opens and the neck elongates with the desire to move, to propel itself forward – it keens – only to be dragged down by the weight of its limbs, or what is left of it, its leaking skin sticks flat to the bones, its lungs, kidneys and liver. It heaves, lifting one organ at a time, every inch of the small intestines, followed by the large intestines, nudging and pulling, learning to use the rhythm between muscle and gravity. All the motions within range of this body that is falling apart, though, some excreted debris are held together by cloudy and congealed fluid, they collide unexpectedly. Joints turn three hundred and sixty degrees and roll through the mud, while ulnas stretch the oesophagus and diaphragm further apart; bile is pushed out as the plant crawls along a wet floor as a bleeding vomiting thing. In turn, its torn stomach sucks back in nutrients from fresh soil, spreads them among its blood vessels to reconnect the fibres in the wasted muscles, so that it can keep moving forward, still.

In hiding

It's like this. A creature that refuses to let itself be seen, obscured partly by sharp branches, leaves, half-blooming flowers, wanting the whole spectrum of possibilities placed along the vertical and horizontal axes: urgently now, divine me the death of this longing, calculate the speed of its movement with the indices of indefinite number, and tell me, tell me the times approximate to the whys and why-nots, and the excess of and the deficient.

I don't feel like

i.

I won't let it go. The weather-storming-sun hovers out of alignment, there are fissures and a shadow is cast: what can you say of these stones at my feet? Precariously. There's not a word from feathers or thinly shaped bones brought about by crashing through muddy grounds. By such means, my head hurts, my feet and eyes sore, and there's no noise from the birds (other than me). They say the blackness gets darker as you grow and it is the only good thing, being borne from this tree that is too small even for this thin bone. Like toothpicks.

ii.

Bone against bone – neither one of us (and still they whisper: bone against bone). Others are made of leaves and twigs, dark too, but of different shades: underlays of green and purple, sometimes, in rare places, navy blue, shimmering. The ground beneath the heaving beast slowly escapes, blends, resulting in shifts, in flooding water. The shifts can reform when they want, muddy themselves when they want. There is no quake to warn. Bells tied to the wrists, branches, wings, wooden staffs. He misses us.

iii.

Cast an alloy: more than half the periodic table is here, the process is entertaining, but the product is useless and costly. It needs to withstand all temperatures, they say, because temperatures can't be fixed; but it's barely over a hundred and fifty-five degrees and the alloy starts to disintegrate. Papers are torn into strips, eaten, fed not-roasted; you wouldn't want to put out a forest fire, even if the trees are bright and dead and can't be hurt.

North point

Forty-five degrees and equidistant from where it was standing, thereís a stretch of empty land, and along the soil, see the collimated light, though it doesnít quite reach that shivering tree with decaying roots. Infected and compromised ñ through what means will it survive the necessary severing of limbs? Meanwhile, it fights with itself, shaking, pulling, bending, all manner of resistance; its noises are gaining on its ears, first gradually, then a loud piercing sound. And among the cicadas, among any other echoing thing: the wheezing, whistling, ticking and clucking, snaps, whole beats, two whole beats, halves, interruptions; the process of uprooting, or the attempts to.

TONY BIRCH

I wrote many poems before I published a single word of fiction, short or long. Some of the poems I was happy with. Others were terrible. Thankfully, most of the bad stuff was never published, although a couple of the more atrocious ones were. I hope they're being taught somewhere as examples of bad writing and giving students a laugh. The poems of mine that I'm most happy with, while not being 'found' poems, riff off the political words of others, hammered into shape with anger, and sometimes caressed with love. Other institutional words, phrases and sentences I picked up along the way, interrogating them until they confessed their hidden meaning. Any dictatorship worth its violent salt executes the poets first. It is the way it should be, as a great poem cuts through the crap and goes for the heart and heat like a double-barrelled shotgun. – TB

Visiting

I trace lives along the river; below the Cat-Walk where we hung as sleeping bats from the rusting beams we left above to fall through summer heat, readying for the touch of velvet waters dammed sixty feet below. We lifted the skirts of Skipping Girl, strobing her night vent with an erratic neon, one lighting the banks infested with years of boosted car wrecks and wet lovers, until the day came to dress the Girl and order her to perform the peak-hour crawl, homeward bound to emptiness. The river's edge is beautified now, bridges caged in safety, Deep Rock lies drowned beneath a strip of freeway and long-abandoned sweat shops dazzle with the cheapness of glass in steel. Sitting at the falls I skip stones to conjure a memory of you and see us here on summer nights. Together we carried the river home with us, in our hair and on our skin.

A Meeting with the Toe-cutter

He tracks his man
from back lane to mattress
the prey wrestling
his troubles

the toe-cutter ropes and gags
proceeds with efficiency
working his way through skin
sinew and bone

he extracts a truth (of sorts)
and scrubs palms clean
the warming stain
of confessional blood

payday is a corner
nursing a glass
carefully eyeing a cigarette smoke
dance solo in an ashtray

a ready hand rests
in a jacket pocket
as a sharpened eye turns
to the opening

A Songline for Minoru

A dark track of blood
leads to the crematorium
I feel myself lost along a boundary
weave of hard wire
drifting away in my thoughts of you

I stay with our light
resting with my shoulder
a warmth has come to meet me
it is Mino telling me to hold on
within this quiet moment
his journey home

in the wooden boat
you lay yourself out
resting eyelids, lips and heart
sleeping quietly in your song
the shroud of skin builds
to ease your body from home
to home

a home

you've left and carry with you
the land of our loved children
touching your soles
and lifting the flight of your kin
we send you away on your
new song, your companion
its voice circles to us
to where all we know
we know more of now
through the beauty of you
Mino, our friend, loved friend
we will meet with you
in the rhythm of this song
as it sways your life within each of us:

Mino is here
when we come
to speak with others
to call to ourselves
he is with us

when we rest
he is us

Mino is here
Mino is here
Mino

MEZ BREEZE

Attn: Solitude isn't a straight poetry book, nor is it a strict collation of cyborgian-emulated [chap+lady]book texts. The codework contents in this book do fragmentally fold [+ spit out of/from] poetic conventions. These microtexts do presentation-lap gently [yes: gently, albeit clinically, in some instances] at the cusp of code and poiesis.

Attn: Solitude employs *mezangelle* – a type of quasi-cobbled convention-set born from 90s digital fomentation – to form packets of code-laced and culturally inflected output. You may choose to snippetswim in[to] these units of mezangelled output, these comprehension chips dragged kicking from one medium and screaming into another. You may not.

If not, then ... ? If-then-else. – MB

2014 – 09

#CryAndSobForVisualInnocence - 2014-09-02 07:49

Username: TheFApp[l]e[is.b0r(k)ed]ning

Password: DisjunctiveAbort[is that all, interMEnets, #ISTHATALL?]

Usr: Celeb[G]rit[t]yGLossAndSpitPolish

Psswd: WeCryAndSobForVisualInnocenceButAreHappyToBombAnd
Drone[or]jail]

U: CogKnitive[ly]Diss[On(D)ance]ed P: [rivacy.Is.Smear.Death]

_\$HelLAc[king/queen][2] - 2014-09-19 23:48

_[a]she[-n(u)][ll(ed)]n[hormone.(p)]aced]

_\$he.drIPs

_he[ll].drOps

[-g]Olden+treAc[hes]le+wr[-n]estle-bITs

[-g]Apped+[gr]Eased;[\$]he[a]r[d]e.

SLaughter | Cauter[DownS]ize - 2014-09-28 07:08

A-f-f-e-c-t-i-v-i-t-y

A-f-f-e-a-t-i-v-i-t-y

A-f-f-e-a-t-i-v-i-t-y

A-f-e-a-t-i-v-i-t-y

A-r-e-a-t-i-v-i-t-y

C-r-e-a-t-i-v-i-t-y

NPC[D]e[si]r[e] - 2014-09-28 07:38

Cut_N_Slash_This_BUrning_pLot [ur_self+selfies_slIDe_inSide(lined)]

-or-

[ur NPC cuts & slashlashes his burningurningyearning plotlot. ur self &
selfies slideinsidesidelined.]

B[Scr]abble - 2014-09-28 08:00

[
Bable+babbling +
Gable+Gabbling +
Bagel+Babbaging ...
]

] #1nce, this would have been. Ex[x]plainable. DesIR[L]able. #Now, it r[gl]
ot-stews. Abortive. C[G]lean[ed]. T[M]imed. #
[
-

2014 – 10

.....*S][yr][ing*(L)ED. - 2014-10-13 22:01

|| |[Syr(unh)inged sing(l)ed ...

]+[Tin(Man)gle-sheete.

]C[He(aving)ster(l)ings.

]M[(X)Y boVine_sPine crAcks].

]All[Trem(ulous)Bling].

-]vs[-

_Syringe_unhinged

_Singled + singing

_Tingle_sheet + Tin_Man_Mangling ['If I Only Had A ... ']

_Chestering + heavings + Sterlings.

[_MY _BOVINE _SPINE _CR*ACKS*]

[_(F)ALL _TREMULOUS + _TREMBLING | |BLING|BLING.]

[f] et al - 2014-10-14 07:50

[f] et al b alling + ge station b atting.

XXXperiencing Interruptions? - 2014-10-16 09:21

:throttled

:thr[m]OTTled

:thr[j]O[s]TTled

:thr[G]OTTI[i]e[bed]

:thr[ee_T]O[NED_LOVE]TT[Y]Led

LeakF[Ph]a[s]ce - 2014-10-27 07:34

the Crac [1st]. deLic[k]ious. febr[Ag]ile. m[F]elt: all goo and no get.

the Leak [2nd]. open. pOro[b]us. pinpr[Cl]ick: we wet + stick, velCro[w]ed[&crow(n)ing].

[(Hormonally_Honorary)Stag]Nation [3rd]. the [Ethe]real. the k[Sl]Ick. the bl[Dem]and. the s[H]in[ge]K[ing+rotting_Queen].

the Now [4th]. the [K]now. + the now. + the nOw[!] ...

RACHAEL BRIGGS

A guided meditation, proceeding backwards through the four parts of *Common Sexual Fantasies, Ruined*:

Goldfish Oil: Consider an orange. It has many pleasing features: bright peel, pungent scent, pleasing heft in your hand. But none of these features is the orange. You could paint the orange purple, de-scent it, dangle it in zero gravity ... and it would remain an orange. Where, then, is the essence of the orange? Whence its orangeness?

Bitter Berries Bite Back: Are you holding an orange? If so, eat it before reading any further; it's important to the example, and you'll need the sustenance. Good. Now you're clutching something even more marvellous and mysterious than any fruit: the absence of fruit. It has no colour, no scent, no heft ... yet there it is, in the palm of your hand. (It's also stashed underneath your chair, balanced atop your head, and stuffed into the toe of your left shoe.) Check all these places and see for yourself: no fruit. How can you perceive what isn't there?

Closets: Consider the inside of your own head. It's more tractable than any pumpkin or melon: you've lived there all your life. Do you have secrets up there: old love letters, embarrassing self-portraits, or half-starved animals scrabbling to get out? Did you leave a crate of oranges there once, and forget about it? What happens to oranges when they can't breathe?

The Rug from under You: If you have one apple, and you take away two apples, how many apples do you have? If two potatoes are launched towards each other at a velocity of 100 kph, where will it end? If this sentence is true, then you are an orange. Slip out of your pith, into a poem. – RB

Common Sexual Fantasies, Ruined

I.

Catwoman bursts through my apartment door, panting
from five flights and hungry for
revenge. 'Revenge and a blowjob?'
No, just revenge.

II.

The Sheik has died and left me his harem:
fountain girls, minaret boys.
Their skin must feel
terribly uncomfortable –
all those grabby fingers.
I sign the edict that frees them.

III.

He's got me pinned
against a brick wall, my arm twisted
behind me. He smells of sweat
and cigarettes. He leans in,
his words pricking my ear:
'Give me your wallet.'

IV.

She hopes I won't think she's perverted, but have I
ever considered a fursuit threesome?
Oh, fuck, Danielle.
Oh, please, Danielle.
You are so gorgeous,
but not with your unsolvable boyfriend.

The Adventures of n

I. Operations

n is not just added, tupled, squared, x -powered,
increased, multiplied, power-setted.

Subtraction, square-root, factoring, division, mod-four:
horrid ideas that eat at n .

II. Fibonacci

n
used to
walk the line
like a straightedge kid:
graph paper shirt, pocket protector –

Then,
 n
discovered difference
equations. It spiralled
fernlike, rabbitlike in artichokery, spiky
as a pineapple down Pascal's Triangle, head over –
stuffed with itself plus itself, scanning Sanskrit and wondering
where it would land –

III. Fractal

n ,
not
noticing
(not cake, not icing,
not cupcakes – nothing), is splicing
note to note, cupping hand to sweat-caked brow.

n ,
O thing who is slicing, splicing
note to note to note, cupping your hands together (not noticing,
not seeing through the sweat to the sweet cakes, noting nothing) –
No, n . O no ... !

Vanity

Male and female God created them:
to each a jewel. Around her neck, a pendant:
'female'. At his wristbone, a transplendent
cufflink: 'male'. And God collated them:

one man, one woman. God had fated them
to love as man to wife, as warp to woof
on a strict straight loom, their union proof
against perversion. When God plaited them

body to soul, though, God mismated them:
irregular and multicoloured jewels
not matched to breasts or beards or genitals
or hearts. When, later, God conflated them,

we could not stay as God mandated us,
however fiercely God berated us.

The Unravelling Scarf as a Model of Time

Suppose you spill lime soda
down the pulsitronic nebuliser of the TARDIS
and it jams the ultrasonic harmoniser.

Or suppose your friend
in a fit of irrational pique
disables the memory on your emotional storage device
so that all the harpsichord songs of history
are overwritten
by ten million copies of Michael Stipe singing 'Everybody Hurts'.

Or suppose some hypothetical person
were to lose the only key to the heirloom chest
where you keep the flashlight
that shines backward through yesterday
illuminating the corridor of time.

What happens to the past, in that instance?
Is it gummed forever up
by sugar gone rotten?
Is it overwritten?
Spooled away on a string of zeroes and ones?
Or do the oil paintings remain
pinned to walls in the empty hallway,
their pigments glowing red and gold
beneath the dropcloths
amidst the dust
in the dark?

ALAN LONEY

Crankhandle is the latest part of an ongoing Notebooks series, the first part of which was published as *Sidetracks: Notebooks 1976–1991* (Auckland University Press 1998). Between *Sidetracks* and *Crankhandle* comes a longer unpublished section, *Melbourne Journal: Notebooks 1998–2003*, begun when I first came to Australia. From the beginning, these writings were never seen as notes or sketches towards poems that were yet to be fully realised – each entry was intended to be as finished an act of writing as any other, longer, individual work.

Over the nearly forty years of this endeavour, there have of course been gaps, but the Notebooks provide a way for me to be quickly attentive to my environment, and to circumstances of wherever I might happen to be sitting, standing, waiting, travelling at any time. Perhaps one could speak of the individual pieces as ‘fragments’, but they are not fragments in the way that ancient Greek poetry has come to us on torn, worn, eaten, half-destroyed bits of papyrus. If these works are fragments, then each of Ezra Pound’s cantos are also fragments, placed against the totality of all poetry, from all over the planet, and from throughout recorded world history. In this sense, fragments are all we have, and will ever have. If some are very long and some very short, then that is simply how things are. – AL

from *Crankhandle*

mourning lies
in wait
for you

sunlight firing
off the page

with nothing
to say

there's no permit
for making
hese

any closer to the sun
to the light
to the source

a glint is
all there is

we'd fry

& Mordecai, a man of
almost ineffable
sweetness, in old age
walks up to me
and in both arms
enfolds me in the soft sounds
of Yiddish

is the culturation of an individual gained
at the price of a vast loss of potential
measurable by the collected culturations
of all the others

and in learning a second language
do we retrieve sounds that were lost
in acquiring our first language

even in this cold
magnolias bloom
thru coloured
light

endlessly clearing the desk
preparing for a work
that is never done

write as if you had
never write as if you had
written anything never
before written anything
before
(via Wittgenstein)

‘underworld’ = all the world one cannot see
or experience at any moment

‘peripheral vision’ = edges of the underworld
hem of the underworld

MATTHEW HALL

This book was written over two hundred years. It was started as a colonial project. From there it developed through the use of the archive as a consideration of historical narrative. The poem employs a Susan Howesque archival practice that selectively disseminates Canadian short stories to think about erasure and failures of settlement: to disclose an underlying colonial reality of the pastoral, and measures of inclusion and exclusion. The poems are familial but underlying this is the glowering absence of the historic, a generative absence which exemplifies how early / prairie literature is culpable in driving a national myth which forgoes Indigenous life.

As a child I was fascinated with rope-braiding machines. Even before I could manage the handle, I could watch them for hours. I consider tension as a form of kinetic energy. Words from archives are interwoven, assembled to mimic this type of tension. These narratives are bound to the manner in which we write the histories of our nation. We are these stories, and they are none of us. This rope can be used to bind, or ... – MH

from *False Fruits*

In the stilt of shadows, bundled down, his growing hands mewling against
the foxtraps.

sere vaulting
pried to silent threat
colloidal under stalk light

casual underwing by feathered
oar, the calenture of
kitchen sight

Harvest songs foreclosing the distance of his father's lands.

His wild absence, her sapling reclamation over uneven ground.

sounds threshing
the dream transmuted
to a panicle of hours

warren wild in silent blue
handling a crest
in axial leaf

Fledgling in bright grey, the central cairn stonepiled in foxlight, silvering off
the metal's red.

Her reflection burnished in cutlery light, words in his streaping bend of
mouth, silently clearing the table.

the merciless
hand on her waist
the cantled touch of skin
flocks diminishing

In the room above her, a winter of lingering branches.

Latent morning, his tread heavy with dried mud, wanting no harvest with redemption.

coverlet over flaxen knees
her weight upon the mantle
days flensed with the image
and of this

The wife of fallowed wing, the husband she is by consonant feather.

NATALIE HARKIN

Dirty Words, an A to Z index of poetry, is a restless offering; an unfolding that may begin on any page. This to-ing and fro-ing of observation is an un-binding of sorts; a mournful rage with beauty and deep love between the lines to disrupt and transcend the pain and disdain. This book is a reminder that what is (re)produced and (re)presented for general consumption, by institutions of power, is often steeped in myth-making and persistent colonial ideology.

This small contemplation on nation and history is informed by blood-memory and an uncanny knowing beyond what we are officially told; a reminder of multiple lived-histories, of other ways of knowing and being in this world. Our elders and ancestors fought for the right to exist and speak up into the future – there are traces and signs, and there was always resistance. *Dirty Words* is my ‘note-to-self’ to speak up, to unsettle and to be brave; to not be silent when another voice would be easier or expected. There is still work to be done, and difficult conversations to have. Hidden stories can be honoured, exposed and shared, and there is always poetry. – NH

D Domestic

The stories of Aboriginal women domestic servants cannot be told enough. They illuminate a deeply-rooted racist facet of Australia's history. They tell of the trials tribulations and triumphs amidst the backdrop of oppression.

—Jackie Huggins, *White Apron, Black Hands*, 1994

Girls of tender age and years are torn away from their parents ... and put to service in an environment as near to slavery as it is possible to find.

—Australian Aborigines Progressive Association, 1928

The great need in dealing with the girls of the [Point Pearce] mission is that they be placed out to domestic service as they reach a suitable age. There is no training and little for them to do in a native cottage home and so many girls grow up both useless and idle ~ Personally I feel strongly that voluntary effort in this direction is useless. A compulsory systematic placing of them out is necessary ~ Requests for the girls are often received by me and there would be absolutely no difficulty in finding situations for them. They become very capable as domestic workers especially at housework and the laundry ~ I think any girl so long as her health is right can do domestic work. The difficulty with the natives is that they are lazy ~ I could do more with them if obedience was enforced but as it is the parents interfere so much

Evidence: *South Australian Royal Commission on the Aborigines*, 1913

Aborigines Protection Board 1939
Committed to Institution till 18 years
Charged 'Destitute' Age 8

*She is very fond
of her own people
and is looking forward
to going home*

(see Justice; Resistance; History Wars)

O 'Occupy and Enjoy'

Whereas that part of [South] Australia ... consists of waste and unoccupied lands which are supposed to be fit for the purposes of colonization. And ... that in the said intended colony [South Australia] a uniform system in the mode of disposing of waste lands should be permanently established.

—South Australian Act, or Foundation Act, of 1834

Dear King William the Fourth

I wonder your intent in 1836
when you sealed your *Letters Patent* at Westminster
to amend the 1834 Act
*[on the nineteenth day of February
in the sixth year of your reign]*
new-provisions enclosed for said Province
South Australia

I wonder what were you thinking
when you wrote —
*nothing contained in those Letters Patent shall affect
or be construed to affect
the rights of any Aboriginal Natives
to the actual Occupation or Enjoyment
in their own Persons
or in the Persons of their Descendants
of any Lands therein now actually
Occupied or Enjoyed
by such Natives*

BROEDE CARMODY

Flat Exit is about greetings and departures, learning to let go and circle back to pick up what remains. These poems jump between north-eastern Victoria and Melbourne, romantic and platonic relationships, moments of personal triumph and those of shellshocked grief.

Collected here in this sequence, they explore the dislocation that occurs when moving from regional Australian to its urban mass, and when falling in and out of love for the first time. The poems revolve from homesickness, to self-care, to finding a soul to complement my own at an unexpected time and in an unexpected place – and life before and after the death of a close friend.

Many of these poems are autobiographical; some are fiction. My intention is not to be confessional but – as Gwen Harwood says – to establish a ‘way of seeing’. Mine, as it’s been so far. – BC

After a Three-hour Drive, Two Boys Fall into Each Other

My mother's sister and I slip south
along a three-hour patch of road.

We pop fizzy lollies and
listen to kilometres

of podcasts dissolve around
lumps of roadkill fuzz.

A hawk climbs back into sky,
the air-con catches the side of my neck.

We talk about films, politics,
revegetation and what should come after
university. The topic we avoid
is the boyfriend I text from the shower.

Our stops for hot chips and petrol spot
skyscrapers folding into view, propped
against the edge of sea quizzing a sky
pregnant with forecast.

Within the hour I collapse onto my bed,
lured by water brushing the windows of the old sharehouse
I don't call home. This place
is too close to the ocean, and
midsummer noons don't bite with wattle.

Boyfriend sends a two-word text: *I'm here.*

The glass door clones his face.

I am a mortician and there are pieces
of his body I've researched
he will never know.

Mango Season

You march into my larynx
wearing the scent
of downpour.
I clear out
the apartment,
clean
and scribble you
notes in the dark.
Dawn
will air clench
weary knuckles –
 the mango resting
in the curve of your palm
peeling back the syntax of our skin.

Common Language

I stomp through the frostbitten door
and your mouth opens as if to push out
a sentence. The mulled wine
makes our syllables bend

out of grammar.

We try on each other's skin,
pine, shed eyelashes like bedclothes.
Despite the storm only one snowflake finds its way
into our room.

There is no future tense on your mother's tongue,
no word for please.
The code we share
is touch.

In a few breakfasts I will jet
south to an island with burning summers
and animals that cannot walk backwards
even if they try. Instead of planning

one last hike inside the forest
we sit by your window, angling to figure out
what the winter sun is
or should do next.

Four Days On

Aftershock and jaw-ache,
a stranger wandering a house in tightening circles.
Hot showers or hotter cups of jasmine cannot fix this.

It sits on my chest and tries
on all of my clothes. Whiskey from wineglasses;
somewhere a whale calf surfaces for air.

I'm tired of writing in this glass box
in the sky. You taught me to slip under the waves like fish
and emerge safe on the side; water flat and calm,

a pane of glass. Come home soon, my love, I'm just
down the hall. There's nothing in our fridge except milk
and your parents' quince paste. But flop

onto the navy couch for a Sunday feast.

Can I remind you
one last time the correct ratio
of rice to water?

JEN CRAWFORD

I wrote most of this book on campus in Singapore, surrounded by a ring of jungle that couldn't encroach as fast as it was being thinned out. The circles and mosses of that location tilt and transect others – Auckland, Bicol, an empty Bangkok penthouse, and somewhere else, entirely see-through. It seemed important to be as close to sleep as possible, so I closed windows and wore headphones. Not to shut things out or make them stranger, but to soften and modulate the tensions of exchange.

In Bangkok, excavators swim up and down the canals. They float on barges and scoop themselves through the water. The water pools and resists, carrying places to places on its way.

In the 'epoch of simultaneity' not all spaces are equally accessible to thought or description. Rituals of immersion, of the maze and the gate, may not open anything but the body's ability to accumulate and to disperse, to be near and far, here and there. Memory, presence and imagination fold and run together. I was looking for gaps to step through, for ways both forward and back. – JC

moon drill

minty

this whole landing was in the sense of lit glass
the door the green readiness it once was
an unwoken christmas, its note the replenished third
I love but when I am gone this page intentionally

mountee

for the first time in six hundred years
the moats were full and the roads moats
spitting up flakes into the foam we waded
to tuneful chainsaws dinging
away through the jungle then clung, we did,
to your elbows and long forearms we
surfed out behind those elephant wings

the mentors

mouth after
shutter-up effulgent eye
they continue their feeding russian
aeroplane icecream to me
their child in beds with fur
and warm leaves electrical flash
broken through the wool
carried between their teeth,
could I whisper in their ears
& they become that to the hole
check for cents

minisher

tipping into a pool that doesn't sound reception
or thirsting and including the settled mud & white sky,
lightning tipping over its extremest branches quickly
stone banks tucking into the far white crease (not

the little curlew
that stays out & drinks in,
the little curlew that stays
out of reach and drinks
up from the pool of
erratic fluorescent
& branches pulling down)

remonitor

springing in the japanese
chinese garden shock slips
a lizard to the lake, April

April sweating
over your own black thumb
with a penknife relieves the pressure
for the mothers who dip wax
in the lake's softening good,
stretching out
the reflux and dismay

April April steal their books for something to go with codeine
April in the field of tent heat is orange
close hot & very much
I remember you

a tempo

these two silk birds are frayed and then it touches them.
these two frayed silk birds. into the river diving and emerging.
one such silk is a cracked river stone and this is the surface
of its silk, the green surface of its time in that silk time, its water.
you could cut your foot on that accurate division. if you weren't
aware. you could lay your hand on it and feel the sharpness
aware in your hand. these silk birds come down from the leaves
of the grey up on the edge of the cliff, they come down
to the water to drink. they fly past the roots that break the cliff
and through the stone cuts water. absolutely slowly and too fast
to see. so holds acceleration in array. when the riverbed bares
its posture and then softens, there go into the memory of water,
into the likely inclination of future water. these forms will
get undone. by their full registration of pressure, heat and sound.
into holding together, into dry and adrift. the dive is whole
into each particle, held or adrift.

CLAIRE NASHAR

Dear reader,

The poems that follow are a few stories. At their most straightforward, they are the stories of a day in the life of my family – when we buried someone we love. Trying to tell these stories meaningfully in a book has been hard. It has seemed important and respectful to undo them into others, bigger and deeper than ours. The lake that delimits the site of this book, Tuggerah Lake, is located on the Central Coast of New South Wales, Australia. Long before us and long after us the area is home to the Darkinjung, Awabakal and Kuringgai peoples. Because of its interest in the dead things of Tuggerah Lake, I initially called this collection a ‘necro-geography.’ I have since read Joyelle McSweeney’s ‘What is the Necropastoral?’, which says:

The Necropastoral is a strange meetingplace for the poet and death, or for the dead to meet the dead, or for the seemingly singular-bodied human to be revealed as part of an inhuman multiple body.

and

Necropastoral is a political-aesthetic zone in which the fact of mankind’s depredations cannot be separated from an experience of “nature” which is poisoned, mutated, aberrant, spectacular, full of ill effects and affects.

The poems in this book do not always start and end on discrete pages, and none have titles, although sometimes the index points a way. Muddle-headed pronouns, tenses and other grammatical disagreements reflect the porousness of subjecthood, action and time . Such disagreements are always fluoresced by subjects like love, death and life. Where there is blank space in these poems, as with most blank things, it is not empty. – CN

from *Lake*

garfish↔sea mullet↔luderick↔silver biddy↔black

↕

whiting

↕

flathead

↕

bream

↕

sole↔snapper↔leather jacket↔river garfish↔king

fish↔school prawn↔fish↔the↔most↔beautiful

↕

fish

↕

the

↕

most

↕

prawn↔tailor↔you↔hide↔to↔<fish>↔beautiful

to reed you as my inside breathing straw out our sad
babyhood of bubble braid or honey no ripening
zooms closer than this each dried
sweet fishy mud bed I Fractured hold right
don't look now or will we prawn each snatch to
you the small set of slucings
the tooth and hook finger reel of a swift fatted salt retch pile take
your hands out of ash into walking put on thwart and never but
be never again my thoughts of new air I want through you a once
out of me an each only but could and so cannot since this or that
undoes the rubble brain slinks in to water and not come back

if

and if a
gain in

tered in
plastic

this box
does no

t begin
now

to be easy

come
easy
at me

AUTUMN ROYAL

She Woke & Rose is an obsession with interiors, an attempt to forge openings, to merge letters as means of release, slowly, slowly feels the longing, the fractures and the loss.

‘When I state myself, as the Representative of the Verse – it does not mean – me – but a supposed person’, Emily Dickinson reveals. Here are multiple voices and personas rising and falling after their flowering periods.

Alice Notley stresses that ‘words are one way to get at reality/poetry, what we’re in all the time’. When it comes to my reality and poetry, Inger Christensen’s fourth sequence in *Alphabet* simultaneously summarises and complicates it all for me:

doves exist, dreamers, and dolls;
killers exist, and doves, and doves;
haze, dioxin, and days; days
exist, days and death; and poems
exist; poems, days, death

To make a stand and push it over, acknowledging the theatrics and violence of it all. I wish to confront rather than confess and as Felicity Plunkett writes it’s ‘when you pin and catch feeling in words / the tissue of its inconstancy / flakes away in your hands.’ – AR

Viticulture

after Sylvia Plath

*I don't bloody understand, he wants to go
from sales to rentals?* I overhear
the property manager say to an unknown
person via mobile phone. A wordless
screen-door slams. I've only ever heard him,
voice high-pitched, a hissing kettle.

I know it's him because he once used the master
key to inspect my flat on a Friday
morning. He thought nobody was home.
The hotplate was burning red as I
was in bed with a fever. The voices
were tucked up between my ears, little hell flames.

Three days earlier I'd emailed a maintenance
request regarding a fallen shower rail
that needed to be drilled into the wall. Steam
had unstuck the glue. The front door closed
and I awoke to voices stumbling down
the concrete stairs. An eavesdropper is forever.

The bed sheets twisted in my mind
and I thought I was mad, or madder
still when I was told the truth. I've never identified
as a neatly made adult, let alone renter.
These are chess-people that I play with, contracted
to with blue biro. Red ink is against the rules.

I imagine the red smoke of my childhood.
'The desert imagines nothing I imagine',
is a line from a Jill Jones poem called
'Leaving It To the Sky'. I'm going to begin
a poem with this line one day, when the ash
disperses from my coming-of-age.

My fever has returned. My blind down, the lamp
from my adolescence gleaming apocalyptically.
My mouth-hole grieves at the world and I swallow
two generic cold & flu tablets, crawl beneath
the covers and wait for a floral
transformation. We never stop flowing.

The pharmacist was romantic looking, thick browed.
His black eyes bloomed. O to drown underneath
the emerald depths and swallow salty seaweeds.
I was interrupted as he complimented my name
while cross-referencing my licence for
pseudoephedrine purchase, tight wires between us.

I was too disoriented to advise that my first,
and consequential surname is also the name
of a grape grown by a company founded
by Steve Pandol, a man who in 1906
immigrated to America from Croatia.
Hopeful interlocutors tug at the tongue.

The Autumn Royal is a grape described
as being a large, elongated purple-black berry
with crunchy skin, a firm texture and a pleasant,
distinctive flavour. I've gorged on these crisp-bellied
berries. The flesh was of a yellow-green
translucence and my mouth felt seedless.

Dyslexia decorates my family tree and like a cliché,
it branches out into daily existence. Until recently,
I've always believed that Pandol was actually Panadol.
I didn't tell the pharmacist this. Instead, I detailed
medications I've recently been prescribed.
His dark-pool eyes rolled with waves.

I wanted to Plath at him, *I have nothing to do with explosions*, but worry is a pillow I've always slept on and I'm drowsy. *Could my medications be causing this drowsiness?* He couldn't advise me on this and waited for me to leave the counter front. The silence was fermenting.

Sweat collected between my breasts.
If women don't sweat, they glow then my haloed radiance bit like chipped teeth and the voices began to worm through. My aguey heart itched as I walked towards the cash register.
I will pay with credit for this golden sunset.

I cannot afford to take another sick day from work. I'm casual, yet seeking commitment like a lamb bleating against a fence.
We're all encouraged to have our own mythical HIS & HER bath towels soaked in fabric softener.
I'm lost in the robes of all this light.

Further reading has informed me that the Autumn Royal grape has a relatively thin skin, is susceptible to cracking and rot, depending on post-rain conditions. As I reread this poem my fruitful tongue reminds me not to overcook it, or I'll kill the word of mouth.

Boiling Water after Emily Dickinson

There's nothing to shatter
on this evening. The window
is open, the neighbours may look.
With my mouth held shut
I fill the saucepan. Black marks,
once boiled-over, flake into the water.
I dwell in possibility,
nothing rarely happens
unless it's passed through the lips.
My body faces the stove,
the saucepan rests over flame,
I want to reduce my thoughts
having sliced them with a knife,
bluntly. I hold my hands
over the aluminium mouth, allowing time
for each line to sink in. The water bubbles,
steam pushes my palms up, warm
and wet to wipe over my cheeks.

JAVANT BIARUJIA

I have written elsewhere that we need the transformative power of art, any art, in order for life to be enduring. (This is not original; Nietzsche more or less said the same.) In 'being, its own reward', I say that 'I have no power of observation, and mere description (mimetic simile) leaves me cold', for I believe in potential literature, the potential of literature. This is especially true of conceptual poems, such as these contained here, although I have splashed a few similes about (who could live without 'like?'). I also said in my poem that '[p]oetry, like water, is necessary for life to flourish. Like breath. Unpredictable'. Anaïs Nin saw the journey of art in terms of a solar barque (commun[ic]ation); John Ashbery, a psychopomp (communicator) – and André Breton had his 'communicating vessels', where they, like most artists, called upon mythology to further their insights.

I also mentioned in 'being, its own reward' that art does not replace life. I agree with TS Eliot on the 'continual extinction of personality', if he meant autobiographical or so-called confessional poems, and with Voltaire, who said that poetry was the music of the soul. The conceptual poems here 'forget the currents', whatever the vogue is nowadays, instead finding their 'own level, *above* and *below* consciousness.' Being is its own reward. Words are empty vessels for the reader to fill. We do not need (auto)biography. Is not poetry a journey, an odyssey or an exploration of sorts? I end (my poem) by saying '[w]ithout poetry, we are *deluded*; we should surely grow older earlier.' – JB

from *Spelter to Pewter*

anima “A Pproaching Zukofsky”

B O xkite began

Adamsons aria for T. Rexs middle class

The tr Auma of Birth

beige act S “in their variousness”

beige fact S & figures

[magnet Ised]

the Dreyf Us case

saving Molière (starring wet wet wet)

use Communist utterances or

pr Oustian *Sur la lecture*

that weigh su Btterranean sounds up

like Zol A translations

aver the context in which Logos vapors

ae Ther

a porous ima Ge

inhered in the ko Ans of *Maximus*

hennaed Larceny (syn)tactical

hemicyc Les

of YES In

j Unk bonds &

/epic/ Moments*

like violas of translation Between
Eshlemans french c Aves
yarda Rming
rôles In
alpha manoe Uvres
of no Menclature

recoded s Peech
rewritten Labanotation
r Adial
verbal Text
rem Itted
bemused Noh
meant *Ur*
re Mixed

savage he Irs
ethe Rial revolution
usual Indices of time
busy Dimensions
alphabetic p Irouettes
amassed Under music
reciting ger Man

french Or russian
medial affi Xes
incunabula of insanit Y
a mute *Germinal*
an inscribed Esperanto
the delirium of ... NAND

Carol Rama dabbled in *naga* «M.A.G.I. C.K.»
she was suave she Adhered to an
avid pixe Lated talisman
she penned a manifesto to a no Cturnal abracadabra
an intellectual at(ar)ax Ia

l Unar
al Macantar

begi Nning black ך ן
pivotal pr Iest
Ra Cines “Song of Solomon”
avoiding Prousts pin K
gangs ‘n’ guns (the s Exual aspect)
she staged *Loot*

in the Sixties ritualised the tetra Grammaton
staged vital v Erbs
& avid love Rs
video tapes of De Meter borne by lions
no doubt C Arol Ramas preoccupation with
frogs stems from *ra Na* the ordinary Italian word for this
amphibian what about the Indian god
an incarnation of Vishn U? or Shiva the sacred bull?
(indented al Manacs of

sonatas to Loti)
Vol Apük case endings
disused Nouns
discussions on *Tess von D'Urbervilles*
or *Die Elenden* considered passé to Human Resources
Rimb Auds
an Nular
residu Um:
a folio ele Ment

for the soul of { Tesla }
lumen / Human
the moon lord Gun worship
Ved As?
— ste Le —
John Dee Linguistics
up & down sp Iral staircases
theban *Ubuesque*
na Mes

ope Ra
eq Uinox
remount Tremolo
Das Wesen des Weltalls let Nietzsc He
b E
ge Rmanic
tutored Frenetic
tutoyer Other
Oxfo Rd Cambridge
agen Da
dji Inn
as Under!
a Mended!

ROSS GIBSON

Where does it take place, *Stone Grown Cold*?

Let yourself think it's a town you know well.

Some bits are real and help like the sun on your back. Other bits have been gathered from gossip, screens and scumbags. There's a good dose of sex in it and knucklehead glamour. It's such a town. For good and for bad. With dazzle all over it. Dumb-arse to match. More gorgeous than reasonable. With everything you want. And who gives a fuck? Not prepared to play or say nice. Not much shame about the wrong things. Except on the quiet.

Most citizens are nine-to-fivers. They're always bumping into folks who are not:

sham company promoters; hollow share hawkers; men loitering in yards; mendacious women importuning on telephones; purveyors of poorly provenanced smallgoods; covert-camera seducers and follow-up extortionists; hotel 'barbers'; boarding-school snow-droppers; hospital potion filchers; theatre impresarios and fanciful futures conjurers.

Best accept it's a town knows you well. – RG

Five More Bells

Fevers seize the freeway because tumours clog the culverts.

Where tugboats thrum the baywater, sunset thickens evening so
the Bridge cools down with moonglow.

Next a mist sniffs at the pile-light and starts to suck the ferry dock.

Beauty gleams for just a moment cinched down as a glimpse before a brewing
welt abrades the moon till damp gusts snap the spinnakers and jibs
all flick and crack.

Then some calm arrives and guarantees that greed glides like a saint.

But wait.

*Earn respite in a wind-change. Bless and lose your way. Scale happiness to
suffering. Drift comatose to ebb-tide. Let music play as absence. Watch slick
beasts writhe and sputter – at the tight ends of your hands.*

Now let it come.

A speedboat takes the future.

Last light gives one quick spasm.

Your phone commences sobbing somewhere in the past.

Small to Medium Enterprise

Jason's gone to ground with a batch of meth home-cook he was hustling at the tapas bar.

He's left your Touareg in a back lane out behind a yeeros shop.

Katie goes to see him. Says she'll blow him for a freebie. But Jason won't be getting it even half the right way up. So he goes at her yelling. Berating what the fuck.

These are people you employ.

Katie tells her tale to Annabelle. Who runs a snitch to Alistair. Who gets so much up in arms, he pretty near shits straight down on her foot. Now it's him that's got a hard-on and is fully hot to trot.

You want to smack their dopey knuckleheads. But this next delivery's drop-dead. Not a breath to spare till Thursday. So you scoff red jolts from a full fist. Glug a bomb of Chivas. Work 36 more rank hours.

And watch your thoughts waft all misshapen.

Collector

You are the fourth person in the room.

A message has been delivered. It's bigger than right *now*.

Not far from here, a stuttering young man is bleeding in a loading bay.

Inside, the Russian has just marvelled: "Consider what such odds, every one man here is left hander!"

Thunder? Outside. Was it?

Moisture sneaks down a tall amber bottle.

The box known as 'television' has seen everything already.

Make a fist with your right hand. It's the same size as your heart.

Two smells are tangled up: iodine & mutton in a broth.

You must learn not to hum when you're nervous.

Puff out one side of your face. It's a sign that you're thinking.

The plastic under foot whispers sinister and quick.

On the floor beside the bed, there's an encyclopaedia of knots.

Outside, the sunset has coagulated red as a knife wound.

The Turk reminisces: "600 miles in 24 hours."

(He has spent most of his life moving from wanting to wanting.)

“When you wake from a nightmare, should you feel guilty?”
The startling thing is how time can slow down.
No one alive knows how it all started.
The Lithuanian starts muttering: “Go get the thing!”
From this moment on, there’s no tense other than past.
“Sit here and count how many breaths you’ve got left.”
Pink and puckering in the sink: one blunt, severed thumb.
They banked everything on one thing.
You might wash your hand all morning, but it will never be clean again.
On a nail behind the door: a wire coat-hanger sagging.
A smell rises up now from the wrong side of ripeness.
A haggle of cockatoos fly screaming to a cloud.
“Stoop you down now for this payment which is what you know makes
your debt.”

Endure ten seconds of silence, until the soundtrack chimes in: it’s a
glockenspiel lullaby.

DEREK MOTION

The Only White Landscape is an assembly point. Past instances of thought and memory have come together as directed when under threat. The swells of real-life changes underpinning the poetry are physical, social, geographic and romantic. But, that's so usual: the attempt to find singularity in the ruptures – not meaning, not really. From loneliness to only-ness. Sometimes I run at night through the fields around my house and then sit on carpet to record the resulting language. 'I feel so lyrical,' I remember thinking at one point, mid-manuscript. I'm always seeking recognition. I want a conversation to surround my personal thoughts. I want to influence 'you' – your actions and opinions. Poetry can and will measure up to somebody's sincerity levels but then he / she still might not love you. All the feels laid bare, the words persisting as evidence of what you might have thought, felt. *The Only White Landscape* is a submersion in the past, a landscape stripped of comforting colour, a set piece refigured in post like a photograph, my choices of emphasis directing and deflecting your attention. It feels like an outcome. I hope the poems keep you just as long as you want to be kept. – DM

density

in long grass everything is a cushion

i'm spread on the world, an empire & we're plants
long butter knives from a corner-eye vantage,
jousting in service of hunger

the world is under your wheels

a static thought bubble but here i am
or was, remembering interference, names, the owner-proprietor's
gilt font, a bra outline under that white shirt, always

buttoning up like it's regimental – ascending
steering via knuckles such a giddy & terse bracket of living

so my work with sound is more a study of walking arm-in-arm
(the anzac dogs, dogs waiting for the anzacs & thinking fine
the courts shouldn't let this happen, you know?)

the ambient potential of a startled wallaby equates
legs, specifically, the hemline to sock gap in your context
a fine massage ascending the calf muscle, everything
staggered, incremental just another word for hand-spans

i wish i was an escaped horse, a bolting solo in reverse
until time pops: i'll think of places i've been now,
filter shit times around formal logic –

only because i'm a country girl

born & bred & unshod out back, the passing smell of rain
gums, muscles loose under thumb & it's another
pointless week spent strategising / wood gathering

i don't understand my own triggers

facebooked my sister with it after wine but it's nothing,
& later, in the poem you can just say 'it rains'
in the poem it can always be the past (the cat licked
ice-cream from my bowl, long grass drifting from it's back)
see people are together & swaddled by cushions
& nothing, it's only touch:

everything was a bite mental, mostly old people
& most of them did most of the talking
the door drummed on sharp like neck bone-on-neck bone ...

rhetorical aspirations closed under the book cover

your hand as image smarts
remember the thin white shirt in the long grass? i've been
saying without guile: 'i don't know'
& making lists (wrote: making lists) marketing
the remainder of a lousy dinner party – anyway

the only white landscape

no drill i was forced
into your new gaze:
this newest ephemeral work a black-&-white set piece
also a seaweed tangle / an effective silk binding
keeping me just as long as i want to be kept

all shared images
are stray whims at
guesswork, i'm an enthusiast & the erasable glow
of thought spurs reassessment / deletion
then i wrote: be more specific full stop

we're all pioneers, maverick
place-makers but people *like*
you / a backlit open-shouldered stretch / this temporal space
or just the line-to-line newell highway in oiled desire
a direction / or another name right

in the browser now
blank tho conscious
things maybe only after-the-fact / after everything
& in a clotted network of sentiments how
i'm identifying with a song lyric, at rest on my yoga mat:

loose me / decommissioned
peak-me / ever-so-briefly
this lamplight flatters the bass line & a moth gets wrecked
in the damask curtaining, the emotions / past instances
we reach at the emergency assembly point

binding

the credits font crumbles to a song
a whole galaxy of concern, one wherein you lack
air. the scenery comes frosted. tell me
your times, specific bare feet on the floorboards:
locate it, see i've got you for real here. it's always
sunset in a vastly specific landscape, sadness
expunged, actors squint-eyed against kissing,
a skirmish of light & dust. in our pillow universe
my robotic arm reveals paddock whorls;
your July 4 stocking run is the sun, wan &
bullocky, softness country's aura & astrological
guidance. waves trample about, under the radio,
a bristly phalanx. there's me! through the curtains'
slit with specific flashback: a gaudy analogue colour
saturation – milky additive – & we're huffing
into a sense of parallelism (naming rights
go missing, ground to some militant pulp).
step into this pre-loaded career & come,
come further past altitude sickness, lost
in the routine of finger-spinning old records,
all things slightly small like me in a room.
my thoughts: everything. mercury dropped
into a bucket atop a median strip. you'd
like that. this was shot generationally
or by degree, a quotient of time, drawn
up by the window with you excluded,
you emended from classification.
it's systemic while we're in transit,
all the feels at bay, distance stares
sapped of flavour, winter watermelons.
i'm often on location culling friends. like you,
cold in the maw, middle ground to crystal focus,
light behind, hair pulled specifically back.

ANNE ELVEY

What is it I take for granted? Skin. The body's fragile, necessary, and sensitive clothing marked by culture accrues value (or otherwise) in particular places for no good reason but history, and an obdurate maintenance of relationships of power and (dis)possession. Hoping to unsettle presumptions of superiority and their mingled threads of colonial violence, I am writing to access and decolonise a white settler unconscious. In limited ways, again and again, poem by poem, by collage, by prose approximations to poems, I am joining a small and growing throng of writers questioning whiteness.

This collection has been building for some years, prompted by thinkers and poets such as Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, and more recently Peter Minter, Natalie Harkin and Shane Rhodes. Minter writes of a 'vision of a decolonised Australia, a place where settler and Indigenous cultures have begun to find an existential common ground that is beyond postcolonial'. *White on White* takes a path through histories and incidents, familial, social, and historical, thinking whiteness, in the hope of opening towards that 'existential common ground'. – AE

On All Souls' Eve ^

The map sketched
on the oval
of the Sir Douglas Nicholls Reserve
had borders

formed by the meander of Murray
and Bay, Pacific and
Bight, the straight
lines of neighbour states and the name
of a nineteenth-century queen. Stones

marked each massacre site



Late evening, we came,

stood

in turn

each hour

placed candles in clay pots

while the stories were told until day.



Is it cliché to say what is true
that the rain that night came soft and silent?

The rain came soft and



Ticket of Leave

With that 1850 ticket William Elvy was at hand on Country
without leave to know to ask. Was he schooled
to vicious force, as were the men John Frost laments?
Was he co-opted to the murder-theft of land? Or was that past?

The shorthand of his entry 16392, arrived 16 September, 1845:

trade: farm labourer
height: five-seven-and-a-half
age: 22
complexion: fresh
head: oval
hair: brown
whiskers: none
visage: oval
forehead: to me indecipherable
eyebrows: brown
eyes: grey
nose: large
chin: to me indecipherable
native place: Canterbury

with later references:

Thomas Burgh at Circular Head in 1848.

William Borrodale at Stanley 1850.

Arrested for theft of a watch from Westbury in '46, Burgh was not guilty.

The same year, Borrodale, who'd been transported for theft of a horse, ran the Black Horse Inn in Stanley.

The Van Diemen's Land Company sheep arrived in 1825 at Circular Head, Elvy in 1848.

In '52, Elvy's t.o.l. was revoked for missing muster. Across the Bight did creeks yield gold? At Kingower in '56 he married a ticket-of-leave man's daughter.

Mary was not fifteen.

Marks: scar centre forehead; 2 angels and bleeding crucifixion on left arm below elbow; W. E. faint between forefinger and thumb left hand.

Transported for: Stealing 8 ducks, third offence

Earlier there was the matter of a carpet bag. I think a python.

Surgeon's report: well-behaved

Did theft cease? Is it in the blood
the turning from the deed?

What ticket is inherited for title?

OMAR SAKR

As-salāmu ‘alaikum.

I won't keep you long. First, I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, on whose land the majority of this collection was written.

Now you are about to read the poetry of an Arab Australian, which is a rare thing when it shouldn't be. Now you are about to read the work of a queer Arab Australian, which is a rare thing when it shouldn't be. Now you are about to read the life of a queer Muslim Arab Australian from Western Sydney, from a broke and broken family – not rare, but it should be.

This is not a definitive statement on Islam. This is not a definitive statement on Arab identity, not Arab Australian identity, not bisexuality, not even Western Sydney. It is a statement – an exploration of me and what I've seen.

The only thing I ask of you is that you do not stop with me. Discover the other diverse writers and poets in this country – find us, find our books. We're here, and we're growing. – OS

Dear Mama

Don't preach to me, Mama, don't tell me no stories
about some holy book-er-other, about angels, devils and
jinn. I've learned too well already the religion of your fists
and my body's drummed its song, its bruised gospel
so often it knows no other, and at night I garble
the chorus, gasps interspersed with bass and moans lowed.

Your god is capricious, strikes no reason, some days (the hours
you had full gear, I later found) you'd grin and order us a pizza
in and we'd lounge about our smoky temple as your silver screen
apostles entertained us, shot & bled & fucked & spat & died
for us. Those days were best. Others were nails-on-chalkboard,
a kind of possession at the edge of hearing – your cheekbones, jaw,
elbow, everything was knives and cut against the air
even though your teeth were set, lips locked prison-tight.

A tinnitus, only I could hear it, but I swear your body screeched
those mornings loose with warning, and so we learned to read
your augurs in Dunhill smoke, those exhales prophesying pain
if we didn't become paragons of silence. Sometimes even then.
You saw my treacherous father in the closet of my skin, my face
his imprinted sin.

I remember when the locksmith came, his confusion, dawning pity when he asked, 'You want the lock *outside* his door?' Your cash and a small gold chain sealed my cage. How could you think walls would hold me? If only you knew how I made that cell a world, hard but free, you might refashion yours: a hundred books, each one key.

I ought to thank you, dearest Mama, for the prayers
I memorised, the blessing of hunger, and the urge for independence
you sang into my bones, percussion-deep, the taboo calls of meat,
the need to roam. I ought to thank you, dear Mama, for your piousness,
for showing me the cruelty and beauty of a God and godlessness
all combined, and for teaching me that holiness is no more
than moments lent with loved ones whether bonded
by blood or not. Especially not. I ought to thank you, Immi, but I'm out now
and the mosque is empty.

America, You Sexy Fuck

You're wearing your prettiest dress:
Fall, the only one named
for its desired effect, that is
when the colourful fabric (succinct
golds, russet and deep browns
swirling together) slips
to your knees. The trees
are endless skeletal shadows
blurring the horizon,
some clinging to a final vibrancy,
daring winter to preserve them
still crowned in aspen glory.
The view out the window shifts,
gradual as the seasons, the inclines
of forest recede, and clusters of homes
wink out from the foliage – humanity
emerging from living acreage – as of old. Roads
proliferate, black stretchmarks
stitching your limbs together.
Factories punctuate the distance, the smoke
hanging between chimney and sky, still
as a painting, yet drifting apart slowly
like a cloud. Destiny beauty-marks
your collarbone (the dress pools
as you reveal yourself to me) sign-posted
at an intersection near Syracuse; I had the rare
pleasure of watching Carver diminish
in the rear-view mirror, not a destination,
merely one of many ways making
inroads into you. Fat syrupy

clouds gather, swallowing the blue
and you begin to sweat red.
I cross your bridges, your rivers
and gorges patterned with cottonwoods,
tracing my footsteps across soft Dakotas,
sweet-talking a groove into your crops.
I want to peel them back with my teeth,
see what's beneath, what you're hiding,
but I'm too distracted by your brazenness,
the swell and heat of your hips. A valley
between and a vast wetness appears: steam
billows off the lake, perhaps it's fog *this* dense
rolling whiteness unbuttoning the cuffs
and trailing fingers over lips of storm.
I am heading to your politics,
walking New York, singing Michigan,
whetting my tongue on your discrete edges.
Tell me, can I outline your everything?
Between us, lies, so much emptiness:
pit stops, Detroit Burger Kings, and dead towns
spoil the tree line
with a beautiful kind of desolation.
Beautiful because of people like Tammy,
iron-grey and swinging sixty, still working
behind a counter, smile manufactured in '89
who keeps industry alive
well past its use-by date,
the way winter rips off autumn heads
highlighting its beginning
in a furious burst of colour.

CHRIS MANN

This ... (change is clAssy, gets you to the end of the queue, (symmetry it seems doesnt Do much as a theory of mind, still looks too much like music), and coz, Its so, a form of AndOrNotcarrytheOne (what If sounds like when youre dEad, (Next step, Licensing the numbers ... and coz the end then lives in diagnosIn Extra time,

... so here are some short, Demonstration silences. this first ones taken from the prayer manual for fixing a recalcitrant Device ... (you'll likely notice it smudges at the edge, but otherwise ... (might be fair to follow that with something more, idunno, Meaningful, you know, maybe a, pale skinny wink at the ethical klepto thatAnd as names think of themselves as philosophies, ratbag nouns with a crush on capital andEpileptic is the thing, blackmails time into fucking itself ... (the great thing about words but is that you only have to say itWhatever Once and then its trUe. Stuff but, bEauty, the classic Medium, (though is it Fair to think while listening? (something of a recidivist witness, on Ice, (some hypocrisy of the forensics biz, Hidden in ubIquity, like, you know, It, (Profit (when youre far enough away, (comes under the statute of limitations, (all whitewash curators and sanitisers ofLike Cop This. (the words got no subconscious anymore, still has that habit of singing out loud ... Anyway, ... i'll pray for you. – CM

Problems

Packages of perspective – peep. What they peep at is unclear. And perverts make profits from (of course) publicity (marriage, tautologies and lies):

- 1.local government (defined as data banks (economic zones)), privatised social services, tax defined as information (or market intelligence (data defined as practical advertising)), and communication networks (education and its look-a-likes (cops)) as supplied by retail bankers are
- 2.the current state of play – just ask your local Safeway manager. Art as advertising research is pretty drab stuff and really only requires reflexive minimalism, modelling, a socialist-cum-corporate realism, tourist insights of accounting (designer theft). What remains however interesting is art as instruction manual, the smudge of ethics, aesthetics and credit (the transcendent fact), pieces as problem grammars (trade, part of a tacky explanation of fundamentalism and the attraction of the phrase). Descartes's last dance (, and other biological synthesisers) uses time as a strange attractor, a bit like red. Forms use agreement as a definition of diagnosis. The ether is not only conceptually noisy – what with all those competing futures, ads – it itself (a butter sculpture) is going off. The key of C puts it's order in and notes that entropy don't live next door no more, it's moved upstairs and history – that fractal of bothered syntax – does the dishes (and rhetoric dries); let's hear it for double bunks: hear hear. A hiccup mimes logic by breathing in. And something farts. Comparison, a cowboy joke (Simon says, of cowards) reneges by giving up: promise just can't win. (It's cool to be embarrassed, eclectics (eclairs and toast) lay on bets by breakfasting in bed. Hip anyway enough. The odds are kept.) And should chance (a packet of little negatives with gregorian use-by dates) come in, you're s'posed to take the spoon out of said mouth before serving. Anyway, if words were jealous of stutterers I'm sure we'd know. Aren't you? A library of hells, a sanctimonious outer suburb of poor taste, has a reference on sets: what did you say? I beg your pardon, what did you say? Aren't you? Liable? Errands are tokens of guilt, sticky edges that join the dots – modern victim blues. Average doesn't rhyme with orange, but neither does anything else. But average does rhyme. Otherwise,.

Slander – an optimistic idea (it piggybacks the free lunch) – always wants

a guarantee (for life, mind you): it'd probably be easier if you paid. Franchised targets with 'to whom it may concern' writ bold, at least keep sight and stock makers off the streets, pity 'bout the view, but next year all this will change, we'll be MBAish and buy success (won't that be proud) and only fascists of intent will cure the ground.

Irony only flatters management – it doesn't quote – and Australia is an ad for market research, it's a known-to-associate (nd warehouses (as a fence)) fifties practices and borrowed criterion (, a museum of exploitatioi). What it did have (access, locality (a syndrome), orchestrated competence) has resolved as debt (every man, woman and child subsidises Murdoch, Bond and Elliot for example, to the tune of one hundred one hundred fifty yen each a week). Chartered accounts model legislation and we get dobbed for holding the ball. Me, I'm going home, get my drugs delivered. Dear American Express, is there a doctor in the house? Does he paint?

Exchange as non-periodic propaganda – you can always get Japanese or German money at two percent so long as it has military application – and seeing the military model behaviour, stress, etcetera that of course means everything. I mean market research is only user-pays surveillance. And the military academies are buying up (specialising) seventies poetry in Australia, pricing criticism out of the market.

Anglo hackers (ghosts of blonde bombshells put out to grass) turn tail by breaking up the palette, a fashioned overkill, a vanity of being right. When John Maynard Keynes designed the British Council he was playing opposite 'the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction'. (Project-based diplomas of electronic arts may indeed be the best way to exploit sixteen year olds (boys) (wetware), but rock and roll is a miserable distribution system of personal pronouns and rancid meat (the nice thing about parallel universes is that you can exploit them with relative impunity) and as any sixteen year old girl will tell you, if you want to make money (be a bloomsbury) don't be first.) And telling all these reformists how to butter their bread, let alone where to get off, is a lyrical job description nor the depressed, a mirror with no silver lining (, it helps explain why case histories always read like whinges, why the most generous thing bureaucracies can do is make mistakes). Paranoia spells

'good' as 'syndicates'. It wants to unionise second thoughts. So? Decoration only looks like pornography (that without redeeming social importance) on sundays. And on sunday afternoons MITI talks about buying CSIRO, the dilettante's acronym go. But is it art? Or is it, at least, Duchamp? The PhDs in aesthetics are all owned by Ford. How's that for robotics?

And don't monkey with social darwinism 'less you want to go into banking, a periodic table of surplus values where any service industry gets a two-for-one. Double or quits, you can't lose. No wonder they wanna up the ante by exporting guilt (me, I'm selling subscriptions to my mortgage, wanna deal?) Manners, it seems, are still the software of things. Gee, I coulda said that. Or using Radio Australia to supply digital signal (courseware) to a field of laptops running conversation-theory based programs (education as the hook (it's cheaper to write off) to sell management; the target area of Radio Australia is the greater economic co-prosperity sphere) and do you think I could give it away? Doing an audition (job interview) on negation is a full time job.

And I'm not arguing here eor versions needing witnesses (best-case argument by fait accompli, otherwise mere collaboration (what you do with an enemy)), but for the structure of cross examination. If the future is defined as that sector of human endeavour that fails to require competence, an audience of social credit, the best we can hope for is yuppie enlightenment, some sort of structural self-reference or what they used to call speech. And apart from being portable – a minimal entry requirement, like bad breath – speech conjugates (Freud's 'talking cure') a calculus of romance: having sold 'listening', industry now wants to buy silence. Dressing silence as complicity (positivism) was a marketing mistake ('though appropriate) equivalent to defining nuns as twins: purposeful systems (a more or less bankrupt realisation of the eight hour day) are honorifics (mercenaries, if you will) that beg to differ. Teachers are reasonably, in fact really, teachers. Oh. Ambiguity is not the pluralism of tautologies that rhyme (actually, average) only on warm nights: it sleeps well. And dreams, of running off at the mouth. However, being right is an experience form that scolds the feedback of capricious standing-for-something-else. It ts an instrumental

want or strategy. It is not an ecology. It is not (thank god) a word. And because committees are right (they legislate gossip), they have nothing to say (place). This is not an existentialist's 'shut-up' (used but not used up), News Limited makes us eavesdroppers. That's where it works. Tale-telling is the only possible job. The only well-formed sentence is a dob, a (false) economy of evidence: 'how much is that doggy in the window?' is a prayer. I say, I say, I say, that's a bit rich.

(Here follows the 'Birth of Peace', a ballet by Rene Descartes, first performed 19 December 1649: We can observe two minutes silence, in lieu. (Heine's ballet Faust works too.))

More is a map. It names names (and looks after common sense) and makes axioms a theory of value (the units of measurement are, presumably, ads). One efficiency too many (the self-deception of parts (an hypocrisy of pleases)) makes a science of attempts. It functions. And crazy-systems theory proves hesitation (the improved proof is irony (pushing shit uphill, 'though perfectly privately (a two-scoop truth where minus minus equals equals, or some such lamingtons' lament))). 'Paying attention' is a form of reproduction that knows, an inheritance that forgives itself. It is a fringe benefit (it relates). It is not a profit. Logic is a profit. No pictures please.

Appendix A

Self – an essentially pathetic way to package time – uses anxiety definition of locality: Dorothy Dixter gets in quick with a fix – Pilot project *47: Balloons / airships as low-level satellites using 2 Meg mmW links to supply city-wide communications (eg Shanghai) *53: Virtual Systems Environments – an on-line strategy-thinking magazine to service management ('management' is defined as the only sector of the Australian economy that has not improved it's productivity since 1952)

*48, *49, *51, *52 are DIY scenarios

Appendix B

Rupert Murdoch's turning Catholic may or may not mean that news has become a transcendent fact, but let us pray.

Appendix C

The 'that' that interprets 'and' was late. It made excuses.

JEANINE LEANE

Aboriginal women are the great gatherers of many things – food, of course, but also stories and inner strength. The women who raised me had vast reserves of inner strength, and to pass that on was a powerful act of activism. In particular, they taught me to listen to the past as it speaks in the present.

This work is about listening to the past and walking back over it, step after step, to see what you missed the first time. It speaks to what has been left out of official records, recordings and documents – the emotions, the other sides of paper – and what is not said. These poems engage with the ongoing, interventionist nation-state and the crime scene that is Australia in the lives of Aboriginal people. In contrast to state archives, museums, libraries, universities and collection agencies – and their methods of ‘recording the lives’ of Aboriginal people – my work explores the body where memories are stored as an archive; anchored and etched. Writing is an act of remembering a dismembered past.

The title *Walk Back Over* alludes to a bridge across the Murrumbidgee River where I grew up but, more symbolically, mirrors the need to revisit our past. Much was made of the 2000 Reconciliation Walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge – many settler Australians walked across this and other bridges, and I am not cynical about that – but there are many other spans in Australia that must be walked: not just once, walked back over. – JL

Colour of massacre

A new century dawned and white Australians got urged
to feel comfortable and relaxed about their history.

*Shake off that irksome black arm band – legacy
of radical lefties who can't leave well alone –
their tiresome chant that white Australia has a Black history
and we all have blood
on our hands. We've got a new song
to sing now!*

Right-wing historians hummed this new tune
set about to write Aboriginal massacres clean
out of the record, history books, out
of the classroom.

*There were not truly fifteen thousand Palawa people
in Van Dieman's Land before the arrival of
white Christians. They said. There weren't
five thousand! Only a few hundred naked savages
roamed here and a meagre hundred or so killed
in self-defence – of course.
Perhaps they were stealing?
Darker still – they were cannibals –
weren't they? Think about it!
What happened to the remaining?
Nobody wrote it – no history of
massacres here.*

*Perhaps saved by Christian charity?
Blended in with the rest – maybe they died of
natural causes, or perished just because
they couldn't adapt. The rest is hearsay – oral history's
words in the air!
Nothing on paper – so who remembers?
The Aborigines didn't count in numbers –
why bother now?*

Nobody recorded those other syllables in time,
full of sound, fury, punctuation
of blows, blood and screams.

Wasn't their blood red?
Didn't their loved ones wail?

Late in the twentieth century, a population
of eighteen million, the shootings of
thirty-five settlers went down in Australian history
as the Port Arthur massacre, prompting a prime minister
who denied Black massacres to buy
back the nation's firearms to minimise
the chance of another white one.

But, wasn't their blood red too?
Didn't their loved ones wail?
What is the colour of massacre?

Cardboard incarceration

This cardboard prison they call an archive
is cold, airless and silent as death.
Floor-to-ceiling boxes contain voices
no longer heard yet wailing within
faces no longer seen yet still missing in
a jail of captured snippets, images and memories
among the severed heads and bleached bones
of dismembered bodies tucked tidily away in vaults
and museums and universities of the world
in the name of science
or history or anthropology or
something else trendy at the time
justifying the collection of our bits and pieces –
as the Other.

Reams of records demonstrate how you measured
our heads with every Western yardstick –
examined us through voyeuristic lenses,
scrutinised our children's fingernails
long under microscopes to find them remarkably pale –
gawked inside vaginas where that rosebud is
pink as pink is pink
despite the otherwise hypothesised differences
between black and white
intellect, industry and capacity to settle.
We are the inmates incarcerated within
cardboard cells where every neatly dotted *i*,
and symmetrically crossed *t* screams out:

*Read this Black angst against
these white pages.*

Child

On a winter day, against a pink streaked sky
we walked to school.

You clung to my hand like

I knew the world.

Grey clouds hung low kissing eucalyptus blossoms –

red and green king parrots clipped the skeleton bows
of frost-glazed trees like brooches. Your peals
of laughter swirled in the chilly breeze
across the empty park.

We stopped to look –

birds, sky and flowers – but not long,

I worried we'd be late. You grew up amidst demands,
busy timetables and hectic schedules.

Now I have the time
to think of that day.

Should I have the luxury of raising you again,
we'll stop and look at all that catches your eye –
let the day go slow – watch the sun on your
face shine gold –
hold your little hand longer.

KRIS HEMENSLEY

i'm not sure it *was* ethics – politics, really – psychological – therefore everything to do with orientation, including a special sense of *facing in the right direction*, which, over time, i've attached to H Corbin's interpretation of Sufism's *ta'wil* – via Olson, Kelly & co – 'the inevitable connection resulting from the double emphasis on the 'visionary' and the 'processual' that has been the heartland of our poetry from Blake and Whitman to Pound, Williams and Olson et al' (G Quasha & C Stein, the Robert Kelly issue of *Vort Magazine*, edited by B Alpert, New York, 1974) – gloriously remembered from one's 1970s Melbourne reading & discussion – hah! the Rushall Crescent Avant-Garde! – world wide web of the New Poetry – American, English, Australian – so, four or five years ago it was, hearing out another sentence from my familiar repertoire of negation, J Kinsella challenged 'and what about the ethics of *withholding*?' – 'i'll have to *think* about that,' i said – buying time, postponing performance – till *now*, i guess, when a year-long conversation with prospective publisher K MacCarter about singularity, locality, expatriation, eased by occasional tots of the Japanese good stuff – during which i sometimes recast him as a Jonathan Williams, dual squire of Dentedale, Cumbria & Scaly Mountain, North Carolina, notwithstanding the Minnesota Lutheran he owned up to be – this between-ourselves correspondence ultimately delivers – and in least-troubled unsureness for yonks – these English sweets – that is to say, all palate & tongue – my just desserts. – KH

Father's Dark Ship after Hesiod

Dear brother

I can't sing you a song
about the ways of the world just now
since I've tied my mind in knots
examining the mystery of father's life
and can't help seeing you & I
in the same strange oscillation
between clarity & obfuscation.

He's become

so much like a dark ship
clinging to the dark lip of the harbour
on a night made darker
by what's judged to be the failure
of the voyage that I feel
he'll sink without redeeming
the promise of a single dream.

If a son

could really be father to his old man
what wouldn't we do to find him a place
between the hills & the sea with neighbours
who'd refuse to countenance his misery
for whom the darkness is only ever
prinked with stars under which it's customary
to sing the songs of youth
which pointed the way once
to the ends of the earth
& back again?

Fox

The early darkness of Winter's longest night
catches me between the streetlights
praising Tuesday in another frame of mind –

I was high-stepping the night's topography
ducking yet welcoming
the wet & heavy wattle on my face –

reminiscing those geographies
which bless a dreamer's construction
of the place
where all the these & t'others coordinate –

when some small thing surprised me
a large cat or dog
stalking the base of the hedge
suddenly in my way.

It was as though a fox had crossed my path
arousing then a store of objection.
Frozen it stands with forepaw raised
returning the migrant's stare not as a migrant
but a native of the Dorset cliff tops' run
from Ringstead Bay to Osmington.
A tremor grooves my spine –

another lifeline's thrown out.
On Wednesday it's my pleasure to shout
Stanley Spencer's peculiar population
free board in Urquhart Street!
Imagine Westgarth's perturbation
if a Cookham Resurrection
occurred right here by the Merri Creek!

A fox crosses my path –
a tremor grooves my spine –
recollection is in fact a compass.
A blind brush with wind & branch
breaks suburbia's template –
the private wildness is called out again.
Within this orientation every edge is a centre.
John Glover Esq., Australia's first landscape painter
delivers the pearly glory of 'Patterdale' & rescues Van Diemen
from the jargon of dread. Far back through time's gate
sprout 'Fern' & 'Brambles' never more secure than in the avalanche
of England. They'd even record Dorset reeds as pampas –
a fringe whose density expounds the divine –
denouncing periphery & ambivalent as a mother's wrath.

On Thursday Spring enters Winter
& spends itself that day. Winter
returns on Friday like fate. But nothing
occupies one so much as Stanley Spencer's thought
of Jesus as that wide-eyed simple man
on all fours in the grass ogling
Jerusalem lilies & Marguerite daisies

Or running in the thickest woods
without a path to curb his clamber
or sat against the bare earthbank & roots
panting in the fox's brazen wake
or lying distractedly in a rift of oats
involuntarily fostering a brood of chooks
or peering over a chasm spread-eagled upon the rocks.

In early darkness wild jasmine's the lamp
which lights the weekend up.

The perennial '*where am I?*'s been stumped
long enough ago now to enjoy the cup

raised in honour of both here & there.
Jasmine's fragrance garlands the change
of season. But how to explain that rare
nostalgia which exacerbates estrangement

one minute & ameliorates unity the next?
Is it held in the figure of sore-eyed Mr Glover
reporting home after long years Down Under?

*'I have been in Australia
where I migrated at the height of my power ...
& I have seen ... & I have seen ...'*

1991

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the authors of Cordite Books Series 1 & 2 for entrusting me with their manuscripts; Javant Biarujia, Tony Birch, Mez Breeze, Rachael Briggs, Broede Carmody, Jen Crawford, Anne Elvey, Ross Gibson, Matthew Hall, Natalie Harkin, John Hawke, Kris Hemensley, Alan Loney, Jeanine Leane, Chris Mann, Derek Motion, Claire Nashar, Autumn Royal, Omar Sakr and Tanya Thaweekulchai.

I would like to thank Penelope Goodes, Zoë Sadokierski, Alissa Dinallo and Lily Mae Martin for their meticulous care and artistry to ensure the books look and read beautifully. My gratitude also goes out to Bonny Cassidy for her generous introduction to this anthology. Too, thanks to Jessica White and her literary network in the deaf community for feedback on the cover design.

Thank you to the Australia Council of the Arts, Creative Victoria, Create New South Wales and the City of Melbourne for their support of Cordite Publishing Inc.'s publishing program.

Finally, I would like to thank Judith Beveridge, Pam Brown, Florian Cramer, Michael Farrell, Berni Janssen, John Jenkins, John Kinsella, Peter Kirkpatrick, Astrid Lorange, Peter Minter, Stephen Muecke, Felicity Plunkett, Sean Pryor, Gig Ryan, Katrina Schlunke, Maria Takolander, Ann Vickery, Ellen van Neerven, Divya Victor and Lucas Weschke for their insightful introductions to the books, all can be found @ corditebooks.org.au. – KM