

# Meta bol. ism

ability of living things /  
organisms in symbiosis  
to keep growing, reproducing  
transforming  
in response to their environment

## Editors

David Adès  
Vanessa Jones  
'Danny' Charles Lovecraft  
Tim Metcalf  
John Pfitzner  
Heather Taylor Johnson  
Susie Utting  
Lyn Vellins

## Coordinating Editor

Libby Hart

## Designer

Victoria Amy

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## Foreword

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Welcome to *Metabolism*, the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, which aims to provide members with a further opportunity to be published and acknowledged for their work.

Earlier this year the inaugural *Australian Poetry Journal* used ‘beginnings’ as its theme. We thought it an interesting place to start in terms of making a connection, as it made sense for the two separate yet co-existing publications to sing together, side by side. As such, metabolism as a concept seemed a natural response. This was because Australian Poetry Ltd is now a wider literary community, growing, reproducing and inwardly transforming in response to poetry’s changing environment.

The definition of metabolism has been woven into the anthology to become a ‘poem’ in itself, naturally forming the title and delineating its five sections. It’s a prescient example of how the physical and metaphysical world – as exemplified by poets and poetry – can work harmoniously together.

This anthology would not have been made possible without Australian Poetry Ltd, its poet members and the volunteer team of editors (also poets and AP members) who put *Metabolism* together over many months and many a long night. The team never met face to face. All communication was conducted by email. We battled technology, different time zones and both hemispheres. We communicated from Tennant Creek to Pittsburgh, from Adelaide to Tokyo, from Melbourne to the Sunshine Coast, from Washington to Canberra and Sydney. And there were many ‘all team’ discussions that buzzed around the world and back again to light up individual computer monitors or laptops.

The effort and commitment by anthology team members was enormous and truly amazing. Thank you so much to David Adès, Libby Hart, Heather Taylor Johnson, Vanessa Jones, ‘Danny’ Charles Lovecraft, Tim Metcalf, John Pfitzner, Susie Utting and Lyn Vellins. Thank you also to Michael Byrne, Immanuel Suttner and Oliver Quinn Walnn for their enthusiasm and early involvement with the anthology.

*Metabolism* is testament to the energy and diversity within the Australian poetry scene. It is also a vehicle of celebration. We hope you enjoy reading this inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology.

**Libby Hart, Heather Taylor Johnson and Susie Utting**

on behalf of the editorial team



1. ability of living things /





## The anthology 2012

In pole position the usual gang,  
I suppose, poets and academics, enjoying  
communication between consenting adults.  
Words glowing with significance  
exploring subliminal territory,  
lightning flashing on road kill,  
moonlight on a pearl earring.  
Geostationary satellites,  
the gestalt of fragile images  
stopping the arrow of time.  
Glaciers melting into a sea of sand,  
the swoop of feathers on the edge of sleep  
like a premature sky burial  
before the entropy of old age.  
The tuning fork finding the nuanced ear.  
Just one person who says, 'I can  
get to where you are coming from'.

## Advice to an emerging poet

Know nothing. Write as if you know. Offend,  
the more the better. Beauty's anodyne;  
avoid it. Readers will misapprehend  
wildly, but remember Wittgenstein  
has all the answers, so you should pretend  
depth, while on the surface every line  
seems only to present mundane despairs.  
This will not win you prizes, but who cares?

Doctors have their Hippocratic Oath.  
The language is your patient, so be sure  
you do no harm. You should therefore be loath  
to operate unless it will secure  
your satisfaction and the rapid growth  
of self-esteem. No benchmark is as pure.  
Critics and cops are there to make life hard.  
Plead guilty and they sometimes drop their guard.

## A silver wind

You know how some layered days  
you long for quiet, and your pockets  
seem full of talkers like drowning stones?

Then maybe a silver wind will bring you  
a woman who talks of her bees, and that  
you must give them all the family news.  
How she introduced them to her Latin  
lover, with his cucumber eyes.  
How she told them that his tongue  
was laurel leaf raspy,  
and he tasted of sun-dried tomatoes,  
avocado and crispy salad.

Suppose this woman tells you that  
the bees tagged him for demolition,  
saw through the colour and fluff  
of romance,  
penetrated his olive-oil skin and  
warned her of tasteless years to come?

If this woman's last words to you are,  
'Always trust the bees',  
won't your pockets feel a little lighter?

## The explorer's dream

Robert, the name a clue, emergent unbidden from dark garden thickets,  
violin bowed arc to arc, to jigs and reels, seafarers' jokes borne rough  
in shoals below jagged headlands, dashing, a glint in a daughter's eye.

This was never the location planned for the shoring party. This is not where  
flowers should be picked, sketched onto drafting paper, outlined with secret  
epigrams, sweated from lovers' communiqués, signatures shifting underfoot.

Sir Robert, if only you knew, the colour of mulberries, port wine spilled  
across linen and lace, a brass button, floorboards, once all polish and interlock,  
before the aftermath of sweetly steamed pudding, hot French parfumerie.

The cue for a song, an epic poem, celebratory, in anticipation of greater times  
ahead: around the banquet table, colliery dust, steam whistles. 'We used to  
sing like this on the river.' Look, the calloused hands, the hardened heels.

There must be something to read. Latitudes. Longitudes. The declinations  
of planets. 'But what's in a name?' Robert. Sir Robert. Mud congealed on shoes.  
The stink of swamps, peat-bog, mouldering leather, fruit rotten on the vine.

Is it morning yet? Have the bells rung? A day for cicadas and bronze-tailed  
skinks. Historiography? Ask the descendants, errant tendrils coiled around  
forgotten guylines and windswept stays. Ask anyone who remained behind.

## More fries, Monsieur?

If Voltaire toured America today  
he might allow himself a little preening  
finding his anagrammatic name in a vast library  
under The Enlightenment Thinkers.  
All around him, the progress he championed.

The natives would hardly look askance  
at his powdered wig, elevated heels  
especially in California.  
He wouldn't be black-bearded, with a backpack  
or with a woman in a burqa.

This brings me to terrorism, and torture  
which he campaigned against  
knowing how a prison cell reeks.  
What might he think of waterboarding  
or torture not being unconstitutional?

Statements whimpered by suspected martyrs  
are now admissible evidence, he'd learn  
— with chagrin, one imagines —  
a Harvard legal scholar having raised the issue  
with regard to innocent citizens' rights.

Freedom, choice, the rights of man.  
But whose, yours, mine, that foreigner's?  
May I smoke, wear a wig, write what I believe?  
Voltaire would read, argue, but mainly write.  
I see him preferring a biro to the keyboard.

Angela Smith

---

## **Dylan Thomas at his desk**

A heron stalks the shallows  
below the faded green shack  
above a tumble of rock wall  
where you inked lyrics  
onto thistledown pages,  
preserving the world outside —  
wingbeat, birdwhistle and waterlap  
under a shroud of darkling cloud.

## glass-bottomed

Volcanic remnant, island  
paradise — there's a shiftiness here  
that's hard to escape.

Look how the clouds keep  
pulling away but always  
return to the mountains;

how the surf breaks free  
of the coral reef then runs back  
over crushed white sand.

And those corpulent fish that wallow  
and thrash till you wade through  
the shallows to feed them.

Before first light, it's doves and  
pigeons to croon you awake, like  
dreams of an English childhood;

and who could believe amongst  
tropical palms to hear  
blackbirds sing *appassionati*?

In the glass-bottomed boat  
we lurch and bob and wait  
for the giant turtles. I wonder

if Eve had the same  
unease or was she just  
tired of perfection?

## Indelible memories

At times a moment is known to be memorised,  
swallowed whole instead of dribbling down the chin:  
a figure standing in the dappled shade beside a wall,  
her head obscured by a tipped hat;  
the pattern of cracks in a path seen once;  
the smell of quartered lemons in a damp room late at night;  
and once beside a road at dusk  
the watching of stars assembling themselves  
like a woman arranging her evening dress,  
determined and slightly embarrassed.



## Orange

It's Spring and  
the mandarin tree in your yard  
is loaded,  
the path between our houses  
lit by a trail of bright orange.  
The bitterness of peel and  
sweetness in it:  
like the time in August we walked up  
Cassia Hill, your lungs grabbing  
at the air, trying to talk about  
food and how to get it down;  
the bowls of soup left at your door,  
what that meant to you.  
We spent the afternoon there and  
I wrote haiku about the clouds, how  
they sailed across the sky like boats.  
You sat away from me,  
drawing them to your sketchbook.  
When I heard the cough storm in  
your chest,  
I was afraid. And later,  
I wept in my room for everything I  
cannot change for you. Everything.

It's Spring and  
you are falling.

The hungry birds and children  
have left the path bright orange  
between our houses.  
I wonder how it is to  
wake each morning to something  
closing in,

pressing down like a heavy coat,  
and to give yourself  
to the day anyway.

## bean dreaming

she dreams of beans

broad beans sprouting in her shoe cupboard

— it makes no sense as  
there is plenty of food in the house  
premium mince and frozen pastry  
for Sunday shepherd's pie  
she does the shopping every Friday

she dreams of beans

chickpeas raining from the shower head

— on a cooking show she sees recipes  
for beans she had never heard of  
cow peas, moth beans, pigeon peas, velvet beans,  
black-eyed peas (she thought they were a flower) and the  
one she cannot shake  
winged beans — will she feel their intimate beat  
inside her, might they feel like tiny feet?

she dreams of beans

kidney beans delivered express post and marked urgent

— when he comes to take his things away  
and parks the ute and the trailer rakishly  
across the front nature strip so that people walking  
have to cross to the other side  
she does not even really hear his shouting  
because  
behind his head she can see a space on the fence  
where a trellis could be built

she dreams of lima beans rolling cigarettes outside a mountain hut  
and starts to slowly track down the exotic ones  
via  
the puzzled greengrocer's son  
and the smiling  
Indian woman with one long eyebrow in the ground gin  
ger-smelling supermarket  
where they scoop flour and rice out of hessian bags and  
tie them into plastic ones

she dreams of running beans hitching rides through the outback  
to escape their domestic lives  
and the vine she plants flourishes  
Jack and his adventure do not feature in her plans awake  
or asleep  
she has no desire to climb to the sky  
she is just impatient for the first crop to swell  
so she can snap them open

she wonders if the dreams will stop  
once she takes her first bite  
and if  
the string will get caught in her teeth  
or if the beans  
she has planted  
are not those kinds of beans

## **That canted hip, that sated smile, they won't last long**

When your life is more lipstick on white china than someone's husband's collar, is it even possible to comprehend that things started to go downhill after Donatello? We let them, meanwhile, go to war, our brood.

Sated. Seductive. The soldiers listen, wired, to rock ballads as they chopper in to slut around the Gulf. Like David with their provocative smiles their bodies are only slimed metal nakedness beneath the crackle of a uniform's gaze.

Jive those hips to the right, children, and let ecology reinvent you like an all-done sun. David loosely holds the fatal stone that will Goliath us all forward, bloodstained, to our souvenired destination. Rock on, glad confident morning.

The wave has done its thing in Minamisanriku: the next set is for you.



## 2. organisms in symbiosis







## Butterflies twice landed

In the year you cheat death  
you argue with portents  
and are compelled by butterflies

two in one week alighting  
on skin needled and savaged  
by chemo drugs, why else

be stunned that your toxic blood  
attracts the most beautiful wings  
be transformed if you like

(solace is in the signs?)

at worst be baffled  
by prognostic high flights:  
15% survival might be short

of optimal but Dr Knife  
is not your final sleep  
you are greedier than ever

for sunlight, winged  
optimism transports you  
at least long enough for green butterflies

to use you as positive space

## The sweetness and the sting

Once the suit is on, gleaming against the hill's flank,  
and the mask pulled down, shutting the world into shadow,  
everything is slow, rhythmic, considered.  
Breath and thigh rasp with a mourner's cadence.  
Thought of him rolls in the petals of her mind, then stings.  
Her longing has the rapid throb of the wasp  
but the commitment of the bee.  
She approaches the city, hives arranged with urban precision.  
Slowly, as if floating,  
she lights wadded cloth, pumps the tiny bellows  
and gusts the throng into a dream state.  
Her thoughts turn him over, examine him exquisitely  
with the intimacy of imagination.  
The flight path traffic slows then stalls.  
Meticulous as an astronaut she pries off the lid  
inserts the blade between the frames and cracks them apart.  
The rack is heavy with confusion.  
She brushes them aside,  
slides frames freshly wired and primed into place,  
and leaves the rest weighted with winter solace.  
She plans hopeful crossings of trajectory,  
meetings where she can do more than just smile, tongue-tied.  
The combs gleam wetly, thick with amber nebulae.  
In the sultry heat of the honey shed  
they orbit within the centrifuge  
a whirling genesis, flinging sweetness into the universe.  
Even her sweat tastes of creation.  
She dreams a space where he reads her wagging dance,  
decodes this mute desire,  
her stumbling movements clearly pointing  
that sweetness lies here, between us and the sun.  
Come with me.  
The hero always wears white.

## Chasing Canadian geese

On the beach  
the geese sleep  
necks artfully bent.

*I'm going to get one*  
she says,  
and I believe her.

Blue-eyed she rushes  
toward the water  
tiny arms

scooping and grabbing.  
The sound of goose exodus  
and the ferry

coming in to dock  
threaten, then  
she's on her knees

crying for lost chances  
clutching a feather  
to her chest.

Gone, the idea  
of flight  
as she walks

back up the beach  
singing her goodbye  
goose song

shadow trailing  
like so many dark birds  
wings slapping the sky.

## Green poem

She stood in the green hall  
At the green door  
Watched the green light of apples  
Seep around her feet.

Taken up on wings into the clouds  
She looked down on the green prison-lands  
And saw the spots with holes in them the shape of diamonds  
Where they'd shot through the tiger, and left it bare.

After they'd farmed all the tiger that there was  
And fenced them into reserves  
They replaced them with cat.  
Planted whole forests of cat.

It was neat,  
Didn't need cables or fish nets to catch them.  
The thing with cat is they grow quickly.  
Just as commercially viable

As apples in tiger-fields.  
Let alone trees.  
Though the people missed the birdcalls  
In the morning. And the moon had a grey edge.

## Grace notes

It begins with a comparison: a budgie  
caged with mirror, spilling seed;  
and a child pecking at the keys

of an upright piano, spilling notes  
into the room, on odd occasions  
stumbling into music. That's the moment:

caged in a sudden net of sound  
her hair falling across her face, floating  
inside the bars as naturally as dreaming.

And then a sudden discord, the lid  
slammed shut, the flight  
to the bedroom, as though a change of scene

will shift the bars. The budgerigar  
all bright with blues and greens, pecks  
the plastic replica; it sways and nods

balanced as a Libran, impassive  
while the cock struts and spills  
a shrill appassionata to the mirror

then flits from swing to perch.  
When she plays the piano, the blue bird  
cocks its head and listens

and offers from the safety of the bars  
a tentative grace note, watching  
itself in the mirror, spilling its seed  
on sandpaper at the bottom of the cage.

## **Thief**

I hear you in the stillest hour of the night.  
One short bright whistle upwards, one long  
whistle downwards, like the gravedigger's  
shovel falling into black soil.

What bird are you that heralds the dawn three hours too soon?  
I have searched for you in books.  
But your call is not the nighthawk's, nor  
the bush stone curlew's. It's not the masked owl's,

nor the barking owl's. When I should be asleep  
I lie awake listening to you. One short bright  
whistle upwards, one long whistle downwards  
like the gravedigger's shovel falling into black soil.

## Miniature

Dragon clouds curl a gold-leaf sky.  
A brush of fine hair paints a beard  
details a guardsman with his bow  
— fine-tipped arrows at his side.  
On tapered pins Chinese horses  
pick their way, carry musicians  
across a sheet of painted snow.  
A blast of horns announce  
the emperor on his elephant.

## The aquarium

1

Sitting close with hazy vision,  
I am almost mesmerised —  
a kaleidoscope of shimmering colours,  
scales glinting.  
Each fish darts, hovers,  
then a sudden downwards slide, swift  
as the predatory bird dives for its prey.  
Always movement,  
these fish intent on  
    twisting, turning,  
    sliding, gliding.  
Just right for waiting-rooms.

2

Is there contentment in such confinement?  
Like fish, we once knew a liquid world,  
then thrust forth, gulped air,  
sought the confines of mother's arms,  
slowly learned the limits of family, kinship, tribe.

Men with dreams  
impatient with inertia  
of authority  
became obsessed.

Some sailed to new horizons.  
Others led armies through mountain passes,  
a surging torrent spilling on plains,  
spreading like a flood,  
reducing towns to rubble,  
pressed toward new targets.



Hannibal sought to free Carthage  
from bondage to Rome,  
Alexander of Macedon  
lusted for wealth, power.  
Centuries later Marco Polo,  
seeking commerce,  
brought his family to the realm of Kublai Khan.

Again I look towards the fish,  
some may hover,  
others slowly swim,  
          twisting, turning,  
          sliding, gliding.

3

Men blast their way into space,  
walk on the moon,  
press beyond our galaxy,  
search the universe.

In the mountains and the desert,  
free of city haze  
the brilliance of the sky  
binds me to earth, content.  
I am at one with those millions  
who through thousands of years marvelled  
while others named planets  
after their gods.

Forever moving, the fish continue  
          twisting, turning,  
          sliding, gliding.

## Anguis in Herba (Snake in the Grass — Virgil)

A snake has come visiting, Yes, visiting,  
And I am frozen still,  
unable to offer hospitality,  
barely daring to breathe,  
watching it from the corner  
of my right eye,  
starting and straining.  
How it flows,                      Yes, flows  
blackly, swiftly, without  
effort, without intent.  
Like a thing that wasn't there,  
being there,  
and thinking itself forward —  
a thick line drawn  
by an unseen hand.  
Its head moves side to side  
the way an adolescent of any age  
keeps headtime with an earpiece  
of an MP3 or Pod nodding,  
seeming more than a little  
demented.  
Meanwhile  
my caller makes himself  
a long, dark drink and wanders  
away/tangos/swishes/sways  
over the edge of the verandah,  
away from the dog bowl,  
boards scorching where it touched  
the fire in its belly to their fibre.  
And my hair slowly,                      Yes, slowly,  
returns from the horizontal,  
and my eyes resume  
the shape of predator, not prey.

## **Eight things you may not know about Vladimir Putin's dog**

1. She is a fat black submarine of a Labrador called Koni. Originally a seal-woman, she emerged from the river and took her current form.
2. Every month she transforms back to a semi-aquatic state and does a lap between the Kremlin and St Daniel's monastery. She is as sleek as a dolphin and quiet as a cat's ghost. A true water-dog needs no fluff, no Portuguese froufrou.
3. She eats cake; all the cakes of the Cabinet and their jellies too. The jellies move into her belly just as she herself slips through water. The cabinet members grumble, but only quietly. Koni's stomach begins to wail like a wolf.
4. She is connected by a device on her collar to the spirit of Laika, still spinning, although that less fortunate mutt's can crashed back when Khrushchev was king. Koni barks up at the stars, twists her head like the trademarked dog of HMV, and eats her treats a little more thoughtfully.
5. Her collar contains another cunning device to detect radioactive particles, although this is currently turned off.
6. Koni loves to lick visiting dignitaries, and journalists, just as if they were luscious jellies. The German Chancellor Merkel magically turns to jelly when she does this! A quivering German jelly, thrown into a right pickle.
7. It would be the worst possible luck to run over Koni. Or to reel her in during her aquatic forays. Remember there is GPS in the special collar! Drive carefully, and never fish when the moon is full.
8. Every evening I pray to be reborn as a fat black Labrador seal-woman, caressed by the indulgent palm of ex-President Vladimir Putin. He loves a faithful friend.



**3. to keep growing, reproducing**





## why i didn't go to mike ladd's 50th birthday party

the tractor-mower hits a stump on the slope and  
flips in a second. thrown off, earphones ripped from  
the ipod when sergio is between *mas que na* and *da*.

then an adrenalin-fuelled leap to avoid  
being crushed between tractor and post  
and trailing fingers go thump in the blades.

when the eyes see the end of the finger hanging,  
a flap of mincemeat, a second thump of the heart —  
orchestral stab in a horror movie soundtrack.

the other hand squeezes  
mashed flesh to stem the flow.

the drive to finders medical centre, cold sweat  
dripping into eyes, blood dripping on gumboots,  
willing myself to breathe slowly. hot needle pain.

triage, grass-clippings on the e.r. floor,  
calming pulse, x-rays. the matter-of-fact  
egyptian surgeon with french accent.

my eyes clamp shut as he works  
for almost an hour reconnecting  
nerves, tissues and finally skin.

later i watch him fascinated as he  
reconstructs the end of my ring finger,

a busted raw sausage held together  
with fine blue thread.

## Chernobyl heart

Of the many quiet legacies  
of a meltdown

most quiet are those  
with two holes in the heart

seven thousand children  
fourteen thousand holes

keep a surgeon busy  
at three hundred a year.

Today this thin boy of indeterminate age  
face like an empty plate

sits while the surgeon explains:  
a Gore-Tex patch

the heart grows around it  
like an apple tree after grafting —

the parents silent, the surgeon asks  
do they have any questions?

their faces wide as apples  
*What kind of questions can we have?*

Three hundred dollars  
three hundred grafts

six hundred pairs of eyes  
watch for each new bud.



## Surprise

Our bodies are recreational vehicles, trammel  
across the sand, toss up mud on indignant wattle then  
sidling alongside each other in the creamy stroke of peak hour.  
There is nothing small about the joys, this  
car feeds the brain, eyes collide under blue  
the finesse of our collisions  
reckless sweat & the burning gilt trail  
of another's fingertips.

That startled throttle of your smile, your suggestion. We  
leak & lift toward flame  
as both make the noise of heaven.  
Wear them out, the raw & the roar  
scratch the door  
a temporary floor as we fall into  
the wise old silence of void.  
Brush & polish the kidneys, spleen, these legs  
are our capital  
or maybe a long-term lease. Either way  
you feel the redundancy built in  
& that is a wry blessing.

Caltrops litter the bridal path ...  
you run towards  
you walk away.  
The cancer *found* Toby. A stray bullet *found* Lieutenant Delroy.  
Our exploding Easter egg hunt,  
mortality glitches in the grass.

Council cleanup time,  
the thirsty grass verge explodes in television & couches.

Surprise is the enemy, across the suburbs

doors taken off dead fridges,  
power cords on every appliance snipped methodically.  
The history of Unexpected is remembered.  
But there's nothing static here,  
a kind of bacterial energy as heaps rise, shrink, transform ...  
visitors, the neighbours ... grazing pluck.  
We are shaped by what we throw out. Redefined  
by all we rescue, take in & make what we call home.  
Children squeal at treasures unaware of  
our secret griefs as all things pass  
beyond our glass.

Found by knowledge,  
grow in knowledge us. Theia was our sister,  
we grew in parallel glide  
until the size of our ambitions  
sent her wobbling into catastrophe.  
But each corpse leaves contention; even then  
there's the tangle for remains:  
rootlets vie about our decay.  
Something that was us,  
bobbed on that lava sea,  
in perhaps one day  
a new moon was birthed in debris.  
From far enough away  
it looks so inscrutably placid. To call it  
'solar system', almost  
a clerical breeze some  
flawless catalogue built against aeons.

The engine kicks in,  
we are *discovered* by a new day. Surprise.  
Entire accident. Entire.

## She sent me emails from Manila

tropical swelter this morning  
in the forest after rain  
a sympathetic cloud of breath  
obscuring bedroom windows  
outside, the heady buzz  
of singular flies seeking each other  
the woodpecker tap of Illya's hammer  
demolishing his home again  
a sleepy orchestra's tuning  
well before the overture

the song is on the surface here  
tripping between karri crowns  
way out of reach  
high, sweet and confident voices  
calling across blue spaces

I am visiting the birds' realm  
sinking below the calm surface  
of something I hold sacred  
while the racket, the clatter,  
the fret and sweat and labour  
of cataclysmic cities  
rings like a bell inside my head  
and my noisy heart bangs away  
at ribs, as if at prison doors  
waiting to be seen  
wanting to be let outside

## ‘Greening’ the harbour

Black rats jumped ship  
like absconding sailors  
swam in the miasmatic sea  
    or ran down mooring ropes

connecting ship and shore  
spreading their bubonic message  
    to produce-stores and rubble sea-walls.  
The harbour was a highway, for colonists — and rats

boarding from Hawaii, New Caledonia, the East  
    in the warm, wet Sydney autumn  
ferrying their contagion across the water.  
Victims were carried in green-painted launches

or ‘death-boats’, to the quarantine station  
corpses buried with shovel loads of quicklime  
to speed up dissolution, their drum the muffled beat  
    of North Head surf.

\*

At Millers Point and Darling Harbour  
they were pulling dead vermin from privies.  
Each rodent-corpse fetched sixpence  
    delivered to the Bathurst St. furnace.

Whaling crews scoured The Rocks for rum and sex  
while their foul-smelling ships were in port  
sulphur burning to flush out the rats  
    bodies dumped on the foreshores.

\*

Hammers peck away  
at Sydney's sandstone, its finger-wharves  
the profile of a broken comb.  
You walk past glassed-in

waterfront apartments, Three-Hat oyster bars  
heritage pubs, galleries  
of Aboriginal artefacts  
to pull the tourist trade.

Where mirage of quarantine  
and fumigation filters through  
(the Chinese quarters blamed again)  
black rats still roam the city.

## Digitalis

I peel purple and lilac gloves one by one  
from the stem, cuffs decorated with dark

pigment against a pale ground, a trail of dots  
running into the depths like footprints

you can't help following. I slide a finger  
into the soft dark shaft; the slip, the snug

fit in the tapered tailored tip, napped like suede  
or fur, one for each finger. Femme fatale,

heart stopper, dressed to kill. Under cover  
of dark, I slip into the quiet garden, take

gloves from the plant as easy as from  
a shelf. My paws glide, tread-softened,

stealthy as shadow. Shapeshifter; one foot  
in the ordinary world, the other in the wild wood.

Am I the fox stalking night, or the grown  
woman, flower bells dressing each finger?

## The house I left behind

The garden I left in autumn, tidied up  
for new people, is a riot of purple, gold and green  
among winter's neighbours, drab since the dry.  
It has shouted another spring and its hard rain.  
The long drought died after the second winter  
and the garden knew long before anyone  
that its time had come. Rosemary's falling arcs,  
purple-blue for the sun's light and wallflowers, gold —  
russet-stained to remember its species genes.

The tubbed lime on the verandah died a year ago,  
the shrivelled border of box below its lip  
greening at last. Winter iris struggle through tangles  
of uncut leaf, their blue and gold carried into the earth,  
and neglected lavenders thrust dry, infertile brush  
through the shining flood. The rose, the Mermaid,  
stands ragged; withered flowers among sprouting leaves.

The garden I gave to someone else: my face to the road,  
the neighbourhood, the world, all I could leave them,  
unvalued in the price, left to itself and the seasons: like  
the broken bones of a geranium warped to the iron fence.  
The passer-by will see only the huge riot of gold and purple,  
smell the unavoidable fragrance of flowers, self-sown,  
perennial, from the stone walls of another country,  
and the bee haunted arcs of purple flowering:  
the persistence of roots that will not be forgotten.

## the well from which she turns to look

I

ripples its gauze  
up and down the bodies of the bare trees  
the scarlet sky, the waist-high grass

swallowing water in the wind  
who cares how her heart softens  
the hard rind of a day lived without love

adjusting its sore gristle-gears  
to the steady seepage of use  
how she could live well without love

cool as a glass pool, not too small a box  
and calm but for this red gauze  
rushing her through the gate of evening

massing and lifting its cockatoo cloud  
its rip of rosellas bursting  
its salted juice

on a shiver of wings  
gap-toothed and whistling  
this stone on her tongue



## II

the shoes were sprouting ears  
legs running without bodies without feet  
struck like a bell dug from mud and water  
impaled on a boat sailing with arrows after it  
bent figures whose torsos fit the shape of keys  
the knife with the mould on it  
my dress with the hem hanging

hands scrubbed raw the pluck of feathers  
all the fruit rotting  
the weatherboard splinters  
the mad chaos of the bearded potatoes  
glowing in the ground  
*beget beget beget*  
war coming down the driveway

the timber giants felled and falling  
me in my loose dress caught on a flagpole  
the flapping artillery in the blackboy clearing  
sheets on the line heavy as thunder  
faces like ghosts in the breadknife  
this spotted dress with the hem hanging  
all the shredded skins

### III

since ladders climb both ways  
                        frost on the grass  
water flowers that burn underfoot  
no wind and no one else at the pool  
                        the roof beams behind her  
inside a tree and sets the satin swaying  
                        the mirror of her passage  
stretching her chest bone open to the bliss  
                        the swim of this the closest  
struck like a bell dug from mud and water  
                        drifts up on the out breath  
of a drowned women's orchestra  
                        she rises up  
and because it must the morning Spring  
                        the glaze on the asphalt  
                        the well from which

the shape of a note in the dark  
the island in the car park  
built on the fruit of all her soul's doorways  
the water in reams rippling  
as a duck's breast parts the cloud  
she parts and plunges with her breathing  
along the cut mosaic floor  
of breathing the nameless underwater  
she will ever come to flying  
the ephemeral two-toned note of her crying  
the aerial touch  
buzzing the bones of her face  
a catacomb of tombings  
opens to meet her  
in all its burnings  
she turns to look

## Ode to a pear

You are a misshapen bell  
Off-centre below your woody stem  
Your striker long hidden  
In your white flesh  
Has held its tongue  
Through the long angelus of summer  
Waiting until when  
For a few brief moments  
You'll release your rigorous pride  
Your core will soften to wet white flesh  
Once more in search of the sun  
Oh, I could be like you  
Sucking in my stomach  
Standing forever at attention  
But like you  
When I finally tear you apart with my teeth  
I'll know in my last moments  
That I would still have been me  
If I'd made no effort at all.



## 4. transforming





teri louise kelly

---

## the mortician's kiss

this love is thermal  
waves of sensation under constellation covers  
saturates and penetrates,  
the wolf's pelt shelters stolen lovers  
from separation  
out on the desolate plantation  
where everything fell; husks of past encounters wither  
the dead hang in trees  
lanterns shedding light into the corners of possibility  
the journey never ends, nor begins  
in another time, another place  
remember this bite, this touch, these words,  
the stigmata of union overrides  
incarnations  
there is no perfect square, no complete circle  
the universe inside your mind is infinite  
the soul of your essence distilled  
can never be taken;  
burn down your reputation and expectations  
you are immortal, you transcend time  
this love is a torch  
find it  
leave your book open, your bed cold  
the way ahead is through the known,  
beyond the unknown  
to the blue light of magnetism and attraction  
push the door — begin  
the first step is not the hardest  
the last is,  
start by accepting the mortician's kiss.

## When

As a nine-year-old, I decided to kill myself  
if I couldn't run from the back porch to the Hills hoist  
before the wire door shut behind me.  
When I was three stepping-stones short, it slammed.  
I wet my pants, and cried,  
then comforted myself with a promise:  
I'll definitely do it, I just don't know  
when.

We'd skipped evening lectures  
to see *Les Sylphides* at the Palais.  
Afterwards, a car hit a black cat at St Kilda Junction.  
It arced, frothed, convulsed,  
headlight eyes frantic, claws shredding air.  
My boyfriend drove on when the lights turned green.  
Cat and death writhed a *pas de deux* in endless dreams.

I'm slapping my three-year-old because he's woken the baby.  
She screams, vomiting a two-hour feed  
of milk and raw-nipple blood.  
Dirty nappies engulf the laundry trough.  
I'm a madwoman adrift, shrieking: 'Pick up your toys!'  
My son crawls under the couch, sobbing:  
'I want a new Mummy.'

When I get to Resthaven,  
my father will be lying on the bed with his shoes on.  
His urine bag will wet the leg of his trousers.  
All three clocks on the bedside table will say 2 p.m.  
but he'll tell me it's time for dinner. I'll feed him  
macaroons studded with cherries. He will ask my name.  
A nurse will bring tepid coffee in a brown plastic mug.  
When I leave, Dad will weep.



Driving down the tollway, I will not  
permit myself to think about the future,  
and will repress distressing memories.  
But I shall allow my eyes to veer — just a little —  
and I'll notice, once again, the  
solid reassurance of light poles.

## R.T.A.

*for William Francis Wynne d. 1973*

Here, in a typographical family reunion  
are the Wynnes together at last,  
this private significance  
ranks one line in the long lines  
the ‘Y’ hammered heavier  
all the way down the page  
as if some bored clerk  
has been drawing patterns  
to keep himself sane.

His better, at least, than the corrected  
‘Frederick George’,  
simply typed over,  
or the long lines of K.I.A.s

I remember being disappointed as a kid  
to learn he was in the Signal Corps,  
not some front-line regiment,  
carrying a rifle, not a bunch of wire.

I didn’t know anything.  
I didn’t know anything.

I should type that all day.

*R.T.A. – Returned to Australia*

*K.I.A. – Killed in action*

## Piecemeal

These things I must steel myself against  
Old men packing books into boxes  
The empty seat between people at the movies  
The smell of armpits on cardigans  
Ironing on the dining table with a towel underneath  
Friends who no longer talk to each other  
Bejewelled butterflies or fairies  
And cards with 'reach for the stars'  
Square brittle toenails  
And plastic bags filled with plastic bags  
A choc chip muffin to celebrate something  
And unplanted punnets with the white roots  
Straggling from beneath the blue plastic  
Board games with missing pieces  
And everything with pieces missing  
And everything that is in pieces  
And everything that is missing.

## The Sicilian friars

Dry air preserved us. They stood us here in rows,  
Thinking us miracles, the work of God, but we are just  
The work of air. In the dark we wait in lines like a standing army,  
Encamped on this side of forever, until we are dust.  
Our delicate tendons more subtly carved than marble,  
The soles of our feet arch, delicate, prepared for our next step  
Though we no longer walk. Considerate, we turn our gazes  
Down: you would find our empty sockets too direct.  
Our hearts lighter than yours, the water dried from our tears,  
Soldiers of dried hide, pillars of salt and ash;  
Taut frames of bones our lives once hung upon.  
We wish to be helpful: in case you've forgotten the map,  
We are your destination. Our tongues are stones that rattle in our mouths  
But still we are speaking to you: hear what we say —  
Welcome. We are glad to have you as our guest — and when you leave us,  
Remember: one day, you will be coming to stay.

## Devil's sestina

Unlike you-know-who, Sir Pie-in-the-Sky,  
I prefer it down here, unvisited  
by a gawping mob of hangers on.  
I don't need your reverence, or even  
worse, devotion. Devotion is a word  
for dogs. Just call me Uncle Ghost.

I'm no conjurer, like that hackneyed ghost  
with his orders of merit, his seating plans in the sky,  
vanishing acts, and god help us all, those word  
games he's addicted to. May the plagues that visited  
Egypt choke him and his word games! Even  
Job when he got there wouldn't take them on.

'I am that am', and so forth, droning on,  
puns that wouldn't make a cat laugh. Not the ghost  
of a laugh to be had up there, not even  
a day off just to ramble round the sky  
and meet your mates. No, he has to be visited  
day in, day out. Eternally, in fact. I hate that word!

You don't want to go there, take my word  
for it. Straight up, I wouldn't lie. I'm on  
your side, I've sussed it out, I've visited  
His Dodginess the Pope. This unholy ghost  
has got the facts to blow the priests sky  
high. And not just for malice, not to get even

for what old bossy did to me. From morn to starry even  
I fell — for what? A sidelong look, a cheeky word,  
that's all. There's not an angel in the sky  
would tell you otherwise, unless they're on  
his payroll, or just plain scared of the holy ghost.  
There's not many haven't visited

his office for a caning. But it's you I'm thinking of. I've visited your churches — you know what? You got an even crappier deal than me. At least, before I was a ghost I lived it up, in every meaning of the word.

All you get is stick and carrot, stick. Chuck it on the rubbish heap. There's no good time in the sky

to come, not ever, on my word.

Let the churches rot, unvisited. Don't live as if you were a ghost. This is the only sky there is.

## Get it!

The best mathematicians, like the best poets, are good at putting together things you would never expect to go together. Like my angel, who wears her hair in ringlets, courtesy of a hot curling iron and tells me that she wants to learn to cook. From first principles. I ask her if there's good food in heaven and she just answers, 'Depends.' Depends on what, I'd like to know. Depends on your taste, the camera angles and whether the director's into visual jokes like casting a short person as the shrink. Get it? My angel gets it and giggles like a wind chime as she rolls the dough, dusted with flour, out over the bench.

## The dream

I watched above the bed in which I lay.  
And on a bed, sheeted, my mother, dead  
ten months now, stirred. But she is gone, I said,  
and saying it returned still mired in care  
to where my mother stilled with barely a word  
left from the hundred years she sealed away.

That strange arrival — seeing death reversed,  
the sheet tensing with movement, the unspoken  
demand we resume together, she being wakened.  
A wondering horror held me, and her hair  
as never in life, was mine, and I lay there  
creature of her imagining, as at first.



Tricia Dearborn

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## Prescription

The gentle haze sleep-hunger wraps  
around the events of the following day  
can be just what the doctor ordered.

A doctor, that is, who knows that the world  
can appear as a maze of knives;  
that fatigue blunts as well as anything

you can get at the chemist and is  
cheap and readily available. It's worth  
putting up with bloodshot eyes,

a metallic taste in the mouth and  
a slight loss of balance  
for what extreme tiredness can do for you:

create a featherbed for the nerves;  
lull you out of a false sense  
of emergency. Use insomnia responsibly.

Don't operate any heavy machinery.  
If you're obliged to go to work or to school  
think of it as a note from your mother

excusing you from perfection.

## Insomnia

Last night insomnia sat  
for a chat on my bed.  
As if I needed company!  
Handcuffed to the moon  
he came through the window  
on a band of light as broad as day,  
as long as a sleepless night,  
tossed me from side to side  
like a hollow log  
and would not go away.

I thought he might leave  
if I made him a cup of tea,  
but he sat on my shoulder,  
drank the pot dry and talked  
so much I returned to bed  
just to get him off my back.  
Yet still he stayed  
till dawn broke down.

I never slept. It was, I think,  
the timbre of his voice,  
the familiar touch of his words  
that seeped under my skin.  
You see, he could have been you.

## possible

in another life I will be  
one of the systems programmers  
at Deakin University  
who doesn't show up for work  
when surf is running at Bells  
with a partner  
who keeps goats and geese  
teaches ceramics at TAFE  
and shares my interest in  
ten acres at Paraparap  
where we are planting vines  
and experimenting with  
vintages of white shiraz

and perhaps at times  
alone with the sea  
I could think of another life  
where I have a disabled son  
and all the heartbreak and joy  
of ongoing care  
that mixed with  
snatched moments of stillness  
make poetry possible



**5. in response to their environment**





## Meckering earthquake

Eleven days before it happened  
a policeman reported  
that the ground was like jelly  
and Mr Sudholz's groceries left  
the safe-keeping  
of his tidy cupboard.  
On the day itself  
three dogs barked at nothing,  
a murmur folded through the trees,  
a brimming dam mounted its banks  
and a table stamped on floorboards.  
Ceilings spat puffs of plaster  
and sheep in outlying paddocks  
faced each other in groups.  
As in a town meeting  
a flock of swallows  
walked round the Railway Hotel's  
upstairs verandah. Its easterly wall  
careered into the street.  
A shudder of light fell across wheatfields  
as if hands skimmed the fat heads;  
there was a rattle  
like schoolgirls dragging  
sticks along fence tops.  
Mrs Nichol closed the general store,  
dancing around the mouthing crevices  
and, out of town, laterite pebbles  
bounced like manic fleas.  
A scarp rose from flat land,  
crossing the highway.  
Railway lines curled across their sleepers  
like soft, loose spaghetti.  
An empty farmhouse shivered  
and sat down.

## Ashgabat desert market

He leans into the wooden rail finding the groove made by his father. Steam rises from fresh dung. He quiets the camels and horses, rolls a cigarette and watches with a trader's eyes. The women

walk by in single file. He hears their tour leader warn, *stay in pairs, keep your money close*. With a half smile, he nods, *I have costumes, very cheap, silk, cotton, velvet*. He signals to his wife at the stall,

she smiles, gold tooth glinting in the sunlight, turns to their son, *grandma's suzani, show them*. The boy hesitates, holding the textile close, then unfolds each bright embroidered flower. The tourists,

huddling together against the din, are circled by hawkers as they pass astrakhan hats, green melons, sacks of yellow spices, carved bassinets, cochineal carpets and white felts. He sees them in the haze

at the centre of the marketplace, a blue bobbing ball unravelling, as women pair off arm in arm, clutching bags, patting money pouches beneath their breasts. One figure alone turns towards the costume

stall where his mother's *chyropy*, dyed with indigo, is hanging for sale — he imagines her sitting with red and yellow thread sewing the familiar Turkoman Teke patterns of his childhood. The woman removes her dark

glasses, picks up the *suzani* then heads towards his mother's coat, fingers the stitching, the best *chyropy* in the bunch. She raises a hand full of dollars bartering for his daughter's dowry. He has prayed

about this moment — to hold on to the past or reach out to the future? After the sale, he inhales deeply then coughs a cloud of grey smoke; his chest hurts as he turns away.



## The opening

*Tracing Charles Conder*

### ***The Scriber wakes above the river***

The scriber wakes and shines above water; the shadows harden into grit  
This little groove is washed by song; under Big Men's smooth feet

And two men are fighting in the middle of the road  
    There is much *fucking* in the tongues of the people  
    Dark ones are flopping in the dark  
Blue-wired girls are slopping in the breezeway

A man in a dreamcoat's standing in the rain  
and in Africa, a lake is turning over ...

### ***Bruise and black: I put in my ears***

I put in my ears and listen:

A coot's wide feet are made for walking  
    as a message a breeze is shining  
water on the Broadway stripping the canyons  
    Sinatra lifting her boots forever

Hard and alone among the glitters  
wind sweating along St Kilda Road  
    a couple arch their backs to the wall  
Somebody cries out from the opening:

Ms red-fingernails screaming curses  
    Weightlifters clinking their chains in Grace  
Bro's and the Honourable Member getting his feet  
    wet and cool on the concrete grillway

The land sloping out in another country:  
the random wine of the body spilling  
its way along the shining  
the gullies echoing under the archways

her breath in your ear, the drunken gasp

~

Now impure Goths are bleeding in the street

The Gorges of the Tarn are a jet-breath away  
from the ledge these girls are squirming under  
and elsewhere, say, in the classical underground  
the vandals play glass music

which could come from anywhere, rolling down  
this way forward in the Old Quarter or  
sleeping again in the Todd cutway or  
riding their boyfriends or

slitting their wrists in the breezeway  
falling, falling, singing their ears and showing their eyes  
as black-eyed Susans lifting their lit  
faces to dark suns in the Roo Montegeuee  
white legs pressing on heels ...

***Red and purple: I put on my eyes***

The Honourable Member presses his skin:

Red and purple the bodies tumble;  
A Romanian starves in the Piazza San Marco  
Angels are dying at the Stalingrad metro  
several saints sleep kindly

Hard and alone along the pavement  
several women are screaming lewd  
comments at the muddy bishops  
counting their rosaries, louder, louder

Here the tramps, who walk for ever  
while Luna is coming, cold and silver  
hard-rinsed and borne away  
by the tears of the sufferers

among the cobbles, the old villages  
and the machines going down skint  
          someone crying from an opening

~

Someone is crying from an opening ...  
          Cloudwire gathers at Sanpan Bay  
White ghosts are bearing their firesticks  
Eels go starving in the beautiful, the beautiful and  
  
at last the pattern emerges: a whorl of dust red  
in shapeless Euclid never glimpsed  
          a form for random red  
the pattern, at last, emerges:

Blessed are the hopeless, for they'll be made blind.

***Yellow and silver: all this will happen in a single breath***

All this will happen in a single breath:

Out of the underground for Uni and the girl turns left  
and Conder turns right for Euclid and

*Baiame* walks straight forward among the animals and  
the Temple of Wisdom strikes its gongs

and we all die together in the evening/morning.

Fire in the greenstone tilts its tongue  
toward the falling water falling:  
the estuary flooding in for the haunting  
a mountain standing on itself in water

*Grendel* spewing the beautiful soldier  
The coal flowing up from The Burning Mountain.

~

Smoke in the underground, banging in the city  
limbs are falling, limbs are falling  
The Honourable Member getting to his feet  
and the crowd whispering 'Yes, again'

The glacier's spitting out its dead

Scraping knuckles in the opening opening ...

We will all hear nothing, at the End, in the morning.

***The purple noon's transparent might:***

So breathe, now, of sun-high dreams; the purple noon's transparent might  
the several women late for the stoning; some light hissing from a whimpering

Down in mud water, in the canal; blue murders whisper the beautiful skinlight  
trunks and openings hard in the streets; stand straight up in the mind-eyes

Thieves steal a living in Finsley Road; a sun wheedles in in a slanting manner  
A lithographer clings to blue sky clearing; a yellow rain falls on Kurrajong Hill

And up in the village, a skitter on the cobbles ...

~

Some water silks in the river and laneway; no-one shelters in the Austral light  
The lithographer's eyes are seared from seeing; the dividers cut rock in time  
with moths

Deep in rock: a young girl snickering; imagined blood-cries, etched in the river  
Water blackening in the Mughal's garden; a woman coughing, coughing and  
again, coughing

***A sun is darkened in the glass:***

The double blaze is cut right in; the arrow swings its certain North  
A sun is darkened in the glass; a branch is a ship's creaking

The etcher weeps his messages in stone; in midnight lightning, under the hill  
writes his lost wakening behind the lens; turns his head to scour the seasons

The colourer's head is going dark; the Honourable Member can't hear himself  
speak above pines: the wasted, remembered; voices, the darks at midday

Limbs & spark-winds speak; about the last fire, about the last opening  
sliding out, her face glowed, split; her tongue grown thick with grasping

A sound like ringing, among his ears; a ground like a whispering  
The darks at midday, the little silences; the sweet birds clamouring, closing in

Black lion pausing in his roar; ledge worn down by suns above the river

And the creek reflects, flows, into its own becoming ...

~

*Look, Reggie, the mist is coming in  
The house in Normandy's falling in the sea  
The poets are drifting ... I lift your skirts  
I am reaching for my colours ...*

~

***The sea sweats away:***

Orchards' blooms fall without issue; the ground coughs up its smoke and  
dances:

White against red, white against the grass; white against the light's weakening  
Red on her breasts her mouth black her shadow's lain open in the vineyard  
the sea sweats away and she sleeps sleeps in her moistures  
quick to the end never

Mother, mother, the light is opening.

*Note: Focking – the two men, a black man and a British boody were saying fock and fighting in  
the middle of the road.*

## Grey sky

The dusk-moth brushes  
colours away:  
each thing joins with others  
in one silhouette,  
a grey harmony.  
A myth floats  
in night's shadow,  
a ghost,  
a wish,  
a soft wing —  
I forget.

## **In my grandfather's surgery**

The rules were  
to stay in the room left as he'd died  
but not to touch;  
I liked that desk of his

so many books  
even the flies were laid before them in ellipses ...  
and the stilled clock,  
in its brown-skinned shell.



## Morning appearance

downstairs they lie  
silently waiting for the dawn  
slowly the shapes awaken  
unconscious colours begin to bloom  
the old carpet  
reveals its floral pattern  
shadows in the hall  
become coats  
tan and blue

grey curtains bleed crimson  
in soft velvet folds  
sleeping animals emerge  
from their gloomy cavern  
transformed as furniture  
and the darkened mirror  
dreaming on the wall  
becomes again  
this clear silvered pool

## Prodigal son (and his partner)

A city boyfriend  
when taken to stay with parents  
in rural Queensland  
must be made to feel  
that it's normal and neighbourly  
to step in and out  
of nearby paddocks at will.  
It's customary to laugh  
at his ignorance of barbed wire  
and the methods of rendering it benign  
by lifting or lowering its strands.  
Looping a gate's galvanised chain  
back upon itself and over  
the mushroomed stay  
must be done whilst speaking  
of something entirely unrelated,  
such should appear the second nature  
of gate administration  
in a boy born and bred on the land.  
After the well-timed peach of sunset  
is photographed and declared to be gorgeous,  
the homeward path should take in views  
of whoever's herd. And when they stamp,  
lower horned heads and begin to follow,  
smile knowingly at his sweet uneasiness  
— they're only cows —  
whilst shepherding him over the fence  
by the most direct route possible.

## On your birthday

I brought orchids  
mauve like the jumper,  
the last one you knitted

I found it in your wardrobe  
neatly folded, the cashmere  
soft as your hands,  
permeated with the scent of *Mitsouko*

In the jumper's pocket  
a piece of paper, my name  
in your hand writing  
a telephone number of my work

I shut my eyes, you were there,  
wanted to embrace you  
ask the questions  
no one can answer now

It's cold today. I'm wearing  
your mauve jumper and the last drops  
of *Mitsouko*, the bottle  
still in my drawer

I don't know why I come here  
this place is foreign to both of us  
your name on the plaque  
has no meaning to a stranger

this concrete vault, the urn, the ashes  
are not you and I don't need to drive  
a hundred kilometres  
to tell you my thoughts

I can scatter the orchids  
over the sea, you always liked  
the ocean, the walk on the beach  
even in the rain

No one will be there this evening  
only you, me and our past  
and the sea will talk

Pam Schindler

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## In September, the river

catching under the city's din  
the river's old yearning

how each afternoon  
the wind comes to us with brown arms  
with bare sandy feet

the old lull and sway  
is back in the spring air  
*remember, remember*  
the lilt of the moving river  
its colours of mud and sky

(I weary of work, I forget the point  
of shopping malls)

meanwhile the river's salty hair  
streams to the bay islands  
where mangroves grow on a line  
inked under sky-glitter

*take me back  
to the knife and cup  
the silvered boards and tin  
that cast a square of shade  
under the salt wind*

## May Day in Hangzhou

Behind multi-coloured fields  
foothills, like ocean liners,  
cruise over lakeside languor  
to the holiday's seasoned applause.

Dozing garlands  
in rhythmic array  
stir in the breeze.

Orioles sing in the willows,  
night noises murmur  
and stars try to come out.

In China, expectations labour  
under the weight of too many.  
A mercurial charm whispers  
while feathered plastic in tattered strips  
floats high on the wind.  
As blue brushes the dusk  
shadow sinks a ruffled absence of light,  
a soft desiccated imprint  
on a translucent, brooding  
pocket of peace.

## After Mallarmé

my house at the extremity  
garlic & onion plantation  
scent does not waver in the ascension  
so visitors  
don't stay about for long  
they do not crackle the drying skins  
in their palms  
and there are no autumn leaves  
clagged on their shoes

I sit behind my window, now  
muffled in plastic  
waiting for the glazier  
whose glitter is always Sun

& lavender is the basket of flowers  
on the horizon.





## Contributors

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**David Adès** has been a member of Friendly Street Poets since 1979. His collection *Mapping the World* was commended for the Anne Elder Award in 2008. He currently lives in Pittsburgh, USA. David is a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Neville Andersen** was born in 1922 and was a medical practitioner after graduating in 1945. He began writing poetry following his retirement in 1987 and has one published book, *The Crow's Threefold Amen* (1998). His work has been published in Five Bells, Kalimat and Writers Voice.

**Connie Barber's** fourth collection is *Between Headlands* (Five Islands Press 2005). She is widely published in journals and anthologies, including *Motherlode: Australian Women's Poetry 1986–2008* (Puncher & Wattmann 2009).

**Susan Bradley Smith's** latest books are the memoir *Friday Forever* (Radcliffe 2011) and the poetry collection *supermodernprayerbook* (Salt 2010), shortlisted for the 2011 NSW Premier's Awards (Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize) and the 2011 *The Age* Book of the Year Awards. She teaches in the English Department at La Trobe University.

**Margaret Bradstock** has five published collections of poetry, including *The Pomelo Tree* (awarded the Wesley Michel Wright Prize), *Coast* (2005) and *How Like the Past* (2009). She edited *Antipodes*, the first anthology of Aboriginal and white poetic responses to 'settlement'.

**Anne M Carson** has been published in the USA and widely in Australia. She has curated two *Poetica* programs and last year won the Martha Richardson Poetry Prize. *Corvid* was highly commended in the Reason–Brisbane Poetry Prize. She is also a visual artist and teaches creative writing.

**George Clark** has a writer's retreat near Oberon (NSW) where he ponders the relationship between our fragile sensitive being and the great world around us. He reads regularly at Live Poets in North Sydney and won the 2011 Oberon Poetry Prize.

**Sue Clennell** is co-author of *The Ink Drinkers* and has recently released a CD, *The Van Gogh Cafe*. She has been placed twice in the Josephine Ulrick Poetry Prize and has been included in *Best Australian Poems 2011*.

**Emilie Collyer** writes poetry, prose and performance works. Her writing has appeared in journals including *Blue Dog*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *Page Seventeen*, *Torpedo*, *Cottonmouth* and *The Australian Book Review*. Her plays have been produced by ABC Radio National, St Martin's and numerous independent theatre companies. Visit her online at [www.betweenthecracks.net](http://www.betweenthecracks.net).

**P S Cottier** lives in Canberra. Her second book of poetry, *The Cancellation of Clouds*, has just been published by Ginninderra Press.

**Tricia Dearborn** is an award-winning poet and short story writer whose work has appeared in literary journals and anthologies in Australia and overseas. She was joint winner of the 2008 Poets Union Poetry Prize. Her second collection of poetry, *The Ringing World*, will be published by Puncher & Wattmann in 2012.

**Benjamin Dodds** is a Sydney-based poet whose work has appeared in various journals, including *Southerly*, *Blue Dog* and *Famous Reporter*. His work has been included in the post-colonial anthology *Antipodes: Poetic Responses* and also in *Earthly Matters*, a chapbook of poetry celebrating National Science Week.

**D J Dowsett** lives in the Southern Highlands of NSW. He has had half a dozen poems published in small magazines.

**David Falcon**'s work has been published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, various anthologies and literary journals. He has performed his work at Varuna, NSW Writers' Centre, Poets Union venues, Radio Station 2NBC, and the Live Poets Society. He was a winner in the 1996 Sydney Writers' Festival Poetry Olympics.

**Susan Fielding** has worked for many years with Indigenous communities in adult education and community development. More recently she has freed up time to focus exclusively on poetry writing. Her work draws on the rich and challenging experience of living and working in the remote desert community of Alice Springs, with its complex social structures and history.

**Ian Gibbins** is a neuroscientist and Professor of Anatomy at Flinders University. His poetry has been published widely, including *Best Australian Poems 2008* and broadcast with his electronic music on ABC Radio National. His first full collection will be published by Wakefield Press in 2012.

**Jill Gloyne** has won numerous prizes, including the inaugural Martha Richardson Award. Her poems have been published in *Wet Ink*, *Blue Dog* and *Fine Bells*. She lives on Kangaroo Island where she is a member of the Dudley Writers' Group and also Friendly Street Poets, where she was chosen for New Poets Nine.

**Fran Graham** loves her four children, six grandchildren, her beautiful partner, singing, and life in general, and looks forward to travelling in her new campervan. She sometimes writes poetry and her first collection, *On a Hook Behind the Door*, is due out soon from Ginninderra Press.

**Eve Gray** lives on a wildlife reserve in NSW's Lower Hunter Valley. She has been published in newspapers, magazines and anthologies, and has written extensively for ABC Radio. Her focus is mainly on the natural environment and she has received a number of awards for her poetry.

**Simon Hanson** lives in rural South Australia. His love of the ocean and interest in science and philosophy often find their way into his writing. He has been recognised in national and state competitions and recently had a collection published in *Friendly Street New Poets 16* (Wakefield Press).

**Libby Hart** has received the Anne Elder Award and was shortlisted for the Mary Gilmore Prize, a Victorian Premier's Literary Award and *The Age* Book of the Year Awards. She is editor of *Five Poetry Journal*, and is a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Dimitra Harvey** has a Bachelor of Performance in Theatre and Acting from Theatre Nepean, University of Western Sydney. She is currently completing a Master of Letters in Creative Writing under the supervision of Judy Beveridge at the University of Sydney.

**Ron Heard** is a Brisbane-based poet whose first collection, *river, she-oak and wind*, was shortlisted for the Thomas Shapcott Prize. His verse novel *The Shadow of Troy* will be published this year by Ginninderra. He edits *The Mozzie*, a magazine that publishes over 400 poems per year.

**Paul Hetherington** has published eight collections of poetry and edited the final three volumes of the National Library of Australia's four-volume edition of the diaries of Donald Friend. He is Associate Professor of Writing at the University of Canberra and a founding editor of the online journal *Axon: Creative Explorations* ([www.axonjournal.com.au](http://www.axonjournal.com.au)).

**Vanessa Jones** is currently studying a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Philosophy and Creative Writing. Alongside poetry, she writes prose and freelances in copywriting. She is an SA Writers' Centre young ambassador and a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Anne Kellas's** books are *Poems from Mt Moono*, *Isolated States*, and the forthcoming *In the bell clear blue air*. Composer Matthew Dewey has set some of her poems to music. Currently moving towards creative non-fiction, Anne worked in youth research for many years (as Anne Hugo).

**teri louise kelly** is the author of the poetry anthology *Girls Like Me*. In 2012 she will be releasing two new anthologies simultaneously, *Like God, Only ...* and *Post It Notes From Hell's Scrapbook*.

**Joan Kerr's** work has appeared in *Best Australian Poems*, *Antipodes*, *TLR Web*, *New England Review*, *Blue Dog*, *Space*, *Island* and *Famous Reporter* among others. She has featured on Radio National's *Poetica* and has won a number of prizes.

**Graham Kershaw** has published two novels with Fremantle Press, and more recently has had poems accepted by *Westerly*, *Southerly*, *Eureka Street*, *Canberra Times*, *Indigo* and *Famous Reporter*. He works as an architect in Denmark, WA.

**Andy Kissane** writes fiction and poetry. His latest book, *Out to Lunch* (Puncher & Wattmann 2009), was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry. A collection of short stories, *The Swarm*, will be published in 2012 ([andykissane.com](http://andykissane.com)).

**Shari Kocher Campbell's** prize-winning work can be found in numerous literary journals and poetry anthologies across Australia. She has lived in many places and is currently studying at Melbourne University, raising two children and writing poems that gather moss slowly.

**'Danny' Charles Lovecraft** began P'rea Press in 2007, publishing Australian and international weird and fantastic poetry and non-fiction: [www.preapress.com](http://www.preapress.com). He also conducts panels and workshops at national and international fantasy and science fiction conventions. Danny is a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Jennifer Mackenzie** is the author of *Borobudur* (Transit Lounge 2009), which was presented at the Ubud and Melbourne Writers Festivals. She is particularly interested in French and Asian poetry.

**Rachael Mead** is an emerging poet from the Adelaide Hills in South Australia, currently juggling a PhD with managing a second-hand bookshop. Her poems have been published in *Westerly*, *Going Down Swinging*, *Verandab*, *Poetrix* and *Meanjin*. She was the Dorothy Hewett Flagship Fellow for Poetry at Varuna in 2011.

**Tim Metcalf** is Director of Medical Services at Tennant Creek Hospital in the Northern Territory. His sixth book is *The Effective Butterfly* (Ginninderra 2011). Tim is a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Graham Nunn** is a founding member of Brisbane's longest running poetry event, SpeedPoets. He blogs at *Another Lost Shark* ([www.anotherlostshark.com](http://www.anotherlostshark.com)) and has published five collections of poetry, his most recent, *Ocean Hearted* (Another Lost Shark Publications 2010). His debut CD, *The Stillest Hour*, was shortlisted for the Aural Text Award.

**Sue Ogle** is a Geriatrician and Associate Professor of Medicine, where she uses stories and poetry to teach medical students. Currently she is completing a Masters of Medical Humanities and is Writing Co-ordinator for AMA Creative Doctors Network. Her poetry has been published in medical and literary journals.

**Barbara Orlowska-Westwood** was born in Poland and arrived in Australia in 1979. She is a retired physician who enjoys writing poetry and prose. Her writing has won a number of awards and commendations, and has been published in Australia, Poland and America.

**Maureen O'Shaughnessy** is currently completing a Masters of Creative Writing at UTS and has been published in *Best Australian Essays 2010*. She has been awarded the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize, highly commended in the Bruce Dawe Poetry Prize and shortlisted for the Blake Poetry Prize.

**John Pfitzner**, a publishing house editor, is a board member of Friendly Street Poets. He has received a commendation in the Max Harris Poetry Award and has twice been a prize winner in the Studio Poetry Prize. John is also a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Ron Pretty's** seventh book, *Postcards from the Centre*, was published in 2010. For 20 years he ran Five Islands Press. He has edited the magazines *Scarp: New Arts and Writing* and *Blue Dog: Australian Poetry*.

**Sarah Rice** is an art theory lecturer, visual artist and writer. Her art-book of poetry *Those Who Travel*, with prints by Patsy Payne, was published by Ampersand Duck in 2010 and is currently on display at the National Gallery of Art. Her poems have been published in *Island*, *Southerly*, and *fourW twenty-two anthology*.

**Liz Robinson** is an emerging poet who worked as a medical scientist and corporate trainer before taking a part-time job that allows her to pursue her passion for writing poetry and short stories. She has had some success in competitions, and has been published in *Notata* and *Poetrix*.

**Judith Rodriguez's** published books of poetry include *New and Selected Poems* (University of Queensland Press). *Manatee* is a recent chapbook. She collaborated with Moya Henderson on the opera *Lindy* (2002), and with Robyn Archer on a play with songs *Poor Johanna*.

**Brenda Saunders** is a Sydney writer, artist and activist of Aboriginal and British descent. Her work has appeared in anthologies, journals and on the web and been featured on *Awaye* and *Poetica*. Brenda was shortlisted for the David Unaipon Literature Prize (Queensland Premiers Awards) and won the Banjo Paterson Poetry Prize.

**Pam Schindler** is a Brisbane poet. Her first book of poems, *A sky you could fall into*, was published in 2010 by Post Pressed.

**Angela Smith's** poetry has been published widely in Australian literary journals and broadcast on radio. Her first poetry collection, *The Geometry of Flight*, was published in 2010.

**Ian C Smith** lives in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria. His work has appeared in *Axon: Creative Explorations*, *Best Australian Poetry*, *Five Poetry Journal*, *Island*, *Southerly*, *Westerly* and Red Room Company. His fifth book is *Contains Language* (Ginninderra Press 2011).

**John Stokes** has won or been shortlisted for many prizes including the Blake, Rosemary Dobson and Newcastle Prizes for Poetry. Publication credits include *A River in the Dark* (Five Islands Press, 2003) and *Dancing in the yard at Eden* (2011). He represented Australia at the 11th International Poetry Celebration in Italy in 2011.

**Jeanette Swan** is a speech pathologist and word enthusiast. Words are both work and play. The part of poetry she most loves to read and write is imagery that creates emotion.

**Patricia Sykes** is a poet and librettist. Her poems have won the John Shaw Neilson, Tom Collins, and Newcastle Poetry Prizes. She has collaborated on two projects with composer Liza Lim, *Mother Tongue* and *The Navigator*. Her new collection, *The Abbotsford Mysteries*, was published in 2011.

**Heather Taylor Johnson** is a poetry editor for *Wet Ink* magazine and reviews madly for literary journals. Her second collection is *Letters to my Lover from a Small Mountain Town*. She teaches in Creative Writing at Flinders University and is a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Gillian Telford** is a NSW poet, with work published regularly in journals such as *Blue Dog*, *five bells*, *Island*, *Eureka Street*. Longer poem sequences have twice been shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize. Her first collection, *Moments of Perfect Poise* (Ginninderra), was published in 2008.

**Tim Thorne** lives in Launceston, Tasmania. The latest of his twelve collections of poetry is *I Con* (Salt Publishing 2008). He is a former Director of the Tasmanian Poetry Festival and won the William Baylebridge Award for his *A Letter to Egon Kisch* (Cornford Press 2007).

**Susie Utting** has been published in *Hecate*, AAWP's *Nth Degree*, *The Canberra Times* and the *Australian Poetry Journal: Beginnings*, and has a forthcoming collection. She holds Masters degrees in creative writing from the University of Melbourne and Queensland, and is a member of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.

**Lyn Vellins** runs the Sydney-based 'RhiZomic'. She was on the Poet's Union committee, the editorial committee for *five bells*, and has helped edit *Phoenix*, *Hermes*, and *Threads*. Lyn is a member of Australian Poetry's National Advisory Council and is part of the editorial team for the inaugural Australian Poetry Ltd members anthology, *Metabolism*.



**Rob Walker** is a writer and poet from South Australia with three published collections of poetry. Recently he's also been working with Max-Mo and writing short stories. He frequently finds himself torn between Japan and Australia ([www.robwalkerpoet.com](http://www.robwalkerpoet.com)).

**Kate Waterhouse** is co-editor of *Motherlode: Australian Women's Poetry 1986–2008* (Puncher & Wattmann 2009). She has moved from Sydney to Auckland and is working on her accent and two poetry collections – one set in Australia and one in New Zealand – and on another editing collaboration with Jennifer Harrison.

**Les Wicks** has toured widely and seen publication in well over two hundred different magazines, anthologies and newspapers across 15 countries in 9 languages. His eighth and most recent book of poetry is *The Ambrosiacs* (Island 2009). [leswicks.tripod.com/lw.htm](http://leswicks.tripod.com/lw.htm)

**Georgina Wyatt** was born in Bowen in 1973 and lives with her husband in Canberra. She is currently undertaking a postgraduate Diploma of Professional Writing at Canberra University. Her love of poetry is a secret she has kept her whole life, which she has now decided to share.

**Warrick Wynne** is a Melbourne poet and teacher. His most recent collection is *The State of the Rivers and Streams* (Five Islands Press).

*Metabolism* is the inaugural members anthology of Australian Poetry Ltd, a literary community that, as the title suggests, is growing and transforming in response to poetry's changing environment.

Readers will find this collection a testament to the energy and diversity within the Australian poetry scene.

