

Poems 2013

Volume 2 of the Australian Poetry Ltd
Members' Anthology



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ed. Jessica Friedmann, Dennis Haskell, and Chris Wallace-Crabbe

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CONTENTS

7	Dennis Haskell	<i>Editor's Note</i>
9	Elizabeth Lawson	<i>No Other Compass</i>
10	Julie Maclean	<i>Painting Rock Woman Uluru</i>
12	Gillian Telford	<i>Displacement</i>
14	Irene Wilkie	<i>Tropical</i>
16	Rose van Son	<i>Temperature</i>
17	Ross Jackson	<i>Mallee</i>
18	Margaret Bradstock	<i>Bees</i>
20	Sue Clennell	<i>New Holland</i>
21	Jackson	<i>The Alkali Cleansing</i>
22	Gail Willems	<i>Broken Memory</i>
24	Kristin Hannaford	<i>Souvenir</i>
25	Wendy Poussard	<i>Tasmanian Tiger</i>
26	Pete Hay	<i>Emu Eats the Future (Dark Dreaming in the City of Light)</i>
31	Jennifer Chrystie	<i>The Vanished</i>
32	David Adès	<i>Blindsided</i>
34	B. R. Dionysius	<i>Powerful Owl</i>
35	Alex Skovron	<i>Climate Change</i>
36	Rose Lucas	<i>New Born</i>
38	Terry Whitebeach	<i>Love Poem for My Mother</i>
40	Nola Firth	<i>My Father's House</i>
41	Helen Thurloe	<i>Wishful Neighbouring</i>

42	Ray Liversidge	<i>T. h. Moluccanus</i>
43	Joan Kerr	<i>11 Things I Know About My Father</i>
44	Patricia Sykes	<i>Linguist</i>
46	Lizz Murphy	<i>Ain't She Sweet</i>
47	B. N. Oakman	<i>Neurosurgery</i>
48	Rachael Petridis	<i>Say Skin</i>
50	Erin Shiel	<i>Simryn Gill's Pearls</i>
52	Pauline Reeve	<i>Easygoing State</i>
54	Gregory Piko	<i>Faded Pleasure</i>
55	Christopher Race	<i>On Not Missing it All</i>
56	Laura Jan Shore	<i>Revealed</i>
59	Moya Pacey	<i>At the Beaumont Hamel Memorial, France</i>
60	Susie Utting	<i>Snap Shot</i>
61	Julie Watts	<i>Underneath My Palm</i>
62	Bronwyn Lovell	<i>No Last Goodbyes</i>
64	Judyth Keighran	<i>After Viewing John Brack's Paintings</i>
66	Ian Smith	<i>He Wishes</i>
67	Julie Birch	<i>Admission</i>
68	Benjamin Dodds	<i>Our Lady of Yanco</i>
69	Connie Barber	<i>The Large Hadron Collider at CERN</i>
70	Susan Adams	<i>The Donation</i>
72	Miro Sandev	<i>Bacon's Triptychs</i>
74	Peter Lach-Newinsky	<i>Echo Point Elegy</i>

76	Rachael Mead	<i>The Polar Tent</i>
78	Shari Kocher	<i>The Star in the Snow</i>
80	Daniel Dugas	<i>A Direct North General View</i>
81	Sheryl Persson	<i>Here's Looking at You</i>
82	Liam Guilar	<i>Caedmon? Him?</i>
83	John Carey	<i>Australian Poetry 1850 - 1945</i>
84	P. S. Cottier	<i>Australia Day 2013</i>
85	James Aitchison	<i>On Boat People</i>
86	Rod Usher	<i>Rin Tin Latin</i>
88	Kate Waterhouse	<i>Talking to Mackinlay at Hut Point</i>
89	Philip Neilsen	<i>Snowy Owl</i>
90	John Upton	<i>ICU</i>
92	Janette Dadd	<i>Beaumaris Mist</i>
94	Jennifer Compton	<i>Lisboa 1755</i>
96	Simeon Kronenberg	<i>The Barbarians Have Come</i>
97	Susan Hawthorne	<i>Trijata's Dream</i>
98	Brenda Saunders	<i>Toyota Dreaming</i>
101	Helen Parsons	<i>Driving Out</i>
102	Virginia Jealous	<i>Miniature Women</i>
103	Maureen O'Shaughnessy	<i>How I Have Felt that Thing that's Called 'To Part'</i>
107	Contributors	

EDITOR'S NOTE

'Poetry,' said the German philosopher Hegel, 'is the universal art of the spirit,' as it launches into 'the inner time of ideas and feelings'. These are terms whose grandeur might make contemporary readers nervous, especially in as hardbitten a country as Australia. However, we all understand what the terms are getting at, and poetry exists to explore the dimensions of our lives beyond pragmatism and immediate time. The Members Anthology is Australian Poetry Ltd's annual showcase of new poetry written by its members, and as such it presents a selection of their explorations of those dimensions which potentially give our lives some sense of grandeur. Since the membership includes many of Australia's well-known poets, inclusion is very competitive and the poems cover a wide range of concerns, in forms that range from free verse to villanelle.

Emerging names sit side by side with better-known poets such as Jennifer Compton, Alex Skovron and Margaret Bradstock: this is one of the virtues of the annual anthology. An anthology such as this is bound to be various, and it is difficult to draw out dominant themes or concerns. Art appears often, including Aboriginal art (but not dance or music, which is interesting); birds fly through the pages reasonably frequently; and the poems evince a strong interest in history. As always in poetry, personal relationships feature strongly, here in various directions but especially towards parents and towards children—history in its personal guise. The uses of language to explore these concerns differ markedly; quiet, lively, restrained, overflowing, even at times zany. It makes for a lively volume; the editors thank everyone who submitted poems and are delighted to reflect that Australian Poetry Ltd has a membership whose work can be so thoughtful, intellectually curious, and so willing to go on linguistic adventures.

No OTHER COMPASS

Emily Kngwarreye

Her studio is kids, dogs, brushes, earth and light,
under-breath song water over pebbles.

Her eyes shine sky. Desert swirl
centres her canvas. No other compass.

Minute hands lift to scatter Milky Ways,
desert dots pulsing red red earth.

Her now is infinite distance,
points of colour veiling story in story,

her nearest meaning
yam, rock, bird-prints,

frail eggs breaking open.
Women are gathering everlastings,

Ahalkere's trillion stars,
while somewhere galleries

ripple and crack, pester
which way to hang galaxies?

Emily glances up.
Down.

Your business.

I paint.

PAINTING ROCK WOMAN ULURU

we snake around her stubborn hulk
pat the sacred skin scaled as a desert skink,
a red brick wall

crawl into her hydra mouths leave footprints
on her tongue with blundstones
and white runners

she's winky round the eyes
a kewpie doll pitted with acne
on a fresh cheek

memorial plaques are stapled
to her thighs Marcia, Brian, Leslie,
George have toppled off these
ancestral slopes fulfilling lifelong
ambition ignoring the warning

ants like us don't creep over her curves today
clouds party with grey haze from Alice fires
it's windy as hell the rains have come

frogs clack-clack love calls like music sticks
before the dry sets them hard in red again

for now, a weeping wet folds a shroud
or bridal veil, a skull tattooed into her back
spinifex sprouts in her sorry cuts

under wide skirts a kindergarten of baby river gums
wild flowers sweet as newborns' fingernails
charm us with their pinks, yellows

at sunset she will pose for greedy eyes
we steal her stories, trawling reservoirs
for sorrow ghosts swirl about this cathedral

jelly baby dugong dreaming
nose of dolphin caterpillar
grungy steampunk armadillo

we make her ours

Published in Rabbit, 2012

DISPLACEMENT

(i)

From the incoming tide
I rescue a stone—
 deep olive green
tinged with yellow buff.

Its colours bring echoes
of old growth forest, as though lifted
from leaf-litter, moss and fungi;
but stranded here

among the pastel shells,
the bleached and silvered grit,
it's a misfit
dumped on a tidal surge.

I roll it in my palm, turn
and stroke it with my thumb,
rub away each grain of sand
and hold it till it warms.

(ii)

In waves of harassment, the hostile
natives dive and shriek—
 From the fig's leafy head,
crouched in defiance— a red-eyed

intruder, huge and pale, keeps
them at bay with great snaps
of its bill and raucous cries.
When we're talking of birds

it's a summer migrant with many names—
stormbird or fig-hawk, rainbird or hornbill;
a channel-billed cuckoo, flown south
to breed and find hosts for its eggs.

As I watch it struggle against the flock,
I think of that journey
across the ocean, grey wings beating,
hour upon hour—

driven by instinct and drawn
to our plenty,
each year they find nurture
despite the clamour.

(iii)

Across the Timor Sea, the boats
keep coming.
Some we hear about, some we don't—

some will wait quietly, others won't.

TROPICAL

Brush turkeys rake the sand,
beach grass and cuttlebone.
I settle in my damp deckchair,
salt drops slide,
broad hat shades
my fluttering magazine.

New learners, new surfers,
the latest lovers sprint from
the panting sea; he piggy-backs
the squealing girl; brown toes curl.
He dares a pat to
her derriere, three kisses
to her upturned face;
she drops sand into his shorts.
They think this place is theirs.

I drop my magazine,
lower my brim, retire
behind dark glasses,
scan the beach for cuttlebone,
brush turkeys on the sand.

The lovers go, leave me to guard
their mound of goods
while they tease, dive, slide
like dolphins about each other.

I watch, remembering, count
bags, red and yellow towels,

and the birds
deep-grunt, flap along edge
of shade, avoid
what is melting in the sun,
inspect, pass over
the barren grass,
forever scrape for something better.

Above their *quirk, quirk, quirk*,
helicopter beat, surf bluster,
I hear the shrieks of the loving two
cascade along the beach
and here they are, skins glistening;

he dries her short-cropped head,
she plants her feet as if riding waves until
he bends to span, measure with broad hands
her slender waist;
she holds her breath, he holds a towel while she,
hardly shy, removes wet clothes for dry.

Brush turkeys parade
their orange-yellow necks,
their red and naked heads
inspect beach grass
peck sand and cuttlebone.

TEMPERATURE

if the weather clears
she will take the sea road
walk along cliffs
hang out near rocks
where seals swim with purpose

if the weather clears
she will tie a line
behind the chook shed
hang dirty washing
in the sun

she will smother weeds
walk to a neighbour's house
slide her heart in her pocket
hide it under a red jacket

if the weather clears
she will tie her hair in a scarf
smell the last rain
catch the last train
leave a letter behind

MALLEE

fuzzy explorer, having just stepped out,
I splatter my moonbeams into
a night thick and black as home burnt jam,

play blind man's bluff in a yard of
unseen oat grass, till the lamps of faint grey
bushes begin glowing there.

at a sunrise stretched to four quarters
beyond the fences, a dry red kangaroo
hide of flatland, and I see

a fluorescence along its edge, a streaming
of white birds in flight. buckled into
the forked elegance of a Rose Mallee,

two cans empty of full strength beer
and in the frittered, creamy, oatmeal rigging,
a little of the red rose blur,

and the slow, well stoked combustion
of a tongue of sun, lapping legs, tickling feet,
and a rising of the flies.

The air swarms,
 neonicotinoids slipping behind screens
like twisted trojans, tents garlanded with flowers

tissues, nectar, fogging honeybee brains
making it harder to forage
 or find the way home.

Watching the hives die off
 corpses piled on corpses
it's like footage of another holocaust

or trenches sandbagged with bee skeletons
 husks of gauze and make-weight molecules
clustered between the lines.

“Tell it to the bees,” said the ancients
 alerting them to deaths,
waggle-dancing their immortality.

Published in Barnacle Rock (Puncher and Wattmann, 2013)

NEW HOLLAND

In the west we worship Psamathe,
the sand goddess, for our houses
are built thereon, and not upon the rock.
Lick us, prick us, are we not grit?
It's under our eyelids, in our DNA,
our bodies also storing the genie of heat,
for even at night we have a black sun
hooning our perspiring streets.
Summer scrapes kidneys with steel wool
while praying mantis men tear
each others' heads off.
When you, in the east, fall into bed,
we are still awake, like the last city
left after nuclear devastation,
dingoes circling.

Published in The Weekend Australian 1 June, 2013

THE ALKALI CLEANSING

In this forest I smell
the leaves, always the leaves,
their eucalyptus breath
But not today

Today I smell, dark but not dirty,
the alkali cleansing
of charcoal and ash

I hear not beaks, not bright feathers, only
the baritone wind
and my soft alto heart

I taste not smoke, not now, but fire-dust
surrounded and spent
in the wet film on my tongue

Rain is coming
I smell the negative charge
Rain is coming
Rain is coming and I feel
the fire-sprung seeds
making ready

*Published in Fire (Margaret River Press,
February 2013)*

the cries take little nicks out of me
licking up from every crack
I can hear you looking for something
pushing the dark pink air with
flaying wings behind a cracked windscreen
kicking it with curses

I'm lost in your memory
 but you're flapping around inside me
coming down like feathers out of nowhere
 in cellophane air evening draws tight
here I am walking behind your eyes
 searching your memory for an old Holden
and black crows

1st prize in the Poetry D'Amour Prize, 2013
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Poetry Prize Anthology, 2013

SOUVENIR

What do we take from a place?
I stand behind you in the mirror –
golden flecks of mica and silicon,
sand carried home, spill from
the black and white cup of your
swimmers and crumb the lino.
You smile, the gap in your teeth
exposed like a binary code for laughter
as you uncover tokens of seaweed
secreted under a breast. Other
souvenirs fret the mantelpiece,
talismans and pocket geographies
of where we've been: a vase,
the bubbled city, a shell – strange
and feeble extractions gathered
to mask that sucked-out kind
of emptiness, the slow-mouthed
'O' that hollows us once the sense
of wonder subsides, and all these
trinkets – our curious ruins.

TASMANIAN TIGER

To tell the truth
you are not much like a tiger,
more like a skinny wolf
with a tail like a poker,
a stripey bum
and a nervous disposition.
People say you are shy,
coughing when anxious,
as I do myself. A good parent
to your tiny sons and daughters.

You failed to recognise your predators.
Even before we killed you,
you were generally silent.
suddenly died from shock
when you were captured,
gave up without a struggle.

Now that you are gone
we have discovered that
we love you. We miss you.
We are looking for you everywhere.
You left your paw-prints
on our consciouness.
You are howling in our dreams.
I swear I almost saw you yesterday.

PETE HAY

EMU EATS THE FUTURE (DARK DREAMING IN THE CITY OF LIGHT)

King Island Emu, Grande Galerie de l'Evolution, Paris 2013

We have crossed vast realms,
me, alive, and this dainty tracery
brought here, a sketch within gloom,
 to lodge in the Hall of Extinction.
He is perfect and small, his neck reptilian,
a boned fluff of tail, all osseous delicacy.
He might be strolling his island's wind-tilted grasslands,
bereft of care, an eye, perhaps, to the storm
rolling over the relentless Strait.
But he is not. Released by Baudin's francs
from the sealers' easy carnage,
he fetched here to live within elms and glades and groves
 under the chuckle of Josephine's imperial eye.
It is a dubious fortune.
He will die in the *Jardin des Plantes*,
the last of his kind, another notch for our species' belt.
Tides of shapeless grief flood the Galerie.
A thought takes tenacious hold:
we are joined at the hip,
 we doomed two.

Thylacine, Grande Galerie de l'Evolution, Paris 2013

How young she is. How soft.
How fresh her coat.
She slips from the night of her ever-after.
Why is she here?
She is the absence that marks my island,
an island difficult, at this remove, even to imagine –
yet she is here in this cave of extravagant death,
 in Paris.
Her eye is huge and brown.
It locks onto mine.
I do not know how to leave.

Place du Parvis Notre Dame, Paris 1447-50, Paris 2013

In the great square, the great cathedral's forecourt,
students on gap years throng, light innocence,
 in bejeaned, blonde cavort.
Stars&stripes are stitched to backpacks, stylishly slung.
They strike huggy poses of cute, hygienic perfection,
 wide-eyed, careless, unknowing.
A busker Chaplin-walks through trills of mirth.
This is a space blessed for culture.
Mere minutes downriver is the Louvre,
revered epicentre of high western art.
'Louvre'. 'Wolf den'.

In the year of his *gran batteu*,
Sir Hubert's black hounds, his *piquers*,
sweep life from the Ardennes forest,
 render it desert.
Cut-tail's pack moves south,
shadow-slips into a jumbled fastness of rock
 guarding the way to a great, walled city.
The wild place has a human name.
 Montmartre.
 It is 1447.

I climb a cascade of steps to the summit of the hill;
to the Basilica with its chaotic command of Paris.
Montmartre seems ancient, its history vast.
Below is the temple of sex – Pigalle, New Athens,
 the Moulin Rouge with its inner spread of thigh.
On the western slopes Zola, Degas, Nijinsky, Truffaut
 slumber eternally on.
There is a soft carpet of sound, a pleasant whirr of summer,
not insects, but the constant song of cameras on automatic focus.
A gypsy girl sells me a friendship band, cheap-woven
 with an ironclad guarantee.
It is hot. It is 2013.
I turn abruptly, look back up the hill.
Two wild golden eyes flare in the sun,
 and are gone.

Cut-tail's hungry pack ghosts from the caves of Montmartre,
probes the crumbling walls,
slides through the tangled ways of the great city.

With souls newly scrubbed, the faithful of Notre Dame
 emerge from piety
into the killing field of the Place du Parvis.
They enter into the eternal life that is surely theirs,
 forty of them,
 ripped apart, gorged upon,
 feast-fare for Cut-tail's wolfpack.
It is the summer of 1450, and the great square,
the forecourt of the great cathedral,
 is a space damned and wild.

Summer becomes winter; the grip of hunger tightens.
Cut-tail returns to the Parvis,
 to a memory of feast and plenty.
 Into ambush.
From the ramparts of the great House of God
a fierce bowstrung rain pelts down.
Blood and butchery returns to the square,
 without outrage, without violation, now,
 of the ordained order of things.
It is the winter of 1450, and the wolves are dead.
That, at least, is the glib and easy take.
From the North Tower the cathedral's old chimerae
 look down, keep their counsel.
 Bide their time.

Emu Eats the Future, Hobart 2013.

In the eternity of oblivion emu evolves,
grows teeth.

In life the savage other
could never be borne,
and primal fear does not vanish
with extinction.

The cavalcade of banished life,
our summary executions,
fixes upon us, stalks through our dreams,
through the ravaged chains of our being.

The emu is at the door.
It grinds new teeth.

Fills its belly.

THE VANISHED

Once it's gone and something fills the gap
you can't remember what was there before
Regret and recall both have left the map

A tooth well-rotted cracks with just a tap
You plan on dentures, implants, crowns and more
Once it's gone then something fills the gap

Want coffee, bread or maybe ginger snaps
Can't find what used to be your favourite store
Regret and recall soon will leave the map

What happened to that gumtree, laced with blackened sap
No hint of trunk or branches: you really can't be sure
once it's gone and something fills the gap

Friends may die through many a cruel mishap
For years the pangs of loss disturb your core
until regret and recall leave the map

Though you're alert and you've no handicap
the blessing of forgetting heals the sore
Once they're gone and someone fills the gap
regret and recall both will leave the map

BLINDSIDED

Kibbutz Gesher Haziv, 1974

It was quiet in the orange grove after the voices
faded, quiet enough for vulnerability to settle on

our skinny bodies, our young heads. We spoke to
ward off something unspoken, the world

reassembling months after the *Yom Kippur War*,
constellations of private grief hidden from us —

children and outsiders – before the funerals of the
four dead kibbutzniks, the lamentation. Close to

the border, past the narrow limits of experience,
even the air was edgy, not with prescience or

premonition but something vague, undefined, a hair
raising on the back of necks stalking the

silence, making us skittish, jumping at a crack like a
shot as a bird, startled, burst out of an orange

tree, jumping again at jets flying low, flashing silver
bright through the sound barrier, sonic

booms catching us, gunshots, gunshots as we
jumped, rumours of terrorists slipping across the

border on moonless nights, rubber dinghies on the
beach; and then the day Dov nearly died – two

severed legs, a severed arm, serious burns – lying in
Tel Hashomer with wounded soldiers, war

amputees. No gunshot, no terrorist, no infiltrator:
a shirt, a tractor, a suspicion of epilepsy

POWERFUL OWL

The pair of grey butcherbirds assaulting the open flak
Jacket of the paperbark's fleshy trunk, alerted them to
Blackburn Lake's violent undercurrent. Their hooked
Beaks flung a warning, woomera-like, extending their
Fear's range; a hopeless sonic weapon they directed at
The Powerful owl's seismic hearing. It was unmoved,
As though rendered immobile by the sun's paralysing
Spell or instinct's polite etiquette. The owl perched,
Its head rotating like a lighthouse beacon, it's yellow
Eyes radiating out a beam of destruction. Its body
Fuelling like a rocket on a launch pad. It only waited
For night to cloak it, an executioner's hood to break
The ennui of its daylight evolutionary prison. In tree
Hollows, night animals assumed the brace position.

CLIMATE CHANGE

*We have no control over the past. There are as many
secrets in it as in the future.*

—Adam Zagajewski, *Two Cities*

The past never happened and never will
the future has come and gone
the present is loitering somewhere on the outskirts
of intention, biding its time, alone

among the old tenses with no place to turn
and nothing to do but await
word from the foggy reaches of photographic memory
as it scans itself, recalling too late

the long latitudes of desire, all those isobars
swimming about an erratic map
like an eternally changing and unchartable weather
like crosshairs that refuse to overlap

to fix at last upon their softly shining target
lurking somewhere in the zone
of a past that no longer can pretend to happen
and a future forever gone.

NEW BORN

Slicked
back with creamy vernix,
you seem to me a
small wet seal,
wrapped tight in your white
cotton blanket.

I hold the bundle of your body
perfect
in my arms -
they were made for this,
they do it without thought
for anything -
 not even my naked,
bleeding body,
or the bustle,
 subsiding,
in the room behind me -

you watch me,
still;
 together we learn the
words of
touch,
and warmth,
the language of our beating,
 proximate
hearts:

holding,
cleaving,
braiding and
spinning apart like the bright
 ribbons on the maypole,
their cords of rich colour
twisting
in the sun:

Little child,
 complex already,
your crinkled eyes,
 all dark pupils
under these dimmed lights,
fix
on me -

LOVE POEM FOR MY MOTHER

Soft slippers to ease your swollen feet
memory to restore your wooden features
their familiar animation - words
for when you struggle and the wrong ones come
who once were such a Gemini chatterer
quick-silver wit and rapier mind.

Photos of you young and beautiful
hung above your bed to reflect
a truth these current facts disguise:
never-ending stream of creature comforts
lip balm, flowers, a smile, a kiss, a compliment,
ironed handkerchiefs, hot cup of tea.

Six strong daughters wrap their wings
about you. Soon it will be goodbye.

"I thought so," Dad said when we gave him
the bad news from the doctors,
"but we won't tell Mum. It would only worry her."
Hoards each day the promise of another hour or so
with his sweetheart; content to sit and gaze
at the glamorous girl he met at sixteen,
unchanged, whom he so ardently still adores.

Back home I read the paper, watch TV,
dig the garden, try to get upset at politics
while my night thoughts hum constant to your bedside
& the hours I am not with you a waking pause.

Daily I am writing a love poem
to my mother – to honour the life you gave me
I want no other.

MY FATHER'S HOUSE

My father strides past me into the front room with the dark
mahogany sideboard, where two crystal decanters stand
empty. No wine was ever allowed in this house.
But there is a bookcase and a garden.

My father strides through the garden, brushes me aside as he goes past,
but he planted plum and wisteria near the house,
and in spring there is a room
of heaven, petal carpeted, where I stand
under the blue sky and here, there is no darkness.

My father strides by me as I play in a sun patch in the garden,
hangs his scarlet lumber jacket on the hall stand,
sits at the laminex dinner table and tells about the past
of this country town, about the ice rink, the orchestra, and the rooms
the barber kept, but not about his small, nearby childhood house.

My father strides off to municipal meetings, emptying the house.
I search for him in his small, dark book case.
Tagore and Omar Khayyam have time for me in this treasure room
of words collected by my father over thirty years past.
School leaver at fourteen, his blue eyes determined to understand.

My father walks with me through the garden and into the house.
Both in our sixties now, the past has become a wider room
in which to stand and let its light explain the dark.

WISHFUL NEIGHBOURING

If I were someone else, and you -
you were someone else too -
I might invite you onto the deck
in this warm jasmine dusk
and we'd sip chilled Moscato, and talk.

Talk about things we both know we know,
but have pretended not to notice.
Like your dead brother, who slipped
down the mountain. Like our children,
who were friends, for a while.
Like our aged parents who tug often
on our diaries and our telephones.

Talk about our shackled dreams, which
while insubstantial by day, might sit
beside us - here - in this thick evening
air, to sip the crisp sweet wine and nod.

And in the dark you would laugh out loud
ironically, and not eye-spark
with keenly nurtured rage. And after
seventeen years I would not pretend
to take sides. I'd like to not regret -
for once - this endless futile reaching.

T. H. MOLUCCANUS

On some mornings they could be seen in the trees outside our bedroom glass doors which open onto the back garden.

Rather, heard first,
then glimpsed amidst branches of the virgilia. The angle was better from
my side of the bed; but then, over time, it was understood
that you were more than happy with the view
from where you were.

Raking the lawn early one spring morning and I catch
the shifting hues of something among
the untold purple flowers.

At first, the bird looks like it's roosting, its colourful body
softly rocking. Yet, something is wrong. The red and yellow
feathers of its breast upturned,
like the bright blue head is.

I gently prod it with my finger, and the bird topples over.
As it struggles to regain its footing,
the lorikeet is already
in my poem, a crumpled rainbow. If I was to turn
around I would see you standing at the bedroom window.
The lorikeet, back on its feet, is looking up into
the unbroken blue of the sky.

11 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT MY FATHER

There are snakes in our fernery
my mother says
it should be pulled down
but my father has no common sense
I have learned this early
the house is falling down
around our ears my mother says
while my father stands over the stove
stirring a pot of soup
and whistling sadly
there are rats in the shed
among the knee-deep
piles of sawdust and the
lengths of wood and boxes
of dried paint and leaking oil
he stands among the rats
making chess sets
while the back door flaps
off its hinges and the
bathroom floor rots
he is famous
for being clever
dogs love him
insanely
he can speak Latin
we must not upset him

LINGUIST

I can see her in the hence
light years on, deeper in the regions
of the articulate, alight as now,
burning holes in someone's comfort.
For brief minutes I am the one

her infancy practices on
her plastic chair pulled up to the sink
appointing herself my assistant
with utensil and pot, with each
item we have just eaten from

or with, each a raw thing once
until invention stepped in
already she is a maker
her two-year-old tongue
able to brandish *tongs*!

the object and the word.
connection and execution.
She trounces and denounces,
discarding tea towel as limp
a damp thing with no spine to it

and soon there are shards
strewn in glitter patterns across
the floor, approximating a planet
being hurled from its galaxy
or else a comet flinging sparks

from its fast track through existence.
We laugh at the nonsense of contrast
her new digits alongside my used-bys
her tiptoe stretch, my sprung tendons,
her swift neurons against age's

contracting wit. But she will forget
this spilt half hour, its proximity
to the same tap which fills her cup,
war-war her frequent cry of thirst
is not yet perfected, water's middle *t*

still beyond her consonantal grasp
or maybe she is too enchanted
by her mastery of tongs
to bother with a life source
so deceptively within reach

tongs she insists, *tongs*!
transfixing them
with her stainless steel grip
her neon grin poised
to read the world like a book.

AIN'T SHE SWEET

We pace off the spare hour the streets quiet our bubble gum breath in front of us chat between ourselves get our bikes get our skates bash our tennis balls against the neighbour's gable wall knock on another friend's door a walk down the street A big chunky car tawny cruisy slows idles at a getaway angle engine toey We are polite children my chum goes to the window unprompted C'mon we'll take you to see the Beatles the driver mutters out the side of his eye the other on the rear view mirror The back door opens heavily he is curly haired thick necked Our laughter we know the Beatles are in England My shyness welds me to the footpath my chum's disdain turns her on her heel She stalks off to peel her big pot of 5 o'clock potatoes I run to my jobs too run home where little is ever said and say not a thing My chum tells her parents the whole stupid story her mother the shop woman in black blanching Her father the tailor reaching for the telephone one of the few in the neighbourhood Years later my mother lips tight chin drawn down says children are not safe in the streets not like they used to be

NEUROSURGERY

She'll be dead now
The woman with bright curly hair
The one I saw in Admissions
She and her man and her boy and her girl
All of them well turned out
Blending in an understated kind of way
And I cannot forget her glorious hair
And how next day her crown was part-shorn
And how two days later a strip of plaster patched her stitched scalp
And how the day after her man was talking on his mobile
Bad news, I heard him say
And when I walked past her room I saw
Her boy slumped on a chair as if he'd been punched
Her girl perched on the bed grasping her mother's hand
Her man rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet
All of them estranged from speech
And then I returned to another room to sit beside another bed
And I took a woman's hand in mine
And gripped it
Hard
Too hard
Much too hard

*Published in The Canberra Times,
Saturday 9 March, 2013*

SAY SKIN

and you will know
the dark eyes of the Mediterranean
look into them
open sparkling alive

look into them
then and now look close
know the people
marbled from their past
plying oceans and rivers
their myths from secret tombs
are flesh
mouthing your welcome

say skin
and you will know love
of land of woman
hair flowing dark and long
mantle of mountain and valley
length and breadth of tongue
singing mask and bone

inhale sea
sweep of sky
know intimacy the islands
whispering salt and sail
wind tunnelled furrows
and the low mourn
of the bent olive tree

say skin
Manna's sweet-running sap
pine and cedar bark and pith
tears of mastic
and you will know
the one deep pool eye
of face of map

*Published in Australian Love Poems 2013,
Inkerman and Blunt*

SIMRYN GILL'S PEARLS

*I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag
of my heart. I am, I am, I am.*

—*Sylvia Plath*

Take a copy of *The Bell Jar*. Tear the cover carefully from top to bottom like a zip. Skip the front pages until you arrive at the text: “It was a queer, sultry summer...” Rip each page so the entire text is a pile of thin paper strips. Take each strip and wind it. Watch the heat of your hands and the moisture in the air form it into a pearl. The words turn around each other, forget rhythm or grammar until they are reformed into a string of beads.

The winter I was breastfeeding my twins, I read
The Bell Jar as it balanced on my knees with one
baby pointing east and the other west. If I had
hung Simryn's pearls around my neck the text
would surely have soaked into my skin instead
of my eyes. The potent beads would have hung
over my heart down between my breasts,
babies and legs. The Bell Jar's words are little
round pebbles. The strings are not tied into
a clasp, but lie loose, waiting to be finished.

Inspired by artworks by Simryn Gill, Pearls, 2008

EASYGOING STATE

I have...quieted myself

—Song of Ascent

Heart-of-our-City is not such a towering poppy.
No one there presumes to freeze the sun.

No. Business, sensible in a floppy hat and zinc
is reclining in the pool shallows at Portsea.
His door wears 'Closed' on Collins Street.
PR is prone on the beach, broadsheet for umbrella,
happy to fall back on the Maker of Mind Games
for today's solutions in tomorrow's newspaper.
Finance—Spent. Home, reducing heat;
horizontal under a fan on the tiles.
Even Tennis, down by the Yarra, retreats.
The roof is slid across.
Between games she gathers her wits
under a towel beside the court.

Heart-of-our-Country reaches for the sweeping sky.
There, things figure on a fiery wind.

Yes. Eucalypt hangs out bark like a hotel shingle
to draw wind-fanned flames up to his canopy.
Burnt, he vents seed on a bed of ash.
Flowering Grasses wave off their pollen that takes
the juddering flight from the pastures—Wire, Wallaby,
falling in with a kiln of wind to find a mate.
Pine Pollen—launched—floats from the north,
bobs along down the Alps, skirting leap and lookout.

Even Mallee by the Murray pirouettes south,
throws a bouquet of red dust,
then grand jetés over Bass Strait
bearing riches to an island state.

I'll catch with a soft laugh, flight and landing;
cool and fruit in the masterful heat.

FADED PLEASURE

You might say that we were living
more for days gone by, than those that
lay ahead. Living more for memories,
than oceans distant and uncrossed.
Love was shining gently as it does on
a slow moving Sunday afternoon, and
we shared the quiet kind of comfort
that comes with familiarity.
We called it equilibrium, though
perhaps we never should, for the
tide rarely teetered: being more
inclined to ebb, than flow.
Still, there was a faded pleasure,
a lingering trace of sweetness, like
the last of the marmalade spread
thinly, on a slice of blackened toast.

ON NOT MISSING IT ALL

It's dark here
Even when it's light
It's dark here.

The mad can go on forever
Unwearied, unwavering,
Make dark out of light and
Light out of dark.

I grow old, like a flame
Blue and shivering, red and
Ululating, orange and
Flickering yellow, all heat
In the black wood all about.

The door just that little bit open
The thin edge moving, back
And forth, ever so slightly –
To go through the door would
Be to miss it all.

I had forgotten how unsettling
Raised floor boards were.
My red wood rods lay across
A deep slab of concrete, but
I've seen walls wave
In a wind, hang from the ceiling
Calling out above the bare earth:
No words just gestures, moving
Back and forth, wavering among all
The ruin and reclamation.

REVEALED

To re-teach a thing its loveliness...

—Galway Kinnell

Nothing much lovely about Grampa Lou,
not the reek of his cigar, the ash and crumbs
tumbling from his vest as he snatched us up
onto his lap, not his prickly moustache kisses.

He'd suck his false teeth at meals, slurp soup
and slam the table in a pique, upsetting the gravy.
Made Grandma blush and squirm
with his salacious puns and Mae West jokes

and who didn't wince at his tenor trills
while listening to Sunday night opera?

He pranced like a circus bear spouting Russian,
though he was only 12 when he'd arrived at Ellis Island.
Waving his cigar, he'd brag about the two jobs he'd worked
to pay for law school at night.

Weeping was a fine art for him and while Grandma lay dying
he wailed, *Mummy, don't leave me.*
The old aunts rolled their eyes and muttered,
About time she went somewhere on her own.

At the nursing home, the staff learnt to avoid
his flirtations and the occasional pinch.
By 96, still healthy, he'd had enough
and refused to eat.

Cocooned in white blankets, he was
a shrivelled balloon minus his bluster and puff.
Groaning in his sleep, wrestling with bedclothes,
with beckoning angels, he'd cry out, *No! No!*
raising his palm to ward them off.

His eyelids flickered then snapped open.
What time is it?
One pm, Grampa.
Seeing me, recognition dawned.
He asked after my children, recalling ages and names,
then drifted off again only to wake and demand,
What time is it?

Once he sat straight up, grasping my hands in his icy ones.
He leaned his grizzled cheeks close.
Eyes, brimming like Russian lakes, revealed

the tender boy
he'd so skilfully concealed
beneath overcoats of bravado.
A luminous boy, we'd never met.

In the light of that naked gaze, he whispered,
You are beautiful!
spoken to me and to the reflection
of that boy beaming back.

The bare room glowed and everything
all of it — was made lovely.

Commended Tom Collins Poetry Prize 2012
Published in Westerly, June 2013

AT THE BEAUMONT HAMEL MEMORIAL, FRANCE

*It was a magnificent display of trained and disciplined valour, and its assault only failed of success because dead men can advance no further.**

The boy's letter hangs straight on the pale wall,
'Don't cry Mary, this way we won't starve
I promise I'll be home for Christmas.'
His penmanship is upright and precise.
Steady hands that Somme morning pulling
On bright blue puttees; fingering
His caribou insignia and pleased
That he does not stink of fish.

He wants to be gone over the top
With the other eight-hundred Newfies –
Farmers and fishermen–
Dead men who stepped out
Heads bent; chins tucked in
Against the fierce snow of battle.

**Said of the actions of the 1st Newfoundland Regiment by the
Commander of the 29th British Division. at the Battle of the Somme*

*Winner 2011 Second Light Poetry Competition UK
Published in Artemis 2012 and Canberra Times 2011*

SNAP SHOT

(Southern Zimbabwe 2006)

Do you see my husband in the back row
beside the nurse,
the day the orphans swam

naked in the river; brown
fingerlings sleeked in green
lungs of water.

See there, how the rancher's wife
loops her only son's arm, like a skein
through her knitted fingers.

See those three
guardian mothers in the back row –
farmhand widows who live with the orphans –

the one to the right, with a cloud over her

eyes, swinging as if on a chain
unlatched to catch the free fall hush before
love breeding sick

ensnares her –
so quick I almost missed it so
slick, yet even strangers hear

the blood rush,
smell the pupils flood with fear
before the shutter closes.

UNDERNEATH MY PALM

Underneath my palm
your silvered scalp

brittle goose egg
container of all our days

under my fingers our childhoods
skip

hopscotch on the chalked driveway
squeals in the kitchen where you played magician.

Everyday I met you at the door
climbed on your lap to smell

the smoke in your jacket
pressed my cheek to your chest

to hear where laughter springs.
Beloved now I fit you in my palm

like a cap feel you quiver
fragile white and ticking.

NO LAST GOODBYES

You could not fathom the sounds
from our mouths,
nor shape your own to make
sense of whatever was under
the brain swell.

You tried
at first, your strangled
tongue taut and twisted.
The slow cringe of alien
strains gave up after two days.

Our hope was caught
on the tight-cornered bed
and the tangle of liquid
leads going in and out,
in and out—out, out.

In the absence
of sunshine yellow,
came a catheter creeping
of sickly brown. We grew
as quiet as you.

Fitting, somehow,
that language should leave
first. The dictionary dropped
with a thud when you did—
back to babble, then silence

'til it was only
your eyes; wide open
as if you still
had something
important to say.

AFTER VIEWING JOHN BRACK'S PAINTINGS

Priming his brush and turning away
from idyllic pastoral scenes
and rustic shearing sheds
Brack stretches out the sprawl

The unmade road
of our lives in the suburbs:
the broad brush strokes of
wasteland subdivision,
the clay of our existence in the 50s.

The car
Hard-edged portrayals
of post-war life in Australia—
Mum, Dad, and the kids, in the car
watching us watching them.

The chase
A trio of cartoon animated daughters
jaundiced portraits of his wife
his own emu face
as he shaves in the tiled bathroom.

The bar

At the racetrack, a stream of men
a single barmaid, a seawall
against the tide:
the 6 o'clock swill.

Collins St, 5pm

The dailiness of workers
an unbroken procession
my father's square shoulders
his cleft-jaw, coming home.

Inside and Outside (the shop window)

Lines become dissolute
the artist's silhouette hovers
reproduces multiple selves
in shiny, ordered kitchenware.

HE WISHES

Urging his sons to see where he once lived
not far from their student lodgings
he knows they lack interest, knows
this interest waits far in their future.

Gentle rain misty as soft kisses,
his boys talking over each other,
tagging along, oblivious, ignoring him
where his old street straddles the railway.

But for the sooty bricks' graffiti
he could step through earlier rain;
a taxi stops by this kerb, a girl he knows
winds the window down to flirt.

He feels like the last Arctic wolf in winter,
gives up on describing his youth
as a squall insists on here and now,
whipping them back to the car.

Windscreen foggy, he thinks of the young Yeats
spreading his dreams under his love's feet,
tenderly asking her to tread softly
as they U-turn and swish away.

ADMISSION

She wonders how she got here
sees no sign that she should be.

They look in on her often
in their coats with their pens making waves
on their papers.
She stares back
her eyes full moons with the heart cut out.

Sometimes she puts on a show
sends their note-taking mad
her hands restless spiders make nests in her hair.

Mostly she waits
moves her words to her fingers
touches her mouth when she wants to speak
her voice like smashed glass at midnight.

OUR LADY OF YANCO

Mary
rendered in concrete
stands serenely in a block of the same stuff
inside the sheltering niche of an upended bathtub.
She was built to last— her salmon drapery applied
over two consecutive weekends
to ensure the undercoat dried completely
before the laying on of her blue mantel
in All Weather Exterior.
She's only faded slightly since then—
mostly in the face.
Who could be blamed
for closing their eyes
to the rippling convection
of such Summer sun?

Published in Bluepepper, January 2012

THE LARGE HADRON COLLIDER AT CERN

What Can The Matter Be?

Once again that inevitable conflict shouts
through keyholes, from telephones, in emails,
across the table, 'Who are you and why?'
constantly defined between the grasp of pliers
in an unknown hand, and the beauty of an art
that continually sheds its face to show
another view. In an intangible moment when
an electric energy and gravity collide

what can the matter be? and why and where
did it survive? Words fall short of what cannot
be seen or felt, only life's leftovers: only love
and living, neither explicable. We try to limn
shadows' substance, the old wisdom and the new,
our legend inadequate and always out of tune.

THE DONATION

I stare at ten red fingernails spread on arm boards
fine blonde hair too real for the pillow
eyes roam monitors, oxygen level,
heart beat pulse, return to red, back to clock,
move behind the unwind of minutes

She's 16, fell from her horse
will never know the wind again,
draped in sterile sheets
arms are free strapped in a 'v'
little red arrows pointing

Hung in this strung space
each second cuts silence

Time is patient, but, never-the-less.
How long will it take
too long, for thoughts to haunt ideas,
the inevitable has already been crossed
if the earth spun any faster
it could not change this outcome

I'm gloved, untouchable,
even my breath is masked

would it have mattered

At last, the needles are dropping
I pick up the scalpel. She's run out of everything
this girl has already left. Vital signs are not her own
machines waiting for switches to be thrown

Her falter took fifty minutes. Now is the speed.
We swoop. Taloned crows on offal. Place organs into ice,
surrendered for survival of strangers

The family have lost a child,
ours is a task more brutal than grief.
There is no debriefing.
What I take home, follows.

Published in Southerly, 2012

BACON'S TRIPTYCHS

on sheets of Kraft paper
the Irish butcher hacks up
hocks of lazy abstraction

his unfettered cleaver
flays the pulpy flesh
into glistening cold cuts

the offal order: pigs wings,
human trotters, Pope brain,
clumps of dog fur

faces ghost across colour blocks
mouths agog
plummeting into caged screams

oblivious figurines lay limp
their lives oozing out
like ectoplasm

or else lost
in the smear of clinched desire
indifferent to the out of frame
the wrinkles are sharp discs
on serrated necks
wrenching away from light

in the mirror swollen
bluish marks of his contentment
jut out & leer at us

these trinities:
not just shrines to the abject
here is a new cutting board

Sometimes she breathes you in, sometimes out
as if you weren't there, this voided vista
of blue-green tree ocean heaving furrowed
ravines under two wedge-tails slow-slicing sky.

Late summer and there's light dustings
of distant blossom on the stringybarks,
just out of reach for my two hives.
As is Hell Hole, lower right, where once

some bloke in a blue singlet and bowyangs
slashed out his little paradise of sweat
and now a tank, machinery rust down
among the agapanthus, iris, odd fruit tree

turning on the birds. This is where they all stopped, their taming, hard yakka to make a quid, the fear and love behind the axe and plough, import of sheep, ballad and rabbit.

Mined a bit of hopeless coal, cut out the cedar like choice asparagus, then settled backwards at the rim. Primitive Methodist slab church squared off with stone Sussex Anglican smack bang

on the watershed between Bundanoon and
Reedy Creek. Trees razed for wood and view,
they would've echoed their contrary hymns
from Constitution Hill to here. Now it's silence

deep as a nave, limpid space suffused with breeze
subtle as a childhood moment of bliss and skin.
Your modern mind knows hundreds of millions
of years sandpapered down these abyssal

gorges of sand silted up by some Rainbow Snake
of a river, some Antarctic Ganges that sunk out
Port Jackson deep as its ephemeral towers
of finance now are tall. Your ancient mind,

as you guide your faltering mother's walking frame
past the perfect minimalism of sandstone, bent
banksia and bonsai gum back to the car park, feels
wider, softer, still walking out on the absolute air.

THE POLAR TENT

After Pip Smith

Here on the ice we are face to face with blizzards,
pulsing our body heat within these layers
and almost not making the distance.
We're only just holding it together
clinging to survival with gloved finger-tips
not wanting to acknowledge that this lack of traction
might mean we're not meant to be here.
So we sit in the tent, the glowing orange walls
giving us fake bottom-of-the-world tans
on skin that is wrinkling before our eyes
the cold drawing years out of us, as if we really
are on some other planet that has taken decades to reach.
It feels this way; the distance from known world,
the religious faith in gadgets,
this feeling of utter skinlessness
under the onslaught of alien weather.
We channel pioneer spirit to each other
tent etiquette distilled to micro-expressions,
what is not said shouted in each other's faces
when the wind-shriek pauses for breath.
We're not saying anything new. Impatience
and fear held in the bones around our eyes.
Everything feels just too hard. A cup of water
demands chiselled ice and an hour on the Primus.
Not even sleep is simple when darkness
must be manufactured.

We pull beanies over our eyes and lie back
against the soft pretence that the Earth
has dipped its axis and is tilting us into night.
Loosening our white-knuckled grip
we slip our necks from fear's noose
and finally plunge boot-first
into deep, courageous sleep.

*THE STAR IN THE SNOW*¹

*Dance, when you're broken open. Dance, if you've torn
the bandage off. Dance in the middle of the fighting.
Dance in your blood. Dance when you're perfectly free.*

—Rumi

*ukuku*² shadow on the wall
half-man half-bear and climbing
i sit on the ground and the ground
is ice and no one above me has sent
me and no one below can know
i am also half *condenado*³

holding on to letting go
my pilgrim soul returning
the call of the past is the call
of my heart the promise in the ice
is healing the ascent the return
the risk the abyss the silver

gate flung open *always already*
the seven doored storeroom *neither*
bear nor man nor condemned man's
daughter sunk in a time of illness *am i*
wandering ghosts a terrible
death dancing death a trickster

if conquered (Pleiades rising) order
ukuku skin and bear mask dropped
the no longer bear man returning
the miniature doll carries miniature ice
hope on the back of shrinking
the star in the snow splinters my heart

splinters the sacred cargo *am i*
the star in the snow parts with a knife
the promise in the ice is closing *am i*
fire in the snow is glacial milk is hands
and feet is burning i bleed i sweat i weep
its kiss on my cheek *i am i am* is keening

¹ (or) the Qoyllur Rit'i Festival

² bear

³ condemned

A DIRECT NORTH GENERAL VIEW

After 'A Direct North General View of Sydney Cove'
by Thomas Watling, 1794.

What is this fold
in the middle of the picture

What is this line that stretches
across the harbor
that runs in the middle
of the road
above the houses
on the hills
that climbs up the canvas
onto the trees and the clouds

What is this
thin seam
almost a bend

among people and nature
As if one half of the world
had been exposed to the sun
and the other half hidden from it

As if one half of the world
had been enjoyed and savored
and the other half despised and dumped

Is this fold a rip
in the fabric of time
A tear between the societies
of men in redingotes
and men with fires?

HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU

—after Ben Quilty's painting 'Germaine Greer Rorschach'

Unlike two-faced, backwards-forwards Janus
god of beginnings, gates and doors, one face facing
future, the other, past, you show your second face to
your first and vice versa threshold to inner-self, mind
and soul, show primitive ego to civilized fear of seeing
beyond the perimeter fence, two way mirror bore hole
to your soul, some feathered bird has nested, trespasses
your doppelganger self-portrait counterpart, solitary
resident of a vast bipolar realm, flipping the double-
headed coin inside your head, outside the same feathered
bird, your own self-portrait counterpart double-headed
coin, unilateral-bilateral show your second face to your
first, perimeter fence, a two way mirror trespass, lets you
out, looking out, in, at, showing your first face to your
second sliding doors, a reveal, expose primitive not al-
ways liking what you see almost the same face, seeing
and not seeing a feathered bird has nested in your tired-
eyes-two-way-mirror-don't-look-for-too-long soul

Warning: when you cross the border
always leave part of yourself there
some rabid thoughts
should not be allowed out

CAEDMON? HIM?

Saint Hilda, Abbess Hilda then,
a hard core babe who brooked no lip,
said Caedmon, wipe the cow shit
from your clothes. Give us a song. Not me, he wailed,
you know that I can't play or sing in tune.
Last time I tried, you laughed.
They laughed again. He fled the room.
Snug in the hay he soon began to snore.
Now listen here, said God, who looked like Hilda with a beard,
sing something or I'll boil your bollocks, boy.
So Caedmon sang, and so would you, a boring
tuneless song, devoid of art
and proved that he'd been honest from the start.

AUSTRALIAN POETRY 1850-1945

When gullies were dales and creeks were brooks
there were four-figure sales for poetry books.
When the woods went bush with the swags and blackfellas
the poetry push became bestsellers
till the time was ripe for the clever blokes
and the only rich tripe was a five-star hoax.
Then depression and war seemed permanent fixtures
and most of the punters had gone to the pictures.

AUSTRALIA DAY 2013

Batemans Bay drapes over itself—
one big flag stretched between Fords,
worn over thin chests and belly hills,
sprouting from houses like starry fungus.
On the slow bus back to Canberra
a woman reads a biography of a big horse named after
eggs of Russian sturgeon. Lips pursed,
she pokes at her phone
like a blunt drunk surgeon,
to raise it from the slabby dead.
Cars are kelpies with ears pricked,
mini-flags raised at front corners.
They await who knows what command
from an invisible patriot shepherd.
Sneering, I buy something
unnecessary and foreign,
e-baying my concern.

ON BOAT PEOPLE

Omar and his family went to sea
In a beautiful pea green boat.
They paid their fare to a man, it is said,
Who promised them it would float.
They all looked up at the stars above
And sang to a small sitar,
“Oh Australia! Oh Australia!
What a beautiful country you are,
What a beautiful country you are.”

When their boat ran afoul in the ocean vast
They radioed their distress,
Along came the Navy and delivered them
To a rather strange address.
They were locked away for a year and a day
In the land where the Abbott tree grows,
Until in a wood a Gillard stood
With bright red hair and a nose,
With bright red hair and a nose.

“I’m sending you to Malaysia,” she said,
“Because you jumped the queue.”
But the Abbott said, “No, that’s not fair,
I’ll send them to Nauru.”
A committee was called to sort it out
And it talked from night till noon,
While hand in hand on the edge of the sand
We danced by the light of the moon,
We danced by the light of the moon.

RIN TIN LATIN

How well works interlaced Latin,
the *sine qua non*
of an argument that's going or gone.
One only has to whack in
a few *quid pro quos*
and suddenly a wilting case goes
from pretty boring to *pro bono*.
Take Scotland's ageing cardinal
accused of a sort of a *tort*
for, *prima facie*, years ago, enjoying
a lively version of *habeus corpus*,
a bit of the old *ad hoc*,
with four prim young priests.
Not exactly *homo sapiens* of him.
Tired old Ratzinger, outgoing Pope
(who resigned in Latin, causing much
dubito among the *proletarius* hacks)
felt it might be wizinger if the one
who might have dropped the soap
didn't cast a vote at the next
habemus papa meeting of the clan.
De facto, the cardinal's resignation text
was already done *nunc pro tunc*,
signed before taking effect, like a will
or a lay-by shopping plan.
A priori the prelate's *delicti* is allegation
not *quod erat demonstrandum*
and the old boy's had more than
quantum meruit from the media drum.

The *sequitur*, however, is yet another RC
scandalarum for the faithful, no doubt...
(um, um, cross that last one out,
not *bona fides* on the poet's part).
Nunc dimitis, let us now depart
with that profound Descartes dictate
which a *sui generis* Latin ham
one fine *carpe diem* did translate:
'I'm pink, therefore I'm Spam.'

TALKING TO MACKINLAY AT HUT POINT

What was in his mind in 1915
Mackinlay as he stashed a case of single malt
under the porch floor of Shackleton's Cape Royds hut?
The remnant men of that expedition soon afterwards turned
their faces from the white soul of the world
towards the war in Europe, raw days at sea
during which many an albatross was seen and some
thought of the Emperor penguin left on the hut table
a meal or experiment— Cherry-Gerard's diary may reveal.
Certainly the penguin didn't see it coming
nor Shackleton's party sailing home stinking of seal blubber
aurora darting green behind their eyes
sea filling the soundscape where had been wind that
tore at them all the black winter, Mackinlay's scotch
47% proof and safe at ground level until
the patient accrual of ice over ninety seven seasons
threatened the very building
& now a dozen priceless liquid artefacts of the
white soul of the world and a dessicated Emperor
are Mackinlay's un-thought of legacy
& that at least we have in common
whatever we lay down won't last as long as a
chance distillate of Scottish peat and mist.
Official replicas fetch one hundred pounds a bottle
but Mackinlay's case is going back where he stashed it
the man himself unlikely to agree:
let's drink the bloody stuff
before the extra security arrives.

SNOWY OWL

If climate change results in habitat changes and it affects the lemmings, it will show up in the snowy owls because 90 percent of their diet is lemmings. The owls are the key to everything else.

—Denver Holt

You know everything
white face of the world
even in flight you see a fox's whiskers
can hear a mouse twitch
three feet under snow.
So what a cacophony we must be
even on days when we catch ourselves
and try to stay still.

The rodent that is your bread and butter
keeps the flavour of flesh in memory
the ice cliffs from falling
a nervous system spread among the grass roots
feeds on water, insect, mushroom
to make a sacrifice more epic and strange
than any lie of mass suicide.

Homecoming, dark specks tracked from above,
rodent and human conjoined, contained
in the shriek from the Arctic.
Though snow blind, we too can be stealthy,
alert as a mouse's eye.

ICU

is a fortress, you press a button
and wait
like some malevolent bacterium.
“I’m here to see my wife”
a click, a heavy sliding. Arterial corridors
a nurse at a station
an orderly with a trolley of folded white sheets.
Another nurse, a tiny ante-room.

Hygiene is vital: over your clothes, you pull
a white gown of tough matt paper, you tie the back
slip on a face-mask, elastic behind your ears –
your breathing’s toxic.
An electric ecology –
bed, ventilator, ECG, all centred
on your wife, invaded by pneumonia.
Somehow you’ve reached the soul.

You hold her hand, you smile
and watch those eyes
see past this, past today
backwards into both-of-you.

Nurses come and go, shifts start and end.
You sit, you walk, you stow the useless gown
and mask into a rubbish bin for burning.
The hospital exhales you. The car, your bed.

You press a button, name, door slides.
This morning the nurse doesn't insist you tie
your sterile gown.
Beside the bed, holding that failing hand
you have no mask.

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JANETTE DADD

BEAUMARIS MIST

in memory of Clarice Beckett

Your eyes scanning my canvas, sipping in the light of Beaumaris mist,
re-awaken my stories.

Is a whisper less than a shout?

I did not mean to give up.

I had strived to ignore boundaries, chasing freedoms
that evaporated in the heat of living.

Only in Beaumaris mists did the draftsman's lines disappear,
the shape shifting morning breath of a new day
making telegraph poles shimmer and shake!

Isn't a whisper as good as a shout?

Some would have me a Woolf woman but I gathered and polished pearls
not pebbles or rocks to weigh me down.

There was so much to tell, in turpentine tones, stories for eye's feast.
Suburban jazz lines, the cacophony of new history, machines, ideas.
Mist's smoky haze softening headlight's brilliant stare!

You in your coat

hat pulled down to hide your wanting

approached to whisper words

that seeped into Beaumaris mist

in the hush of early murmurings,

when bodies turned, cuddled close,

ignoring life that had stirred outside windows and filtered in at borders.

Or those rare days
 when sailboats created collages on the bay
 and families patterned lawn with rugs and wicker hampers.

But mostly it was mornings and evenings and isolated longing.

For a time I was lost to nature's fanciful whim
 and midday's harsh criticism
 but
 now
 my stories are there for your eyes again.

A life not wasted, but acknowledged
in history's whispers.

LISBOA 1755

All the bells of the city began to ring of their own accord,
on All Saints' Day, and nearly everyone in church, at prayer.

Geese in the market, horses on the street—brute creation—
had been raising a stir for days, and people had noticed this.

Some say that it was for the first time but I am not so sure.
I have seen a cat crouch and growl, and then the earthquake.

And I am not exactly attuned to the animals I need to live on.
I've not cut a throat, nor birthed a calf, nor set a clucking hen.

I've not died yet of my incompetence. I'm prepared to believe
that it was the first time that they wrote it down—trying to

make sense of it, predicting the movement of God's awful hand
after the event. Shaken loose from an old idea, it seemed as if

God didn't care, or could do nothing for his people, or simply
didn't exist. And this shock is what we call the Enlightenment.

The bells rang out tentatively, then the roofs and the walls fell in.
The city heaved. The sea drew back like a complete abandonment

exposing the ancient catastrophes of wreck. The people stared.
No one knew that it meant the sea was gathering in upon itself

to inflict an almighty trinity of punishment. As fast as a man
on a horse could gallop—for his sins—three waves rolled in.

What the monstrous power of water didn't drown began to burn,
the hapless kitchen fires took hold, and did what fire does best.

What now? What else? We bury the dead and feed the living.
And the king? He slept under canvas for the rest of his days,

and was pitiful. The notion of a gorgeous palace frightened him.
What was left was the struggling breath of your own anxious life

as God's men roamed the aftermath, and forced you to kiss the foot
of the Madonna whether you believed it would do any good or not.

THE BARBARIANS HAVE COME

Children play on the road in the dry town
singing songs of petrol, voices like flutes.
The lorries have gone, the town subsides in dust

and parents scratch to feed their young.
A boy plays with his genitals, he rubs the useless sac,
and watches, while his mother frets and aches

for lives lost and a past already forgotten, gone already.
The town still gathers at the bore, there is still some water
but not much and not fresh and just enough to keep them alive.

So they scrape and pull up what's there, brackish, sour
and dark with minerals – it hardly spills but sticks to the bucket.
Men hunt for bedraggled kangaroos with leftover rifles,

obsolete now, bullets low. Soon the trackers will come
(they say) and spear the beasts for us and feral dogs too –
and anything else that frightens – everything depends on it.

*TRIJAṬĀ'S DREAM**

don't listen to the propaganda of my brother
he's a fool
his head has grown long
his arms short
he thinks that sword will save him

I've seen her dressed in moonlight
on a milk-drenched mountain
above a foaming sea
eight white bulls draw her forward
across the sky

she touches the moon with her hand
everything shines
her face
her flying chariot
the cloud-shrouded peak

my brother is earth and dung-smeared
his skin blooming red
hair dragging mud
that heart of his
is a clot of blood

**Trijaṭā is a female rākṣasa (or demon) who comforts the goddess Sītā during her imprisonment by Rāvana, the demon king of Lankā. The story appears in Vālmiki's Rāmāyana.*

TOYOTA DREAMING

At sunrise, the mine lifts in stark surprise
reveals a skyline shaped by giant graders
Kimberley hills stepped like ancient ziggurats

Machines that sifted precious ore are silent
now. Giant loaders have left the tailings
heaped in piles: pink dust powders the sky

Young *Gidja* men speed in new cars, scatter
the tribes with ideas of progress. New stories
cut deep, cover the tracks of the ancestors

Fumes from Toyota utes spread particles
of doubt among the people. A new smell fills
the air. Black roads smooth a bumpy ride

*

The old ones do not understand this need
to change. Re-create the ancient stories
for the sake of a diamond mine

They sing the Ngarranggami Dreaming
Point to rocks. Three women turned to stone
warn of the sacred Barramundi's journey

– dance the legend shaped by a magic fish
who leaps the narrow gorge: brushing her pink
and golden scales on her way upstream

Women 'Smoke' the bosses crowding onto
totem ground. Men who come from far away
burrow like ants beneath the secret places

*

Argyle have come to build a tunnel, excavate
the hollow caves, searching for hidden seams
Their hope studded with diamonds

– plan to blast the *Gap*, fill the sacred springs
with broken rock, drive the workers
into a pit, offering danger money

The tribes can see the value, the power
in red shale: they sift their Country's losses
against solid gains. Working for 'the Company'

lured by the shine of a crystal trinket harder
than stone. Buried treasure of the River Spirit
gleams forever in the white man's dreams

Gidja: traditional owners

Ngarranggami: the sacred Barramundi

the Gap: Barramundi gap

the Company: Argyle Diamond

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Looking for Bullin Bullin, Hybrid Press 2012
Won second prize in the Society of Women Writers National Poetry prize 2012

DRIVING OUT

Georgia O'Keeffe, New Mexico, 1929

She's bought a car, her first. It's black.
It waits for her beside the kerb. It's faithful.
Its clean lines curve as lovely as a flower
but it is armour, engine, invitation.
Her spirits rise as she inhales the tonic
fragrances of petrol, leather, chrome.
She wakes its power when she turns the key.
Her eyes flick up to check the world behind.
She's changing gear now, awkwardly at first
but then each time a smoother modulation.
She feels her body settling on the seat.
Her hands upon the wheel are useful again.
The city is a dream of crowds and noise.
She is American: the country opens before her.

MINIATURE WOMEN

Kanga Valley paintings, 18th Century

Suspended like a cloud of ambered flies
are women, caught in motion, centre stage.
It could be London, 1970s;
some confluence of history. Every page
exudes imagined scent – there's jasmine here,
despite the thrumming air-con's temperate flow
it perfumes all the heady spaces where
flowered fabric blooms and hookah spices smoke.

The women talk. They read and write, listen
to music, wear their long hair loose in falls
over bare breasts and flowing robes. The men
are in the background, if they're there at all.

The caption calls this art '*a song that sings
itself*'. A painted sitar strums. It's ravishing.

HOW I HAVE FELT THAT THING THAT'S CALLED 'TO PART'

1.

It was the fifth morning and I'd heard her all night,
a woman – I ought to say my mother – in her room.

Calls (3 am) from hospital.

That radio beating on,

beating on, cellos against horns. And calls, (5 am)
more calls (6 am) – and I'd ask myself
who is it now? and the radio

beating on.

Disquiet inside me, like a girl on a first date.

Melbourne – a premier whose state
was implied in the moniker *Mother Russia*,

and cricket from Lord's on a borrowed television,

and my father, who left this world astonishingly often,

was coming and going continuously,
like someone opening a door and looking through
and shutting it and opening and looking through.

Daybreak: I took their dog for walks.

It was a time of practical matters – and waiting.

2.

I make you a picture of her as I saw it.
Moulded twists of grey hair pinned as from childhood.
And the sculptory crepe dressing gown falling over curves
of the fullest contour, blue with a gold border,
finest piping of gold snaking along the collar
like a *Lindwurm* wending all the way up to her neck.
Down the stairs, slapping in felt slippers
with hands in her pockets, glancing out of the window
at the same concrete patio, the same unsettled trees,

the same grey fence line and the same tiled roofs she'd been
looking at for such a long time. Anxiety was it.
The alarm of a hot February north wind picking up.
Waft after waft of vacancy.
No children in the house anymore.
Shadows feeding on winnowing grass.
Crab-apples and elders and banksias scattering drying leaves
on the double-brick homes spread across the reclaimed
billabong. Antennae cables swinging in the cloudless breeze.
And the clip and ting of a dripping tap,
the implacable drawl of a distant freeway,
the soddening of onions in a wicker basket,
the stink of the vinegar in which she had cooked
for dinner last night the pot of red cabbage.

3.

From her angle, a gap bridging
the two conditions of myth or nothing.

That morning, her face floating in the mirror.
Still his heart tugging without limit
on life in its usual way – the simple

determined action of the body, circulated by blood
flowing round bone and muscle, the intricate equipment
that bears what makes a human being, bears existence.
That morning, her face floating in the mirror.

The situation was, trying to arrive at strength
when the days are open mystery; *stabil* or *stable*
I discovered, being from the old French word
estable for “standing room.” It was an impossible measure
between two points. You are never
not questioning when it might happen, trying
to pick up on the signals, like an old card player.
You are never not there

and also somewhere else.

CONTRIBUTORS

Susan Adams PhD is an Sydney poet published in nine countries. She was awarded 'commended' in the 2012 O'Donoghue International Poetry Competition (Ire), Highly Commended in the Val Vallis Award 2012, (Aus), and Highly Commended in the Adrien Abbott Poetry Prize 2012 (Aus). She has been read numerously on ABC Radio National. Publications include *Quadrant*, *Westerly*, *Southerly*, *Eureka Street*, *Hecate*, *Social Alternatives*, *Cordite*, *Visible Ink*, *FourW*, *The Long Paddock*.

David Adès, a member of Friendly Street Poets since 1979, currently lives in Pittsburgh. His poems have appeared in Australian and more recently American publications. His collection *Mapping the World* was commended for the Anne Elder Award 2008. He was a volunteer editor of the Australian Poetry Members Anthology *Metabolism*.

James Aitchison won the Commonwealth Government's inaugural Australian Arts in Asia Literature Award, 2013, for his 120 children's books published in Asia. Melbourne-based, he has 135 books in print. His writing career spans Channel 7's *Mavis Bramston Show*, radio drama, ABC radio features, essays. His passions are poetry and Australian broadcast media history.

Connie Barber 1980-1983: Secretary Poets' Union, Melbourne Branch. First collection second in the Anne Elder Award, winner of the Ian Mudie Award and the Society of Women Writers Peace Award. Fourth collection, *Between Headlands*, Five Islands Press 2006. Shortlisted Newcastle Poetry Prize *Time with the Sky* 2010.

Julie Birch is a British poet currently living in South Australia. Her poems have appeared in the following anthologies: *Loose Leaves* (2010), *Balancing Act and Other Poems* (2011), *Secrets of the Heart* (2011), *Sentinel Champions* (2012), *What We Carry Home* (2013) and *Australian Love Poems* 2013, as well as *The New Writer*, *Darker Times* and *Sotto*. Find her at <http://jvbirch.wordpress.com/>

Margaret Bradstock is a Sydney poet, critic and editor. She lectured at UNSW and has been Asialink writer-in-residence at Peking University, co-editor of *Five Bells*, and on the Board of Directors for Australian Poetry. Her poetry is widely published and has won awards, including the Wesley Michel Wright Prize for *The Pomelo Tree*. Her sixth collection is *Barnacle Rock* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2013)

John Carey is a Sydney poet, ex-teacher of French and Latin and a former part-time actor. He has been published in *Best Australian Poems 2011*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Island*, *Meanjin*, *Quadrant* and *Southerly*, among others. He is the author of four collections, the latest being *One Lip Smacking* (Picaro Press 2013).

Jennifer Chrystie's poems have been published in *The Best Australian Poems 2012*, *Blue Dog*, *The Shot Glass Journal*, *Cordite* and *Quadrant*. Her first book of poetry, *Polishing the Silver* (Ginninderra Press, 2006) was commended in the FAW Anne Elder Award. Her new collection, *Weight of Snow*, was launched in July 2013.

Sue Clennell writes fiction, short plays & articles, but mainly specialises in poetry. Two poems from her CD *The Van Gogh Café* can be found on YouTube. She has been published in various school textbooks and anthologies, including *Best Australian Poems 2011*.

Jennifer Compton lives in Melbourne and is a poet and playwright who also writes prose. Her book of poetry, *Barefoot* (Picaro Press), was shortlisted for the John Bray Award at the Adelaide Festival. 'This City' won the Kathleen Grattan Award in New Zealand and was published by Otago University Press in 2011. *Ungainly* has just come out with Mulla Mulla Press.

P. S. Cottier's favourite word at the moment is 'egregious' although she has a strange attraction to 'über'. She is yet to include both these words in the same poem. She is co-editing an anthology called *The Stars Like Sand: Australian Speculative Poetry*, with Tim Jones. This is egregiously time-consuming, though über-cool. She was Australian Poetry's inaugural Online Poet-in-Residence, and went on about lots of different things at considerable length.

Janette Dadd's second book of poetry *Early Frosts* (Ginniderra Press) is to be launched in Melbourne in November of this year. Janette has been an AP Café Poet for two years now. She actively promotes this art form by her performance work and organising slam poetry events in the Eurobodalla area of NSW.

B. R. Dionysius was founding Director of the Queensland Poetry Festival. His poetry has been widely published in literary journals, anthologies, newspapers and online. His eighth poetry collection, *Weranga* was released in August 2013. He lives in Ipswich, Queensland where he runs, watches birds, teaches English and writes sonnets.

Benjamin Dodds is a Sydney-based poet whose work has appeared in journals, magazines, newspapers and online. His poetry has been included in several anthologies including *Earthly Matters*, *Antipodes: Poetic Responses* and *Stars Like Sand: Australian Speculative Poetry*. His first poetry collection, *Regulator*, is forthcoming in 2014.

Daniel Dugas is a Canadian poet, videographer and musician. He has participated in festivals and literary events as well exhibitions and performances in North America, Europe, Mexico and Australia. His eighth book of poetry, *Ravins* (Cliffs), will be published in January 2014 by Les Éditions Prise de parole.

Liam Guilar's most recent collection of poems, *Rough Spun to Close Weave*, was published by Ginninderra Press in November 2012. His blog is at <http://ladygodivaandme.blogspot.com.au>. He is the proud winner of the 2013 Bad Joyce Award.

Nola Firth is a poet and essayist. She is a recently retired academic with work published in national and international academic journals, media, and books. More recently, her work has been published in literary journals and poetry anthologies including *Kill Your Darlings* and the *Third Australian Haiku Anthology*. Her poetry chapbook, *Even if the Sun*, was published this year by The Melbourne Poets Union.

Kristin Hannaford is a Queensland based writer. Her two collections of poetry are 'Inhale' in *Swelter* (Interactive, 2003) and *Fragile Context* (Post Pressed, 2007). Kristin's writing has recently appeared in *Cordite*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Overland*, and *Trace* (Creative Capricorn, 2013) a chapbook of commissioned poems exploring histories of Rockhampton. Kristin was awarded an Australia Council for the Arts Literature Board New Work grant to develop a new collection of poems in 2013.

Susan Hawthorne's *Cow* (2011) was shortlisted for the 2012 Kenneth Slessor Poetry Award and *Earth's Breath* (2009) was shortlisted for the 2010 Judith Wright Poetry Prize. In 2013 she is the resident at BR Whiting Library in Rome, funded by the Australia Council.

Pete Hay is the author, editor or co-author of four volumes of poetry, with two currently in press, as well as a volume of personal essays. His most recent works are *The Forests*, co-authored with the photo journalist, Matt Newton, and *Last Days of the Mill*, co-authored with the artist, Tony Thorne. *Last Days of the Mill* was short-listed for the 2013 Tasmanian Book Prize, and won the People's Choice Award.

Ross Jackson is a retired teacher from Perth. He has had poetry published in local and interstate journals. Some work has been commended in competitions.

Jackson seeks poems that work whether declaimed loudly or whispered in the mind. In 2013 Mulla Mulla Press published her second collection *lemon oil* and Fremantle Press a micro-collection. She also released an album, *The right metaphor*. Jackson's guest performances include Tasmanian Poetry Festival. Visit Jackson at proximitypoetry.com.

Virginia Jealous is a travel writer and poet, whose most recent collection *Hidden World* was published by Hallowell Press in 2013. She lives out of a suitcase and on the road when not at home in Denmark, Western Australia.

Judyth Keighran is a Melbourne poet whose work has been published in Poetrix, Poetry Monash and other journals. She has a Masters in Creative Writing from Melbourne University and is a PhD student at Latrobe University. Her first poetry collection, *Shorelines*, is due to be published by Melbourne Poets Union this year.

Joan Kerr is a widely-published poet and fiction writer. Her comic novel, *Writing is Easy*, jointly written with Gabrielle Daly under the pen name Gert Loveday, is available on Amazon, iTunes and Kobo.

Shari Kocher has been writing prize-winning poetry for almost two decades and is widely published in literary journals in Australia and elsewhere. Her first book, *The Non-Sequitur of Snow*, is forthcoming with Puncher and Wattmann. Her current project, *Sonqoqui*, comprises part of her doctoral research at Melbourne University.

Simeon Kronenberg has published in *Meanjin* and *Australian Love Poems 2013*. He works in the visual arts and is currently undertaking post graduate studies in contemporary gay love poetry at the University of Sydney.

Peter Lach-Newinsky has published two poetry collections: *The Post-Man Letters* (Picaro 2010) and *Requiem* (Picaro 2012). A third collection is forthcoming. He has won the Melbourne Poets Union and Vera Newsome Poetry Prizes and the Varuna-Picaro Publishing Award. He works a small permaculture farm near Bundanoon in NSW.

Elizabeth Lawson, widely published as a literary academic, is an award-winning Canberra poet whose books include *Changed into Words* (poems) Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1980, *The Poetry of Gwen Harwood* Oxford University Press, 1991 and *The Natural art of Louisa Atkinson*, State Library of NSW, 1996.

Ray Liversidge's latest book is *no suspicious circumstances: portraits of poets (dead)* published in 2012 by Littlefox Press with illustrations by Kathryn Bowden. His other books are: *Obeying the Call*, *The Barrier Range*, *Triptych Poets: Issue One*, *The Divorce Papers*. He won the 2010 Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize. See: www.poetrytray.wordpress.com

Bronwyn Lovell lives in Melbourne. Her poetry has been published in *Australian Love Poems*, *Antipodes*, *Cordite Poetry Review* and the *Global Poetry Anthology*. Bronwyn has won the Adrien Abbott Poetry Prize and been shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize, the Bridport Prize, and the Montreal International Poetry Prize. She works for Writers Victoria.

Rose Lucas is a Melbourne poet, critic and academic. Her collection *Even in the Dark* was published by University of West Australia Press in July 2013. She is currently teaching Poetry and Poetics at Victoria University, and has been Chair of the WA Premier's Book Awards from 2011-2013.

Julie Maclean lives on the Surf Coast, Victoria. Shortlisted for the Crashaw Prize (*Salt*, UK), Press Press and Whitmore Press prizes and winner of the Geoff Stevens Poetry Prize (UK), her debut collection of poetry, *When I saw Jimi*, was published in 2013 (IDP). Poetry and fiction feature in leading international journals including *The Best Australian Poetry* (UQP) and *The Age*.

Rachael Mead is a South Australian poet. In 2013 she was shortlisted in the Newcastle Poetry Prize and her poetry collection, *The Sixth Creek*, was published by Picaro Press.

Lizz Murphy is an Irish-Australian poet living in Binalong, NSW. She was recently Highly Commended in the 2013 Blake Poetry Prize, and has published seven poetry titles including *Portraits* and *Six Hundred Dollars* (PressPress), *Walk the Wildly* (Picaro), *Stop Your Cryin* (Island) and *Two Lips Went Shopping* (Spinifex: print & e-book). Her blog *A Poet's Slant* is at lizzmurphypoet.blogspot.com

Philip Neilsen's most recent collection is *Without an Alibi* (Salt, 2008). He teaches creative writing and poetics at QUT.

B. N. Oakman, formerly an academic economist, started writing poetry in 2006 and has since published many poems in Australia and overseas as well as a book, *In Defence of Hawaiian Shirts* (Interactive Press), and two booklets. His work is recorded for ABC Classics. Currently he's preparing a second collection. www.bnoakman.com

Maureen O'Shaughnessy completed a Masters of Creative Writing from UTS in 2012. Previous work has been published in *Best Australian Essays*, *Island*, *Blue Dog*, *Wet Ink*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Hide Your Fires*, *Rock Country*, *Artsrush* and *Swamp*. Her poem 'Thursday, July 15' was awarded the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize (2010). She is currently working on a novel in verse. NB: her poem's title is from Rilke's poem 'Parting'.

Moya Pacey's collection *The Wardrobe* was runner-up for the ACT Poetry Prize in 2010. Her poetry has won prizes and is featured on busses and on radio and appears in print and online journals in Australia and overseas.

Helen Parsons lives in Adelaide and has for many years been a grateful participant in Jan Owen's Aldinga poetry workshops. Her work has been published in *APJ*, *Meanjin*, *Island*, and other journals.

Sheryl Persson's poems have been published in journals, anthologies and educational publications. She has published a poetry collection, *Scarcely Random* and four commissioned non-fiction books. With DiVerse, poets who write 'ekphrasis', Sheryl performs regularly at galleries. As ACDN's Auburn Resident Poet, she worked in the community developing poems in response to Auburn's cultural and linguistic diversity.

Rachael Petridis is a Western Australian poet. She has published nationally in literary journals and anthologies. In 2009 she won a place at the Varuna Longlines Australian Poetry Centre Workshop. Her first collection *Sundecked*, published by the Australian Poetry Centre 2010, received a Commended in the Anne Elder Award.

Gregory Piko lives in Yass, New South Wales. His poetry has appeared in various journals and anthologies including *SpeedPoets*, *Page Seventeen*, *Famous Reporter* and *The Best Australian Poems 2012*. Greg was a featured haiku poet in *A New Resonance 7* (Red Moon Press, USA, 2011).

Wendy Poussard has published three books of poetry, *Outbreak of Peace* (Billabong Press 1984), *Ground Truth* (Pariah Press 1987) and *Poetry as a Second Language* (2013). Her poems and songs have been published in journals, newspapers and anthologies in Australia and internationally. For many years she worked for international development and human rights, and is one of the founders of International Women's Development Agency.

Christopher Race's poems have appeared in *The Paradise Anthology 5* (2011) and the MPU publication *The Attitude of Cups* (2011). He was a prize winner in the inaugural Glen Phillips Poetry Prize (2012). He lives in central Victoria and photographs clouds when not writing, exhibiting in both Castlemaine and Melbourne.

Pauline Reeve is a Melbourne based poet who supports her writing through part-time teacher-librarianship. Her poems have appeared in various Australian literary journals and anthologies including *The Best Australian Poems* (Black Inc) and *Reflecting on Melbourne* (Poetica Christie).

Miro Sandev is a poet and fiction author based in Sydney. His poems have been published (or forthcoming) in many literary journals and anthologies including: *Meanjin*, *Cordite*, *Rabbit Poetry*, *Australian Speculative Poetry Anthology*, *Regime*, *Meniscus*, *Hypallage* and *The Red Room*. His essays have appeared in *Arena Magazine* and *New Matilda*.

Brenda Saunders is a Sydney poet and artist of Aboriginal and British descent. She has published three collections of poetry; her latest, the *sound of red*, was launched in 2013. Her work has also appeared in selected anthologies and poetry journals. Brenda is a member of DiVerse Poets who read their ekphrastic poetry at Sydney art galleries. She recently returned from a Resident Fellowship at CAMAC Arts Centre in France where she worked translating her poetry into French.

Erin Shiel is a Sydney writer of poems and short stories. She is working on a collection of ekphrastic poems while conducting research for her Masters degree at the University of Sydney. Her poem 'Nacred' was published in *Australian Love Poems 2013*.

Laura Jan Shore is the author of *Breathworks* (Dangerously Poetic Press) and *Water over Stone*, winner of IP Picks Best Poetry 2011, Interactive Press. Winner of the 2012 Martha Richardson Poetry Prize, 2009 FAW John Shaw Nielson Award, and 2006 CJ Dennis Open Poetry Award, her poetry has been published on four continents.

Alex Skovron is the author of five volumes of poetry, most recently *Autographs* (2008), and of a prose novella, *The Poet* (2005). He lives in Melbourne and works as a freelance book editor. His *New & Selected Poems* is forthcoming from Puncher & Wattmann.

Ian Smith lives in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria. His work has appeared in *Axon:Creative Explorations*, *The Best Australian Poetry*, *London Grip*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*, *The Weekend Australian*, *Ë*, *Westerly*. His latest book is *Here Where I Work* (Ginninderra Press), Adelaide, 2012.

Patricia Sykes is a poet and librettist. Her works in collaboration with composer Liza Lim have been performed in Australia, Paris, Berlin, Moscow and the UK. She has published three collections and a chapbook. Her most recent poetry collection is *The Abbottsford Mysteries*. She lives in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges.

Gillian Telford is a NSW Central Coast poet whose work is published regularly in journals & anthologies. Longer poem sequences were shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize in 2006 & 2009. Her first collection, *Moments of Perfect Poise* (Ginninderra) was published in 2008. She is currently working on a second manuscript.

Helen Thurloe is a Sydney writer. Her poetry is included in *Best Australian Poems*, *Australian Love Poems* and *Women's Work*. Recent awards include Banjo Paterson Open Poetry (2012 and 2013), Ethel Webb Bundell Award (2012), and shortlisting for the Australian Science Poetry Prize (2013). She also blogs on MCM architecture at www.beachcomberhouse.com.au

John Upton's poetry has been published in *SMH*, *Canberra Times*, *Quadrant*, *Cordite* and many other literary magazines and anthologies. He has extensive drama credits, writing for more than 20 TV shows, and has had five stage plays produced. His political comedy *Machiavelli* won the Australian Writers Guild's award for Best New Play.

Rod Usher lives in Extremadura, Spain. His third novel, *Poor Man's Wealth*, was published by HarperCollins in 2011. His poems have appeared in *Meanjin*, *Island*, *Quadrant* and in *Australian Love Poems 2013* (Inkerman & Blunt). He is completing his second collection of poetry.

Susie Utting has completed a Masters in Creative Writing from the University of Melbourne and an MPhil from the University of Queensland, and is presently studying for a doctorate at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Her poems have been published in the *AAWP Anthology of New Australian Writing*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Meniscus*, and in *Contemporary Haibun Volume 14*. Her collection of poems, *Flame in the Fire*, was published by Ginninderra Press in 2012.

Rose van Son is a writer and poet, living in Perth. Her collection of poetry, *Sandfire*, (with two other poets) was published by Sunline Press in 2011. She has been published in many journals including *Westerly*, *Indigo*, *Cordite*, *Blood Orange Review* (USA), *Landscapes ICLL*; she has won prizes for poetry, short fiction and non-fiction including First in the KSP Short Fiction Award (2000), the Fremantle Press Tanka Prize (2011, 1st), and the Ethel Webb Bundell Short Fiction Prize.

Kate Waterhouse is co-editor of *Motherlode: Australian Women's Poetry 1986-2008* (Puncher & Wattmann 2009). She is currently working and living in Auckland and received an NZSA poetry mentorship in 2011.

Julie Watts is a Western Australian writer and her first poetry collection, *Honey & Hemlock*, was published in 2013 by Sunline Press.

Terry Whitebeach is a Tasmanian writer. Her published work includes two collections of poetry, *Bird Dream* which won the Anne Elder Award and was shortlisted for the WA Premier's Prize, and *All the Shamans Work in Safeway*, a collection of poetry for young adults. She has also published two novels for young adults and the biography of a Kaytetye stockman.

Irene Wilkie has been widely published in anthologies and journals including *Going Down Swinging*, *Divan*, *Five Bells*, *Blue Dog*, *Notes for Translators (Kit Kelen)*, *Poetrix*, *fourW twenty-four* and *Award Winning Australian Writing*. She has published two poetry collections, *Love and Galactic Spiders* (2005) and *Extravagance* (2013) both by Ginninderra Press. She is a founding member of the Kitchen Table Poets, Shoalhaven.

Gail Willems is a founding member of Out Of The Asylum (OTA) writers group. Her work has been published in journals, magazines, in an academic anthology for universities, schools and libraries published in NSW, online journals, Writers Radio, and various anthologies. She has been a competition poetry judge and won the Poetry D'Amour 2013 poetry prize. Her first collection *Blood Ties and Crack-Fed Dreams* published by Ginninderra Press launched November 2013.

Featuring some of Australia's most prominent voices alongside new and emerging poets, *Poems 2013* sketches an overview of contemporary Australian poetry that is wry, thoughtful, and frequently moving.

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