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p8: Kim Ki Taek, courtesy of Kim Ki Taek

p15: Lee Seong Bok, Photo by Im Jae Cheon

p18: Lee Si Young, courtesy of Son Hyeon Sook.

p38: David Musgrave, photographed by Vicki Skarratt, Sydney, courtesy of Vicki Skarratt.

p98: JS Harry, photographed by Jenni Nixon, courtesy of Nicolette Stasko.

p130: Scenes of the State Library of Victoria from 1954 *Age* newspaper, *Age* (Melbourne, Vic.). State Library of Victoria – H27642a–i

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Foreword

Michael Sharkey

This issue continues to take account of the work of translation and influence. Dan Disney, Daye Jeon and Ungyung Yi present some aspects of contemporary Korean poetry and its political import. RD Wood reviews Stuart Cooke's interpretation of the Bulu song cycle and other poetries. In subtler manner, several poets pay respect to the topics, forms and temper of poets in English and other languages: witness Vanessa Page's 'found' pattern of speech in her poem 'Manus'; Lorraine Haig's employment of Ali Jane Smith's take on a form encountered in a poem by Laurie Duggan; Joe Dolce's sampling of William Blake; Josh Mei-Ling Dubrau's channelling of the moods of Tom Raworth and Philip Larkin; or Michael Easson's epitaph for sinologist Pierre Ryckmans—celebrated translator of the *Analects*, and author of the extraordinary novel *The Death of Napoleon*.

Can I justify the inclusion of poems such as Dolce's very Australian 'Tyger', or Ian C Smith's 'Cat's Breakfast'? Or the appearance of a flower poem like Vanessa Proctor's 'Bathroom Orchid'? To cadge a phrase from Denise Levertov (whose work is familiar to countless Australian students and readers), 'O taste and see'. Caitlin Maling's perceptive review of the *Best Australian Poetry 2014* and the *Best American Poetry 2014* suggests that the latter collection offers a more varied range of poems that catch a moment in time rather than seeking parity with 'timeless' reader-friendly, humanity-uniting poems. In something of the same spirit, this issue of the *Australian Poetry Journal* offers poems that, while catching particular moments on the wing, rub against each other in surprising ways.

I have included poems that exhibit playfulness of a kind that might not often appear elsewhere in Australian poetry magazines. Readers have asked why, on the evidence of such publications, contemporary Australian poets don't seem interested in writing poems that directly invite pleasure or laughter, or poems that might appeal to children. The answer lies to some extent in demarcation: in the editors' sense of an audience.

I expect more than one poetry magazine editor has shuddered at the idea of publishing poems that might enjoy broad popular appeal, let alone engagement with young readers, for fear of deflecting attention from an unstated assurance that what's on offer is high-minded art about the self and one's place in the order of things. Perhaps reluctance reflects fear of lowering the tone by taking a chance on amusement or fun (as Ezra Pound did in his hilarious parody 'Ancient Music'). My imagined readership can live with poetry that delights as much as it challenges preconception. William Carlos Williams (especially in his poems of birds, beasts, flowers and everyday objects) did not think appeal to pleasure, expressed in forms that made some readers do a doubletake, beneath consideration.

The demonstrated ability to imagine as a child, as reflected in poems of Michael Duggan, Lorraine Marwood, and Libby Hathorn, never gravitated against appreciation of such works as they directed to predominantly adult sensibilities. Christina Rossetti, TS Eliot, Shel Silverstein, Roger McGough, Roald Dahl, and Australians since CJ Dennis, Elizabeth Riddell, Leon Gellert, and Douglas Stewart have addressed work to younger readers without any lessening of the appeal to aficionados of prosodic experimentation or engagement with topics of national and international import: witness Dennis on ecological responsibility versus 'development', Riddell and Gellert on personal experience of war, or Stewart—in his poem 'Rutherford'—on what now looks like a forlorn hope that 'men who would stop at nothing might stop at fear'.

I share the frustration of readers weary of poorly executed work in received forms or topics vitiated by anodyne sentiment, but I don't denigrate the taste of those who are not put off by the mere subject of a poem concerning a bird, beast, tree, grass, or element on the grounds of subject-matter alone. The actual topic of such a poem may be far from pictorialism, and if I discount such poems on the basis of their ostensible subject or title, I must try to forget William Carlos Williams' 'Queen Anne's Lace', Robert Hayden's 'The Night Blooming Cereus', Judith Wright's 'Platypus'

and 'Rainforest', Tomas Tranströmer's 'Morning Birds', or Dimitris Tsaloumas's 'The House with the Eucalypts'. What lodges these in memory, as firmly as such unfashionable antecedents as Herrick's 'To Daffodils', Lovelace's 'A Fly Caught in a Cobweb', or Whitman's 'This Compost' is, in every case, some matter that presents, in received form or not, immediate apprehension of temporality and what the poet makes of it.

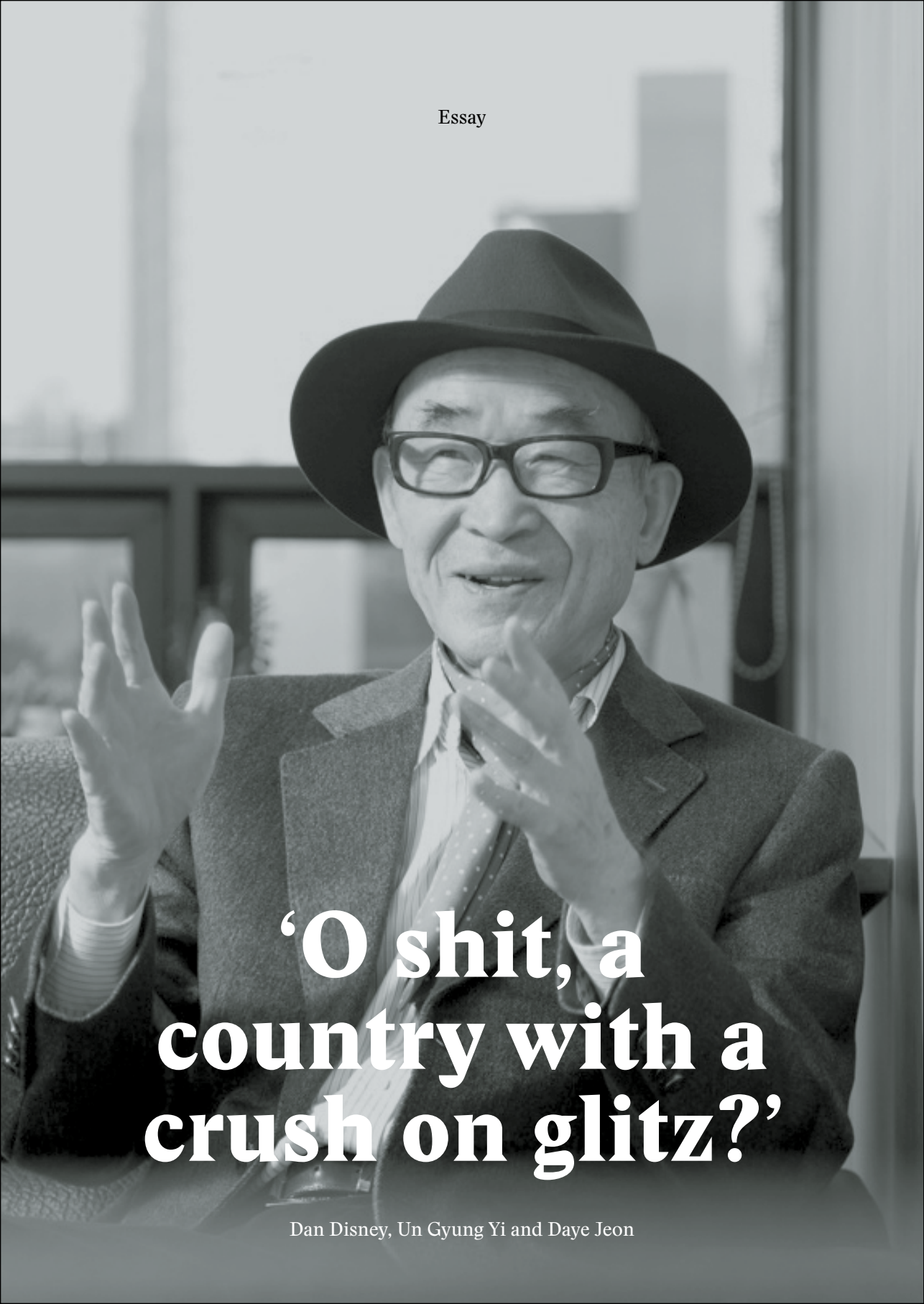
I refer to memorably provocative poems of this sort, not those that plunge from ludic to ludicrous, though the edge is fine at times. Blake, Ginsberg and Arthur Symons have all written 'sunflower' (or 'heliotrope') poems: read these and exult—or despair on encountering clichéd thought and style? Perhaps the prevalence of what Annie Finch and others consider the postlude to New Formalism and conscious adoption of multiformalism will have much to answer for if it deters readers from reading no further than a title, or from observing the semblance of traditional form, and immediately whipping to the next page or screen.

Does this mean I will welcome an e-mailbag of poems solely devoted to the topics of flowers, land-, water- and air-dwellers? Hardly, but it may be that some examples provoke reflection on being alive, or of grief, folly, blame, the twisting of language, or the decline of non-human populations in Australia and elsewhere. Like the decline in the bee population, the phenomenon of avian depletion should be of interest to more than orchardists, agriculturalists and pastoralists. From Catullus's ambivalent 'sparrow' and Bai Juyi's equally equivocal 'parrot', to the present era, poetry has employed avian imagery as expression of allegory, joie de vivre, connectedness, political analogy, warning or lament. Poetry that advertently or not reminds us of inclusiveness in and reliance on a wider community than human social life is to our creative existence as food production and resources are to the physical life of human and other inhabitants of the planet. As John Kinsella has remarked, 'Parrots shadow Australian poetry'—and, I add, in a polymorphous analogy, Australian politics.

Astute readers will detect poems, essays and reviews engaged with far other concerns in this volume of the *Journal*.

Table of contents

Essay



‘O shit, a country with a crush on glitz?’

Dan Disney, Un Gyung Yi and Daye Jeon

It is 2.30am in early November and the streets are frosty, the dry air abrasive. Small groups shuffle towards the neon of V.I.P. rooms, saunas, sundry entertainments. A few lonely cars speed along mostly empty arterial roads. I am sitting at a table with an octogenarian and two others, a dozen empty bottles before us. This is the fourth place we've been to this evening, and we're soaked. These three Korean poets—Ko Un, Lee Si-young, Kim Soo-bok—are again breaking into song. Ko Un lurches upward, balancing on his red plastic stool, clapping and urging us to sing louder, to follow him. A table of twenty-somethings collectively rolls its eyes while the teenagers staffing this concrete-floored annex sit passively and pretend not to watch. Lee Si-young sings wistfully, dutifully, cigarette smoke curling itself around him while Kim Soo-bok claps, explaining 'we are chanting protest songs from Gwangju': 1980, and a civic uprising is put down by dictator Chun Doo-hwan; hundreds of civilians—and many say thousands—are killed by crack troops sent to assert with bloodshed the military dictatorship's authority. In this late-night BBQ joint, this is no drunken sing-along but an alcohol-fuelled shamanic paean to unforgotten spirits. Two of these poets have been jailed for their political activities. Before South Korea became a democracy, Ko Un and Si-young both spent time in Seoul's notorious Seodaemun Prison, and Ko Un speaks openly of his time in another (Daegu military jail) where he feared summary execution. What happens to a mind that escapes, against all odds, a prescribed and certain fate?

These so-called old men eat energy for breakfast, and the oldest here out-talks, out-dreams, out-thinks, out-charms and out-drinks seasoned campaigners a third his age. Allen Ginsberg once called Ko Un a 'demon-driven Bodhisattva' (Ko Un 1997: 9) while on his website, the poet suggests he is a 'friend of Dionysius' (http://www.koun.co.kr); these are each men who dare to remember everything and have been doing so, professionally, for decades. When the table of youngsters across the room asks the staff to tell the old guys to quiet down, little do they suspect they're insulting national treasures whose lives are defined by a predilection for disturbance. Of course none comply, and our group is soon on the street once more, and the night full of immediately-arriving taxis zipping drunken dirge-filled poets across the concrete suburbs.

§

Musing on Ko Un's *Maninbo* in the *New York Review of Books*, Robert Hass remembers a comment from Czeslaw Milosz: 'Woe to the poet born to an interesting piece of geography in a violent time' (Hass, 'Poet of Wonders'). Ko Un is a literary giant, and his life reads like an epic: failed suicide, former monk, peace broker between the two Koreas, one-time *maudit*, and Nobel Prize nominee. He describes his life as 'a poetics of experience' (Ko Un 2008: 35), and this perhaps is best exemplified in the *Maninbo* project, conceived during an extended period in solitary confinement. *Maninbo* translates literally as the 'family records of ten thousand lives' (Ko Un 2005: 35), and this poet seems compelled to record the details of those who might otherwise be erased from history. His long-time translator Brother Anthony of Taizé states how '(t)hese are not simply amusing anecdotes, but deeply considered distillations of what truly happened, although

many aspects of recent Korean history are (still) veiled in secrecy' (Anthony: 44). The *Maninbo* texts trace the traumatic odyssey of a people marching tirelessly toward an uncertain future; these poems are eulogies for the very many who disappeared during the Japanese occupation (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and the ensuing rule of successive military dictatorships (1948-1987). In 2010, and numbering 30 volumes, Ko Un finished the project (or perhaps, as Valéry would say, abandoned it), but *Maninbo* remains a landmark in contemporary Korean Literature, a loud provocation and unofficial chronicle of the struggle for cultural identity. In a place where

> Missing persons
> are part of our land's traditions
> between revolutions and counter-revolutions
> (Ko Un 2005: 325)

Ko Un's memorialising picks over places of erasure and disappearance, recalling the lives of ordinary people interrupted by extraordinary, and too often violent, historical events (for anyone interested, Bloodaxe have this year published a selection: *Maninbo—War & Peace*). But these founding sites are also places of resilience, and Ko Un tells us he is protecting these stories both from the pallor of deep gloom and the darkness of forgetting:

> My encounter with others is far from personal. It's essentially public, and this public nature makes it necessary to prevent my encounters in life from fading into forgetfulness. Even a casual encounter contains a historical inevitability. (Ko Un 'Preface' *Maninbo* Vol.1)

Robert Hass tells us this elder spokesman is "one of the heroes of human freedom" and that it is no accident how 'important work in poetry in this last half-century has come from Poland and Korea ... The reason is not, I think, that it is dramatic to live inside violence or terrible injustice, but that it is numbing and that numbing incites a spirit of resistance' (Hass, 'Poet of Wonders'). Ko Un's supremely dedicated, democratising voice rings out as more than just a purifying of dialect; he has pitched himself ceaselessly against often monstrous powers, and his resistance is a demonstrative, resonant dissent.

§

Against this particular backdrop, our work is essentially a mode of transforming not only linguistic but cultural grammars: an exercise, of course, in profound non-equivalence. In his essay 'The Task of the Translator', Walter Benjamin asks his readers to consider the lexical embeddedness of the German word *brot*, contrasting with the French *pain*: each of these words is enfolded within a tissue of associations that stand to be lost as soon as utterance shifts from one language to the next. Benjamin fears translation enables an unwitting reshaping of nuance into

contours not present in source texts, and he imagines that the task of the translator 'consists in finding that intended effect (Intention) upon the language into which he (sic) is translating which produces in it the echo of the original' (Benjamin 19, 20). Poet-translators from across the twentieth century (Bonnefoy, Valéry, Paz, *et al.*) have long concurred that translations of poems are at best only ever variations. Commenting on his recent English-language version of Rilke's *Die Sonette an Orpheus*, Don Paterson frames it as follows: 'one can no more translate a poem than one can a piece of music' (Paterson 77). Elaborating on Benjamin, Paterson understands the impossibility of his task and distinguishes between literary translations and versions: 'Translations fail when they misrepresent the language of the original, or fail to honour the rules of natural syntax. Versions fail when they misrepresent the *spirit* of the original' (Paterson 81).

Reading a range of Korean poems, we have listened opportunistically to cultural products that propagate particular sounds of what Ko Un calls "the music of history" (Ko Un, 'Ko Un on Ko Un'). In attempting to summon the spirit (*Intention*) of the original texts, we have acted less as *traduttore-traditore* ('the translator as traitor' or betrayer), a term first coined by Italian scholars mistrustful of French translators of Dante and echoed by Koreans, and instead of 번역자 반역자 (beonyeokja banyeokja: the translator traitor), we instead attempt to act more as *traduttore-traghettatore* or 'translator-ferryman' (번역자 뱃사공, beonyeokja baetsagong). Attempting to locate the echo (Benjamin) or spirit (Paterson) of the original, we like to think we are performing a reversal of Charon's underworld activities ... moving across the oblique flow of 한국어 사전 ('the Korean lexicon'), our versions transport these native images into the materiality of English-language sound-shapes and there reimagine their spirit. We hope what emerges, as if Orphically, are discrete and somewhat faithful echoes.

§

Face
Kim Ki-taek

momentarily covered my face with both hands
eyes dim
and face dark, soon that darkness soaked into my hands
over both palms, my hands
feeling the bones as if sensing something mysterious
feeling as if something would be missed
I felt reluctantly for that cold, blunt, indifferent thing
the enduring ruins which may have been there
before the face existed

stuck on that skull
you, face
that smiles, cries, frowns your expressions
you face, thin as a heart, thin without sleep, thoughts, sorrow

my skull is watching you always
face that blooms for a moment and then falls
long hours stretching behind the face
empty black sockets
watching beyond the memory of the face

after a while, I let go and the sunlight suddenly
becomes flesh covering my skull
and soon becomes my face
for a while I blink, awkward
with a face finally returned
and barely regaining my eyeballs, before
Hurriedly focusing on those figures in the documents

§

Were all grammar structures similar (as they are, say, between Korean and Japanese, Swedish and Danish, etc), then translating poetry would be a matter of simply populating recognisable structures with phonologically similar sounds. Alas, the simple fact is that, grammatically, Korean (subject + object + verb) is nothing like English (subject + verb + object); in the wake of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which proposes that grammar structures are key determinants of culturally-defined behaviours, this makes for interesting speculation: Koreans *do* so often seem acutely attentive and perhaps necessarily, because this is a language in which the verb telling us what we're doing always falls as the final word in sentence constructions. But alongside the challenge of radically remaking original sentences that perform (perhaps culturally enshrined) grammar structures, when ferrying echoes from source to target, reconstructing tone can be an especially tough job. This is the final section from Lee Seong-bok's short prose poem, 'End of that Summer':

> 넘어지면 매달리고 타올라 불을 뿜는 나무 백일홍 억센 꽃들이 두어 평 좁은 마당을 피로 덮을 때, 장난처럼 나의 절망은 끝났습니다.
>
> (neom-eojimyeon maedalligo taolla bul-eul ppumneun namu baeg-ilhong eogsen kkochdeul-i dueo pyeong job-eun madang-eul pilo deop-eul ttae, jangnancheoleom naui jeolmang-eun kkeutnassseubneedah).

Without following any of the grammar conventions faithfully advanced by Lee (whose experiments are typically image-driven), a word-for-word translation of his Korean text arrives as

> fall then hang burn fire exploding tree crepe-myrtle rough/tough flowers (평, or 'pyeong', is untranslatable; a Korean unit of measurement) small yard blood cover when joke-like my despair ends/ended.

Lee Seong-bok is a celebrated, innovative contemporary poet influenced by the likes of Kafka and Nietzsche; this writer's work is said to use 'free association to expose the hypocrisy, corruption, and perversity of this world' (KLTI 124). Partly, this worldview is a matter of tone, and some of that tone is established through the ways Lee constructs each sentence. An example: within this most hierarchical of cultures, Korean grammar requires that speakers situate themselves in relation to those they are addressing: to wit, verbs may end in '-어' (-eoh) when addressing close friends and family members, '-요' (-yoh) when adopting a formal but friendly tone, while '-니다' (-needah) connotes gravity or importance. Thus, and depending on who is being addressed, the (irregular) verb 'do' is expressed as either 하다 (ha dah), 해요, (heh yoh) or 합니다 (habneedah). Throughout 'End of that Summer', the poet uses the term '장난처럼' (joke-like) but conjugates the verbs with the highly formal '-니다' (-needah). Tonally, then, 'End of that Summer' is no work of slapstick or satire, and the joking referred to within the text works at darker purposes—a serious-minded comedy—and we have read the intention of the original text as a Beckett-esque existential critique:

> The crepe-myrtles were safe that summer. One storm after another, their
>
> red flowers hung without falling, just like the hailstones.
>
> That summer, I too was in the middle of a storm. My despair hung that summer like a joke of red flowers, unfalling amid the storms.
>
> Despite falling, the crepe-myrtle flowers are still burning and blazing, finally covering my long narrow yard with blood. At that moment my despair finishes like a joke.

§

Dating from the 15th century, the *sijo* (literally 'time rhythm') is Korea's most famous form; each of the sijo's three lines consists of four word groupings containing three to four syllables. Historically, these aphoristic texts are accompanied by the *geomungo*, or six-stringed zither, and sijo were initially enjoyed by the *yangban* (elite classes) who would transmit these tiny musical artefacts orally from one generation to the next. It was not until the 18th century that the appeal of the form broadened beyond the literary elite, and sijo began to be written down. Writing in *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Korean Poetry*, Peter Lee identifies three recurring themes:

> (i) Love, including the 'physical symptoms, dilemmas, love as dream, metamorphosis in dream, or love after death' (Lee 70):

I send you, my love,
    select branches of the willow.
Plant them to be admired
    outside your bedroom window.

If a night rain makes them bud,
think that it is I.
(Hongnang, 1576-1600)

(ii) Friendship, including 'parting, longing for the absent friend, celebration of a reunion with wine, moon, flowers, and music' (Lee 70):

If flowers bloom, I think of the moon,
if the moon shines, I ask for wine.
When I have all these at once,
still I think of friends.
When can I drink a night away,
enjoying moon and flowers with a friend?
(Yi Chongbo, 1693-1766)

(iii) Time, alongside 'Taoist concepts of nondiscrimination, the utility of inutility, and non-action' (Lee 70):

The candle burns in the room,
for whom has it parted?
Shedding tears outside,
does it know that its inside burns?
That candle is like me,
it does not know its heart burns!
(Yi Kae, 1417-1456)

(all translations by Kevin O'Rourke)

This mnemonic form echoes still, thrumming across history and into the 21st century: what is remarkable is that so many Koreans can recite their favourite sijo. Like Ko Un's *Maninbo*, then, this is another instance of a people refusing to forget. The recitation (and perhaps rejoicing in these native sounds of the sijo reconnect a once agrarian community to place (remembering the etymology of culture as 'the tilling of land'). To recite sijo is to recultivate a connection with origins. As such, these are sounds that act as boundary stones to mark out long-inhabited ground.

§

Much as anywhere else, the Korean literary scene is pocked with mutually antagonistic cliques and cabals. As one eminent stakeholder suggests, caddishly, there are over 7000 living poets in Korea, and they don't (under any conditions) speak to each other. In part, these spats are over future places in the canon—as if space were limited—but more immediately, the non-conversation (as it were) encounters turbulence according to priorities of particular programs and protagonists: simply put, animus grows when poets disagree about what the function of poetry is. In the late 20th century, and leading up to the democratisation of the southern half

of the Korean peninsula, the *sunsup'a* group maintained a purely literary focus; alongside these, the *ch'amyŏ'p'a* group took a more active role in critiquing Korea's socio-political unevenness. To members of the latter bloc, the silences within texts made by *sunsup'a* poets contain audible complicities. Indeed, protest has long been a dangerous gambit here, so poets often have needed to write their resistance cryptically. The inferred meaning screams just under the surface of texts like Kim Su-yong's famous 'Grasses', published in the late 1960s:

> Grasses lie down
> Blown by the wind driving rain from the east
> grasses lie,
> at last cried
> As the day is overcast, they cried more,
> and lay again
>
> Grasses lie
> Faster than the wind they lie
> Faster than the wind they cry
> Earlier than the wind they rise
>
> The day is overcast, and grasses lie
> to the ankle
> to the sole they lie
> Later than the wind they lie
> Earlier than the wind they rise
> Later than the wind they cry
> Earlier than the wind they smile
> The day is overcast, and the grass roots lie.
>
> (translated by Y.-J. Lee)

If one of poetry's functions is to be 'the subjective expression of a social antagonism' (Adorno 2009: 30), then the voices of the *ch'amyŏ'p'a* poets have long proclaimed an idealism that, Samizdat-style, refuses to accept imposed social orders. Consider the implications in Lee Si-Young's epigram, 'The Way Goats Walk':

> The way every goat in the world walks is sad.
> Because as they go clip-clopping, along all unsuspecting, reined
> in close to their owner's side, the way they walk is so earnest and meek.
>
> (translated by Brother Anthony of Taizé)

This is not poetry for poetry's sake but the enactment of a refusal to simply 'be at home in one's home' (Adorno 1974: 39). And that desire to speak out, founded so ferociously in the recent past, is still very much alive today.

§

Mid-September, and the last night of the Seoul International Writers Festival has been predictably weird. The week's events have showcased the extent to which those many lyrical darknesses explored by previous generations of Korean poets have been chopped into a salad of non-narrative styles; this current generation of loud and rambunctious Rimbaudians, who seem to each scan the glass and concrete vistas of new Seoul with large doses of scepticism, prioritise explorations in all the latest usual unusual ways: these *enfants terribles* mix a localised variant of the dream logic of Dada with L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry's resistance to commodification by means of fractured syntax, and this autochthonous experimental poetry caterwauls from a place that has grown insanely wealthy, made by those who remain at once astonished and suspicious of the benefits such wealth confers.

Every evening, in the wealthy downtown suburb of Bukchon, the tiny Changwoo Theatre has been packed. Autumn is disappearing; some nights we've sweated our way into unintentional sleeping, and others have been spent chattering and rigid on our chairs. One poet, the fifty-something Lee Young Kwang, is universally fêted by younger innovators, and he delivers a threnody on mad trees, sinking warships, the timeless wisdom of ghosts who've had their human lives cut short. When asked, he growls in guileless monotone how poets are wolves: solitary, best left alone, instinctually watchful, usually mistrustful. In this country of spectacles, the festival has foregrounded interdisciplinarity, and audiences treated to a strange synthesis of poetry read alongside duelling guitars/ video installations/ stamping flamenco dancers, etc. Some of it has been interesting, but the work of some poets in particular (such as visitors Sinead Morrissey and Claude Mouchard) calls for closer and careful listening, without interruption. And it is here that Lee Young Kwang's ideas resonate: in this country of massive distraction and even greater magnitudes of aspiration, paired with compliance and peer pressure amid the hegemony of capital, the need for outsiders, disbelievers sounding wolf notes, howling naysayers et al., is more pressing than ever.

§

While the economy booms to the logic of commodity fetishism, labour in Korea remains stratified. From part-time unskilled through to skilled employment, work is often dispatched into sub-contractual contexts, belying a massive gap in personal wealth. In her paper 'Reterritorializing Working-class Literature in Contemporary Korea', academic Eun-Gwi Chung makes clear just how disposable labour is seen to be in this country:

> In 2013, 45.9 percent of salary workers in Korea are temporary workers, their salary is 49.5 per cent of fixed-term workers, and the minimum hourly wage for temporary workers is 4,850 won, or around $4.20, less than the price of a hamburger.

Many multinational Korean companies (including Samsung) retain a standing policy of not tolerating a unionised workplace, labour unions being considered impediments to economic growth. Strike-busting, standover tactics, police brutality, and legal action against organisers are common practices here. In late 2014, poet Song Kyung-dong was sentenced to two years prison for mobilising what he called the 'Hope Bus' movement, in which some 200 buses swarmed one site of industrial action in a show of solidarity. The poet has appealed his sentence, and the Hope Buses are remembered as icons of an all-too-infrequent resistance. Despite the potential consequences, Song Khyung-dong remains a voice prepared to agitate on behalf of an alienated workforce.

§

Answering Trivial Questions
Song Kyung-dong

one day
a man calling himself a Marxist
came and asked me to join a new organisation
after some talking he asked
by the way, from which university did you graduate comrade Song?
Smiling, I answered, high school is the end of my education
I graduated from juvenile hall
and have been a labourer ever since
that moment I saw a cold greasy film cover his eyeballs
only a moment earlier so passionate
flustered, he said
you should feel glorified to be together
with the liberation frontier of the nation
sorry, but I decided not to join that glorification

today, ten years later
again people are asking what organisation I am part of and I answer
again without hiding
I am registered in that field pushed by the sea-waves
flickering every day in front of those flower petals
coloured by the green tree
instigated by the wind
part of the fallen walls of the ones that don't have anything
kicked stalls and shoes falling to pieces
the words of the many still not born crawling like amoebas, I answer
I am taught by the river
silent after recording so many ripples

§

In and around Seoul, a cadre of recently emerged poets are writing about madness, collective exhaustion and, amid the baubles of hyper-capitalism, loss. Inside their poems are pantheons of otherworldly wanderers, silhouettes, drunkards, misfits, shadows; what's also clear is the extent to which these heterotopians seem so keen to abandon older expressivist modes. There's a certain punk ethos at work in these rebellions; in his paper, 'Who is the man who puts rotten fruit inside my head, and squeezes rotten juice deep into my blood vessels', poet Jeong Kang exemplifies the mood:

> The facts that I witness are always betrayals of facts, so to speak, and reverse images of facts (like a scene caught on a camera lens) ... What's significant is that these mutants come my way at unpredictable moments, regardless of my intention or desire. In other words, I don't summon or give rise to them; forms and images that develop naturally in a time and space of their own suddenly come upon me and make me scribble things down. In a way, I am assaulted by the world, and one of the first symptoms I get is dry heaving. (Kang 2014a: 84-5)

So many of these visceral responses (of which poet Kim Hyesoon can be said to be a high priestess) scan as refractive and unedited, random snapshots of often nightmarish alienations in which affect is tellingly absent:

> Biting into the flesh of things said to be inferior to human beings,
> striving to liberate my humanness,
> because someone's heart, still alive in my body, playing the coquette artistically
> wants to touch something outside my body.
> I look into the mirror after eating meat,
> covet the eyeballs of the mournful carnivore in the mirror
> and masturbate as if turning off the last switch of earth's destruction.
> At that moment, inside my head is the gathering place of the theories of modern physics
> that I had grasped too poetically.
> As hours and seconds cross boundaries freely, the narrow bathroom
> becomes the battlefields of the far-off Tang and Sung dynasties
> where tens of thousands of dead men and horses attract flocks of crows.
> (Kang 2014b: 86-7)
>
> (translated by Chung Eun-Gwi and Brother Anthony of Taizé)

In an era in which stylised transgression is *avant-tout*, Kang's work exemplifies an unambiguously disharmonic, disunified, and non-connective style; in other words, this is a reflection (and quite possibly also a symptom) of the contemporary Korean milieu. Moving through what he calls 'a delusional anatomy chart of matter' (2014a: 86), Kang and those younger poets around him portray their atomisation like players performing in a digital era's version of Artaudian theatre.

In this mode, there are no fortuitous meetings (as Ernst would once have had it) but simply the kinesthetics of affectless pictures.

§

This once-hermit kingdom, where all but gentry were garbed in white, now spills the phantasmagoria neon of frantic consumerism. Seoul is a city-state of hands-off governance in which politicos make big deals with big smiles (when they're not throwing punches or teargas canisters across parliament). But so many confess to feeling far from comfortable with the arrival of this country's incredible wealth; we leave it to the inimitable Ko Un to make his lament for modern Korea. In the foreword to *First Person Sorrowful*, Andrew Motion suggests that this is a poet equally able to 'look back at the past with regret' while singularly fixing on 'the desecrations of the present' (Ko Un 2012: 12). Like many in this country, Ko Un is wide awake with anxiety at the neo-liberalisation of this ancient community:

Where Has My Frontier Gone
Ko Un

It's wrong, wrong, wrong.

All of the Korean peninsula is turning into Seoul.
Oh shit, a country with a crush on glitz,
on thousands of flashy events.
You, and I,
all of us, ditto,
are turning into New York.
We're turning into that wretched 'hub' or dub of a hub.
I say:
We're turning into the ugliest, most shameless so-called 'centre'.

The place where once we knew sorrow.
The place that was far from anywhere.
The place we could not leave.
The place we finally left
after being held back,
held back.
The mud-flat of my heart.
That place where, at sunset, we could see clearly
the biennial bloom of quince flowers.

The place that looked the same ten years before
and ten years after.
The place where we lived together
with great-grandmother whom I never once saw,
and great-grandfather, too, whom I never saw,

both there in mother's blurred mirror-stand.
The place where an uneducated father
plowed an ancient field at dusk.
The place where truth kept to itself within a village.
The place where you fell asleep when I fell asleep.
The place where the uncle we believed dead came back to alive.
The place where the land-rent was a bone-breaking seven-parts-to-three.
The place where people died closing their eyes, having no
strength to keep them open.
The place where people with low noses and high cheek-bones,
enduring harsh poverty, bowed to the dead on ritual nights.
The place where long-terms plans were ineffective.
The place where people would gather together on rainy days.
The place where, if one died, all mourned.
The place where Kim was uncle to Jang,
where A and B were cousins.
The place where people like Sir Magistrate never appeared.
The place where, on huge full-moon nights,
someone sharpened a kitchen knife
and slashed it gleaming through the air.
The place where meaning bowed down before meaninglessness.
The place we have left behind.

Where has my frontier gone?

(translated by Brother Anthony of Taizé and Lee Sang-Wha)

§

Unless otherwise noted, all translations by Un Gyung Yi, Daye Jeon, and Dan Disney.

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Pamela Schindler

say, a river

say, a river of dark honey
say cormorant, a swimming
neck and head

curved the wet black neck
diving through, flecked with gold
the sliding dark
river dusted with leaves, with sun
dusted with glint, touched
with the tip of the brush—say
goanna, its tail on the ridged bark
finely dotted with yellow, scales of
paint on the slow curve bending
the honey river, its dark flank
speckled with light, with dust
spreading wide under the shine
of sharp leaves brittle
banksia and she-oak
soft-flaking paperbark
river of slow honey, say dark
river of light

Saxby Pridmore

Things

There didn't seem much point to log books
after we got slide rules.
Now, there doesn't seem much point to surf boats
because of jet-skis.

But some people like old things
like throwing the javelin at the Olympics Games
even though at the next pavilion they're blasting away with magnums.

There didn't seem much point to slide rules
after we got calculators.
Now there doesn't seem much point to milk bottles
because of cardboard cartons.

But some people like old things
like collecting Bakelite telephones
even though we now have better ones in our pockets.

There didn't seem much point to dedicated calculators
after we got computers.
Now there doesn't seem much point in knives and forks
because of Colonel Sanders.

But some people like old things
like the history of the British Empire
even though it's bad to be proud of what the colonialists did.

Susan Hawthorne

unknowing

it's all about unknowing the gaps in our histories
the story about my grandmother travelling
to Japan after the war the black and white
photographs of her sipping tea in a Japanese
teahouse is that why she is there to sip tea
her elbow pointed at the eaves her hand delicate
behind is the garden as ordered swept and leaf-
cleaned as every other Japanese garden
even the one in the woodblock print by Saito
here the forest invites us in the gate opening
to the world and closing again in solitude
there are no clouds the image is grey
grey and white no black cranes silhouetted
against the sky no shadow anywhere no figure
walking by I sift everything for another story
the one about my uncle her son prisoner
of war the visit could it be reparations
for relatives a loop travelled there and back
her kind of solitude her kind of unknowing

Geoff Page

L'esprit d'escalier

All those things one cannot say,
the niceties, the need for tact,
the things you'd never tell your kids,
the silence of the Marriage Act,

the 'Spirit of the Staircase', which
pursues you lightly down the stairs,
the barbed riposte you could have made
that might have caught him unawares

and sparked a nasty sort of laugh.
You would have smiled to see him wince.
Most cruelty does not work well.
The arguments do not convince.

Some words, I've found, are slow to fade.
My second wife once called me smug.
Should I have called her something worse?
I let it pass with half a shrug.

I must admit though there are times
when disagreement can't be shirked.
It's been some years since Christ's advice
re 'other cheek' has really worked.

Trolls that throng the internet
pop straight up to have their say.
Not all of them wear pseudonyms.
They want your head served on a tray.

Across the reach of etiquette,
there must be much that stays unsaid.
Feel free to laugh at funerals though.
There are no lawyers for the dead.

Martin Kovan

Laccadive Sea

We know how long the crossing takes.
There is precedent and all the
measuring genius of the ages, all
those who've made it through before.

Then something that happens, inside
the calibration of waves, and mid-sea
we start going nowhere, momentum
only a stasis of motion. There is no

knowing how long it takes, not an
albatross or pirate, spouting whale
or sage to guide us through the
passage between. Sun-struck

Laccadive Sea, something someone
wrote once on a map, and it stuck:
waves and air, sound and space. We
cross the time-line, that was never there.

At sea, June 2015

Jennifer Compton
Two Women

Believe nothing she says. Provide her with a warm coat.
Believe nothing she says. Give her a cigarette, and a light.

Believe nothing she says. When her foot is trapped, stoop,
wrestle with the slab until it yields. Then caress the mark.

Wait for her, wait for her, wait for her two hours before
you give up. Hear out the reasons that she gives with

equanimity. There will be reasons, of course there are.
Believe nothing she says. She isn't lying, you wouldn't

call it lying, but it is an artful art. A kind of inveiglement.
The inconstant narrative of bewilderment. She shivers but

she's not cold, she says. It's winter and we are all cold.
It's cold. But fold away the facts, put them in your pocket.

This is a labyrinth, with a broken thread. Feel about in the
muck, in the dark, for the two frayed ends and make a knot.

It might hold. Or it won't. Beat fists against your forehead.
Confess. You yourself have been dissonant with grief. Why

you write this. Late at night, jangled, without recourse to
irony or impatience or display, at least insofar as that goes.

You yourself would have tried the patience of a saint. So
do anything for her except believe anything that she says.

Ken Chau

Things Wong Kar-Wai Taught Me About Love, Part 3

for Chloe

The accordion
is not a very sexy
instrument but
I like the sounds
it makes.

You can get anyone's phone number
if you really try.

To
improve my love life,
I might take up smoking one day.

A sofa
is too small for two people to sleep on.

Disinfecting the bed on sunny days
is preferable to rainy days.

I'd rather have you
in bed with me than fleas.

If
it's too cold to walk together over a bridge,
it's best to turn around and go home, together.

A bare tiled kitchen can be as romantic as a dance floor.

Food, like love, that you don't have to pay for, always tastes better.

Being head butted by your beloved

is a bad omen for your relationship.

Being drunk
is not
ideal when you're trying to sort out your relationship problems.

Having to greet people cheerfully as a doorman
is not the best job to have when your heart is bankrupt even
if you need the money.

Let's start over
is another way of saying
I love you.

Martin Dolan

The Feast of Valentine

Today was the festival of the wolf,
whose stalking and rending is forgotten,
who stared at paradise with yellow eyes.
Today is the day we exchange hearts
of flattened paper bought cheap from elsewhere.
There is no blood. Teeth are no longer sharp.

What big teeth they once were, as curved, as sharp
as the blade that sacrificed child to wolf
while his clear blue eyes were looking elsewhere.
Blood puddled on stone. We have forgotten
the price of safety, forgotten how hearts
were torn from warm flesh as light drained from eyes.

See where a young girl with the same blue eyes
walks the wild path. A hidden knife is sharp
in her basket. It is not enough. Hearts
can falter even before the grey wolf
lopes from the wood. She has forgotten
all that she was told. Her mind is elsewhere.

All the things we need to see are elsewhere,
hidden around the corners of our eyes.
Is there something we have not forgotten?
The scissors that slice red paper are sharp.
As I cut I could whistle like a wolf,
making what cannot be bought: conjoined hearts.

Once there were twin brothers with killers' hearts
left to die in the desert of elsewhere.
What does it mean to be mothered by a wolf,
to see some sort of love in yellow eyes?
No matter. They grew and in one sharp
burst of anger all love was forgotten.

There is so much that we have forgotten
or buried in the place we call our hearts.
Our vagueness takes the edge from all things sharp;
our tame love has lost the map to elsewhere
and bright sunlight hides the moon from our eyes,
but the shepherds' god always was a wolf.

Watch in moonlight for the wolf, forgotten
in open eyes, absent from bloodless hearts.
Wildness still lurks elsewhere. Its teeth are sharp.

Michael Easson

In Memory of a Useless Man

for Pierre Ryckmans (1935-2014)

Whimsy, an art he lived by.
From Chesterton's lamp-post
He saw an asylum of Napoleons,
In Don Quixote the noblest hero,
Truth battled in dialogue with imbeciles.
The burning forest kept him alive,
the flames from which burned deep inside.
Complimented the great Chou en Lai
for declining to pen poetry.
In life's shitstorm, poking fun at idiots,
Wit, calligrapher's stroke, slight
withering wince, were his umbrella,
shelter from humbugging humanity. Passion,
pausing with irony, fun on a seesaw.

Lesley Lebkowicz
Flight

He'd post it from the airport (so he
thought) to keep things simple.
Life had a way of complicating things:
emotions: sudden crying, a flick
of joy when all one really needed
was the steady work of research,
some thoughtful reference to Linnaeus
pinning the heart in its right place. In this
he'd failed – marriages and children spilled
from specimen trays like butterflies come
inexplicably alive. (All he wants is peace.)
His decision had the ring of truth,
like finding where a bug belonged,
a taxonomic certainty. And so he wrote:
there's no one else. But I yearn for
the innocence of childhood.
No responsibilities. No ties.
I'm going to cruise my life along
the straight lines of canals.
And posted it as his flight was called:
just half a page to say he'd not be back.

Kevin Ireland
Flying across Australia

There was so much of the whole place to take in
that whatever may have slipped out of the frame
belonged nowhere else you could think of quickly

and you might even be tempted to add that there was
enough down there to get on with anyway so why
worry about it and who'd argue the point, the drift of

what I am saying possibly being that what glorious
small thought could ever be deemed appropriate
when confronted with such immensity, by which I mean

all those patched bolts of crumpled scenery unrolling
for what could be ever-and-ever—like fate, history
or the hereafter—indicating meaningful assertions

in hessian, blotched sailcloth, with obscurities of muslin,
not to mention an endless sufferance of sacking,
complete with suggestions of hot and gritty ashes,

all of them ripped apart by huge riverbeds, none of which
were presently serving their prime purpose?
But never forget you could very well take a deep breath

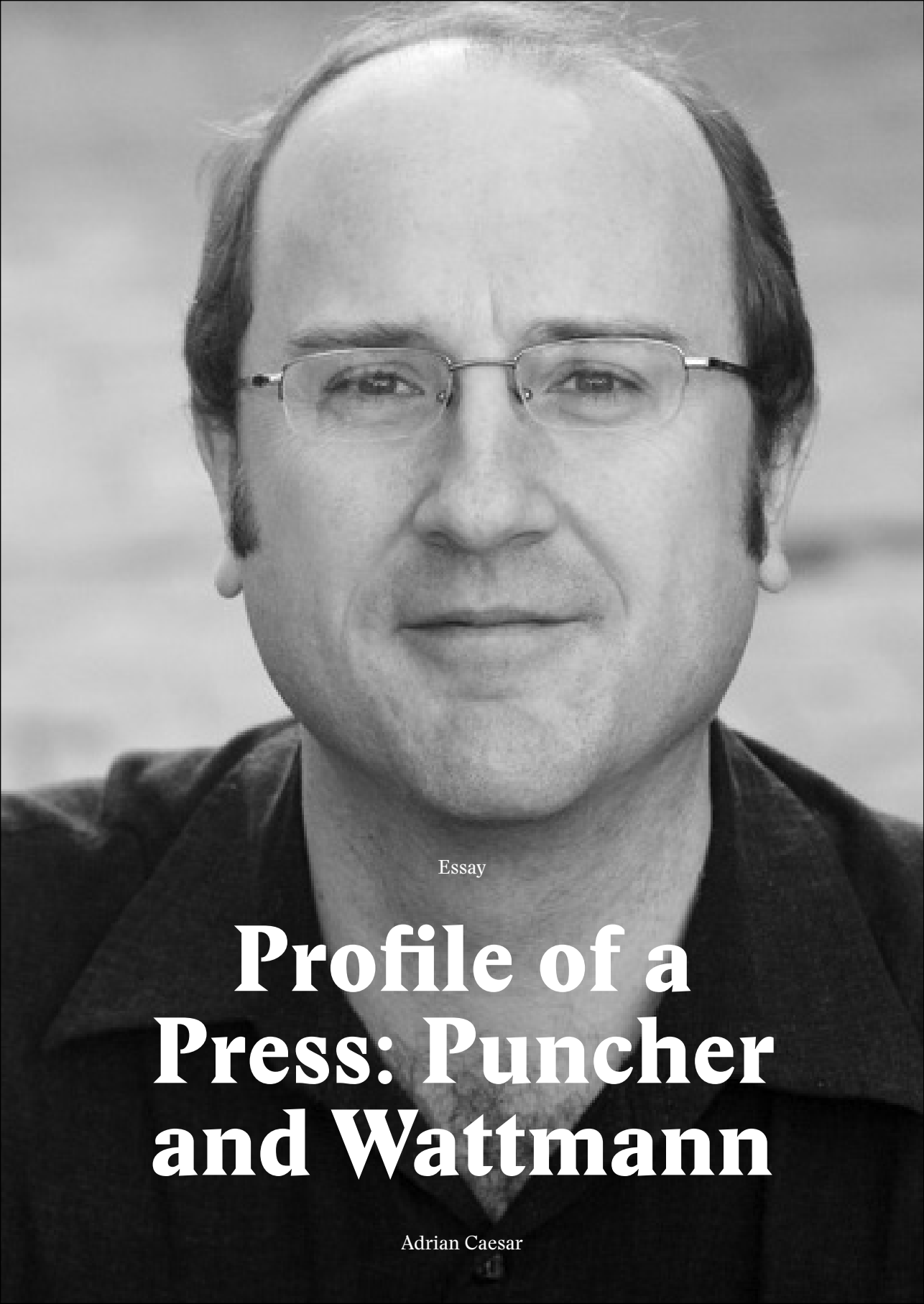
and go on to ask what about the hand of man and if things
might not be enhanced greatly by long strips of steel rails,
chains of lorries loaded with asphalt or concrete

and shops with gas pumps, just as with a dramatic sweep
of the arm you may as well go the whole hog and admit
to the mystery of endless giant clouds that were pegged out

like permanent fixtures, exactly the same as last time.
In other words there were aspects of largeness that didn't
fit a neat picture even though, I agree, they also weren't

trying to go out of their way to be what you might describe
as pretentiously impressive on an entirely imaginary
scale of holy grandeur. It called for some sort of theory

to tidy up everything. I didn't feel it was down to me
to figure it out and the passenger next door never stopped
talking, so there it still is, patiently out there waiting.



Essay

Profile of a Press: Puncher and Wattmann

Adrian Caesar

The multi-award winning poet and novelist David Musgrave founded the independent publishing company Puncher and Wattmann in 2005. Its name derives from Lucky's soliloquy in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. In ten years, the press has produced some one hundred and ten books and established itself as a significant and reputable presence in the Australian cultural landscape. Though poetry titles constitute about three-quarters of the Puncher and Wattmann list, the press has also published literary fiction, literary and cultural criticism and biography.

This diversity is, I think, important, providing as it does opportunities for writers whose work doesn't suit the commercial imperatives of the major publishing houses or the increasingly straitened (and therefore increasingly commercially driven) circumstances of the remaining few university presses in Australia. The story of the founding and development of the press is the story of David Musgrave's initiative, vision, determination, resilience and taste. Though he would undoubtedly credit the help he's had from friends, there can be little doubt that his own commitment has fuelled the enterprise from the beginning. It is in keeping with this commitment that he drove from Sydney to Canberra and back in a day at his own expense to spend a couple of hours with me over lunch, talking about the origins, development and future directions of the press.

In the 1990s, Musgrave was involved in producing the Sydney university magazine *Hermes*. Using experience gained there, he subsequently produced 35 issues of a newsletter, *The Rejectamenta*, which arose from the fortnightly meeting of a group of friends, including Peter Kirkpatrick, Sarah Newton-John, Matthew Karpin and Delia Falconer, who came together through the Sydney Poetry Society. The idea was to showcase their work, but it also developed Musgrave's skills in layout and design: the seeds of an ambition to start a publishing company were sown. The newsletter, however, died a natural death, and the seeds lay dormant for another ten years. Though the idea of publishing remained attractive, Musgrave admits he had no money and no idea how to make his aspiration a reality. Then, in 2004, while working in IT and as a compensation for trying difficulties in his personal life, things changed. Having lunch one day with his friend, Nick Riemer, the conversation turned to the fate of Riemer's poetry manuscript. It was Riemer's first book of poems. He'd had a contract in place with Robert Adamson's Paperbark Press, but Adamson's financial backer had recently withdrawn support, and the contract had been cancelled. With the demise of Paperbark, the alternative options were severely limited. Discussing this situation, Musgrave said, 'How about I publish your book. What do your reckon?' Riemer agreed, despite being warned he would be playing the role of 'Guinea Pig'. And so the first Puncher and Wattmann title was decided.

The book, however, didn't appear until 2005. In the meantime, Musgrave acquired the Adobe programme *InDesign II* and over a period of six months taught himself how to use it. He also investigated costings with the Sydney University Printing service and began to learn about the economic realities of establishing a press.

In those days, in order to be registered as a publisher with the Australia Council, five books needed to be published with minimum print-runs of 500 copies for poetry and 1000 copies for a novel. The cost to produce these runs was approximately $2000 for a poetry title and $6000 for a novel. Consequently,

Musgrave spent a lot of time in the early years scraping together the money to produce the first five titles, including cash he'd won from poetry prizes and grant money he'd received for his own work from the Australia Council. Nick Riemer's book was published in 2005, and in the following two years three further poetry titles appeared, including Peter Kirkpatrick's brilliant collection, *Westering*. But perhaps most significantly for the future of Puncher and Wattmann, in 2006, Musgrave published Alex Jones's wild, witty and wonderful comic novel, *Helen Garner and the Meaning of Everything*. Well and widely reviewed (Kerryn Goldsworthy described it as 'a brilliant and near-absurdist rave, a sort of 21st Century *Such is Life*'), the book sold well and made enough money to ensure the immediate future of Puncher and Wattmann. Revenues from the book were helped by the fact that in the same year as its publication, Musgrave was made redundant and spent his time doing his own distribution for the press, carting boxes of books around in the boot of his car, thereby avoiding any payment to a distributor and maximising the returns for the press and the author.

Having five books in print enabled Musgrave to win grants from the Australia Council to support the press. This, together with the money from Helen Garner and the Meaning of Everything, enabled Puncher and Wattmann to thrive and grow. Apart from a difficult year in 2010-2011 when the Australia Council reduced its support at a time when Musgrave was also assailed by difficulties in his personal circumstances, the growth of the press has been steady. This doesn't mean that it has become massively profitable or profit-driven. Sales of the anthologies *Motherlode: Australian Women's Poetry 1986-2008* (edited by Jennifer Harrison and Kate Waterhouse) and *Australian Poetry* (edited by John Leonard) have provided welcome revenue streams. Nevertheless, the business still struggles to break even or make a small profit. Musgrave doesn't pay himself a salary from the company, and its work continues supported by several key people who donate their time and efforts *pro bono*. From a precarious beginning with slender means, Puncher and Wattmann has grown to become one of the most important small presses in the country; it is to Sydney what Black Pepper is to Melbourne. Black Pepper is, of course, ten years older than Puncher and Wattmann, but it is interesting that both these fine companies have been founded and are run by practising poets.

David Musgrave has very clear ideas about the position of his press in relation to literature and society. Though he thinks that literature might be viewed as an autonomous field—a system and structure that constitutes its own body of knowledge—he strongly believes that literature can have a positive indirect impact upon society. The notion of indirection is important to him in so far as he does not wish to subordinate literature to anything else, yet he is adamant that he doesn't believe in art for art's sake. Musgrave is also clear-eyed about the way the withdrawal of the traditional 'gatekeepers' of literary merit has left the field more open in some ways, even though he avers that the market for individual titles has shrunk since 2005. The lack of any authoritative critical culture once supplied by serious and widespread reviewing and value-judgements emanating from English Departments together with the withdrawal of the major publishing houses from the publication of poetry and literary criticism means there are few mechanisms for promoting one poet's work more than any others'. The relative ease with which a book of

poems can now be produced means that the market is flooded with product, but readers are difficult to find. With the relaxation of the Australia Council's rules in relation to print runs and the advent of the Heidelberg machine that can easily print small runs, the usual number of copies of a book of poems is now 250. These are usually sold (if they are sold) by a launch and readings to the poet's friendship group and networks. Musgrave is clear that spending more on larger print-runs and marketing would soon lead to bankruptcy.

There are aspects of this situation that trouble me more than they appear to trouble Musgrave. I can see the attraction of viewing 'literature' as an autonomous field, yet I worry about the definition of 'literary' in this context. It seems to me that in this model, there is a risk that 'literary' will be defined against all other writing that is popular and does have a market. In this scenario, 'literary' may come to be associated with writing that is self-consciously obscure and self-involved, couched in an ornamental rhetoric wherein figures of speech are deployed to display the writer's ingenuity rather than being integral to vision. Fine judgements are required to differentiate between the genuinely experimental avant-garde and the lucubrations of the pretentiously incompetent. It seems to me there is a widespread lack of confidence in declaring which Emperor or Empress has or has not clothes and, indeed, whether nudity or dress is preferable. All this, I think, contributes to the divide between the 'literary' and the 'popular' and so the process goes on squeezing the literary further and further from a general audience and sequestering its readers and practitioners in the contained walls of the academy wherein schools of creative writing have flourished at the same time as value judgements have been abnegated and the selective relativism of post-modernism tends to reign.

Though it might be argued that the proliferation of titles (I'm thinking particularly of poetry here) enacts a nicely democratic impulse, validating as it does an ever increasing number of poets, one could also suggest conversely that the paradoxical effect of this is to bolster the ranks of a self-selected group who want to see themselves as an 'elite' and pride themselves on not having an audience, for that would condemn them to the assumed vulgarities of the market place. What seems on the one hand to be an impulse towards democracy paradoxically turns into the creation of an elite.

I have no answer to these problems, and it is all to the good that Musgrave has not allowed such considerations to deflect him from his purpose. Though he concedes that few of us read well all of the time and acknowledges the part that regionalism and friendship have played in his editorial decisions, he is very clear on one point: his ability to distinguish between writers who have taken ten to fifteen years to hone their craft and those who are interested in fast-tracking a career via instant publication of second–rate material. He is also keen to point out that some of his decisions to publish have been based on the position of a manuscript in relation to the broader context of Australian Literature. As an example, he cites Winifred Weir's book, *Walking on Ashes*, a poetic memoir of an Australian family affected by two World Wars. Weir's father served in the First World War, and it is his service and its impact on the domestic life of the family that forms the kernel of this thematically linked sequence. Musgrave cites the fact that nobody else had explored this ground in Australian poetry before as a big factor in his decision to publish.

Though he believes in innovation, Musgrave is open to publishing poets who belong to various traditions, Romantic, Modernist and Post-Modernist. Many of the poets he has published were already established figures before being taken up by Puncher and Wattmann. Two very substantial 'New and Selected' compilations perform the dual function of offering a generous selection of previous work that might now be hard to find in out-of-print earlier volumes, while simultaneously showcasing the poet's latest work. Diane Fahey's *The Wing Collection*, and Alex Skovron's *Towards the Equator* are books of this kind, to which we might add Geoff Page's *New Selected* to make a trio deserving of the widest possible audience for poetry in this country.

Fahey's observations of and meditations upon the natural world are poems characterised by linguistic clarity and fine particularity of perception. They are filigree poems that invite the reader in through their subtle rhythms and lucid syntax. More ambitious perhaps are her dealings with classical mythology and fairy stories. To my mind, these are not as evenly successful as her poems dealing with the natural world, yet here, in the absence of pretentiousness and in the intimate tones adopted, there is also much to surprise and delight.

Alex Skovron's work has a more dramatic, historical and political flavour to it than Fahey's. The brutal history of twentieth-century Europe, and in particular the Second World War and the Holocaust, casts deep shadows over Skovron's work, much of which is engaged in trying to come to terms with this history in the context of immigration to Australia. Like Winifred Weir's, but on a larger scale perhaps, Skovron's work is important because it occupies a unique space in Australian Literature.

Geoff Page's *New Selected* shares Skovron's taste for the historical and dramatic. Page's poems, however, form an interesting and ongoing argument with several well-established Australian cultural myths. They are lean, terse, laconic sidelong poems, which interrogate the masculinist traditions of the bush and Anzac, often bringing these into question while also celebrating the hardihood of men and women living disappointed lives. The puritanical cast of these poems means that they are emotionally spare, but the precision and clarity of Page's technique results in poems, like those of Fahey and Skovron, that one can imagine being enjoyed by more than a specialised audience.

Other established poets Musgrave has published include Ken Bolton, Philip Salom, Anthony Lawrence, Laurie Duggan, Jordie Albiston, MTC Cronin, Peter Boyle, Ania Walwicz, Sarah Day, Alan Gould, Bruce Dawe, John Tranter and Jill Jones. The range and quality are impressive; in the contrast between say, Ania Walwicz's experimental and recherché procedures and the accessible astringencies of Bruce Dawe's work, we might locate the breadth of Musgrave's taste and discernment. If we add the names of another group of poets who are fast establishing themselves as significant voices in Australian poetry—including Andy Kissane, Louise Wakeling, Simon West, Meredith Wattison and Musgrave himself, we begin to appreciate just how distinguished a list this is becoming. One of the effects of this is to encourage readers to sample the work of less well known writers like Tricia Dearborn and Phyllis Perlstone who have had early books published by Puncher and Wattmann. The reputation of the press begins to become a marker for the discernment of quality and interest.

Having said so much, I confess that while many of the individual volumes of poetry Musgrave has published promise to be as replete with accessible and important subject matter as Fahey, Skovron and Page, some of the work published tends to reinforce my worries about definitions of 'literary'. I am not keen on poetry that seems to be hermetically sealed in a world of its own self-delight. The experimental work of Catherine Vidler or Toby Fitch, for instance, demonstrates that Musgrave has wider tastes than mine. This is poetry that advertises its intellectual ingenuity, but the point of the 'cleverness', beyond a questioning of what 'a poem' might be said to constitute, isn't always apparent to me. It is hard to imagine such work appealing to anything other than a coterie audience.

Instead, let me turn to three outstanding volumes that would surely bring pleasure to many more than 250-500 readers. I should make it clear that my choice of these books is arbitrary to the extent that I haven't had time or energy to read all Puncher and Wattmann poetry titles and that my interest has been led by earlier preferences. Nevertheless, Andy Kissane's *Radiance*, Anthony Lawrence's *The Welfare of my Enemy* and MTC Cronin's *The Law of Poetry* provide three outstanding examples of contemporary Australian poetry. Although very different in their styles, these writers work with immediately accessible language and form. This doesn't mean their work is devoid of artistic risk and surprise; it is rather that such risks and surprises are not foregrounded to display the respective poet's virtuosity or cleverness but arise organically from the poet's vision of the subject matter at hand.

Andy Kissane's work is often lyrical and owes much to Romanticism, but he is also capable of great narrative energy and deft changes of linguistic register that deliver wit and irony. He is also unafraid to deploy unusually long lines and risk the charge of writing prosaically in order to create relaxed and intimate tonalities appropriate to his narrative purposes. Though there isn't a weak poem in the book (which is unusual in itself), the sequence 'Sea of Tranquility' with which *Radiance* ends deserves special mention. I know of no other contemporary poet who has dared to write about the moon at such length and with such élan. These are love poems to the literal, metaphoric and literary Moon, in which the poet makes daring and dazzling shifts between the quotidian and the sublime, maintaining a compelling emotional warmth without ever succumbing to sentimentality or cliché. It is a bravura performance. Though I haven't space to quote at length, I can't resist a few lines; this is the beginning of a poem titled, 'At the Movies':

> The Moon likes to catch a film on Friday nights.
> She enjoys art-house, film noir and a clever script,
> but whatever you do, don't mention werewolves.
> We sit up the back because of her tendency to glow/
> in the dark and disturb the other patrons.
> O my firefly! My phosphorescent queen!'

Anthony Lawrence's *The Welfare of my Enemy* is an altogether darker work than Kissane's, though like Kissane's, Lawrence's work has its origins in the Romantic tradition. (I'm aware, of course, that Romanticism, Modernism and Post-Modernism might be seen as a series of modified conjunctions rather than

a set of discrete disjunctions.) Though the blurb describes Lawrence's book as 'blending verse novella and book length poem', I experienced the poems as a sequential dramatisation and meditation on the phenomenon of missing persons. The whole book is written in couplets of varying length, sometimes rhyming, more often near-rhyming or off-rhyming. These latter techniques reminded me of the way Wilfred Owen's para-rhymes work to give his poems a sense of unease and disquiet. Just such an atmosphere pervades this volume as Lawrence approaches his subject from all angles. His ability to imagine victims, perpetrators, policemen, lawyers, relatives of missing persons, and voluntary missing persons makes this a compelling if at times chilling read. While using some of the recognisable motifs of crime fiction, the sequence works to destabilise and question these, leading the reader into harder and more complex spaces where our society's obsession with crime, real and imagined, is subjected to forensic scrutiny:

> Since the night or morning Paul and Anne
> went missing: you want to move on, you begin
>
> connections with the day to day, you try.
> Once, in a shopping mall. Those kids, they
>
> were so in love, they had their whole lives.
> It gets so bad. Sadness and anger come in waves
>
> and you never know. You hear all kinds of stories.
> And those shows on television – what a sorry
>
> spectacle for anyone. And I'll tell you, your marriage
> takes a hiding, when it should . . . You pledge
>
> your heart and life, for life, for ever and ever.
> Having someone go missing. . .

M.T.C. Cronin's *The Law of Poetry* might be read as a companion volume to her book of micro-essays (also published by Puncher and Wattmann) entitled *Squeezing Desire through a Sieve: micro essays on judgement and justice*. *The Law of Poetry* runs to some 260 pages and, we are told, contains poems written over twenty years by someone who is described as 'coming to poetry through the law'. Every poem in the book is titled 'The Law of Something' as in 'The Law of Broccoli', 'The Law of Ducks', and so on. As these titles suggest, there is some serious play going on here, and, as in the micro-essays, a concern to subject the idea of 'Law' to post-modern deconstruction. I find the poems fascinating. Cronin's style owes a lot to Pablo Neruda, and, like that poet, she writes work that has a beguilingly approachable surface, but also, as with Neruda's, the end product is often mysterious, and the quality is sometimes hit-and-miss. I like in Cronin's work, though, the sense of abundance, and the movement between abstraction and imagery; she is capable of the epigrammatic as well as imagery of great verve and invention. Throughout, one

senses a keen intelligence at work, and the poems (as well as the prose) continually provoke thought and feeling not by hectoring but through a sense of being invited to join the writer in her investigations. The opening lines of 'The Law of Kindness' demonstrate Cronin's ability to shift effortlessly from abstraction to image, and to invite the reader to ponder big themes in the lightest manner:

> To produce nothing
> But yourself
> Is the kindest action
> For the Universe
>
> When pushed
> To swing like a little door
> That others
> May pass through . . .

Musgrave is committed to continuing to publish criticism and biography, and for the most part, he seems to have selected works like Cronin's 'micro essays on judgement and justice' that have their origins in academic interest but find a form that might well speak to an educated public beyond the academy. Michael Carter's stimulating discussion of excess in nature and in dress is another case in point. His *Overdressed: Barthes, Darwin and the Clothes that Speak* is a stimulating discussion in which both Barthes and Darwin are interrogated with respect to the idea of useless ornament in nature and in fashion. Michael Sharkey's meticulously researched and elegantly written biography of David McKee Wright, *Apollo in George Street* not only provides a fascinating portrait of its principle subject but also provides a brilliant account of literary life and its relation to wider society, particularly in Sydney between 1910 and 1928.

Given the quality of these books, it seems unfortunate that to my mind the least compelling critical volume published by Puncher and Wattmann is dedicated to poetry. *Poetry and the Trace*, edited by John Hawke and Anne Vickery, constitutes a series of essays mostly, but not exclusively, by academics addressing themselves to Derrida's notion of 'the trace'. The title of the book, of course, suggests that anyone unfamiliar with Derrida might as well not begin. The opening essay with its unfortunate title: 'To hold the Hole: Poetry and the Trace' begins like this:

> This volume considers the relationship between poetry and the trace, investigating whether poetic language and form might provide ways in which to approach what Derrida calls the 'mark of the absence of a presence' or 'an always already absent present'. (Spivak xvii) The trace is an affective site; our relation to it is often of desire, but also of mourning and melancholia. Just as 'Nothing is ever lost' so too '"Everything is lost" doesn't sum/it up either" (Du Plessis 29)'.

As this beginning might suggest, the book is large and heavy, running to 445 pages. Though no doubt it contains hidden gems, it's hard to imagine anything

being written more likely to alienate a potential reader from outside the literary academy. It is this kind of writing that I worry about when considering the idea of an autonomous 'literary field'. In its determined promulgation of specialised language, its astonishing lack of wit or irony ('John Tranter writing about [...]. John Tranter might be considered an exception, but I'm not sure ...') and its pervading sense of high-minded seriousness, it made me wonder if the writers were not like adherents of some gnostic sect seeking to articulate their search for the numinous through their 'belief' in literary theory. For myself, I recall the opening of Brecht's last poem: 'And I always thought: the very simplest words/ Must be enough'.

Though all I am noting here might simply add up to a difference in taste, in turning to the future of the press, it is heartening to hear Musgrave articulate his hope that Puncher and Wattmann will continue to publish literary biography and scholarly criticism of a general rather than strictly academic nature. He is also keen to make the point that the press is striving to find as wide an audience as possible for its fiction list. In order for the press to continue at all, however, the practical side of the venture presents a constant challenge. Though turnover has increased by 500% since 2009, there is still a lot of work to be done to make sure the press goes forward on an even financial keel. Part of Musgrave's vision for the future is the establishment of a Puncher and Wattmann literary trust fund that would enable philanthropic donations to be made tax-free. A 'Friends of P and W' could be established to encourage regular donations. The necessity for such a strategy is predicated upon the unpredictable future of funding from the Australia Council and indeed on the unpredictable future of the Australia Council itself.

One of the practical difficulties going forward is a direct consequence of the success of the enterprise. Authors who have been published by Puncher and Wattmann understandably want to make the press their home. Keeping up with the output of these writers and having the resources and capacity to also expand the list is a constant challenge. Over the last few years, the press has aimed to publish about twelve titles a year, but this has resulted in the accumulation of a backlog of some thirty-six titles. Accordingly, sixteen titles appeared last year, and with the help of Australia Council funding, Musgrave is hopeful that the remainder will be published as soon as possible.

One senses that the burden of pressure of running the press is considerably lightened by the team of friends helping Musgrave keep the company afloat. Anne Vickery is now the poetry editor while Ed Wright edits the fiction (Musgrave talks enthusiastically about new forthcoming novels by Subash Jaireth and Philip Salom). Andy Kissane helps out with publicity. Matthew Holt is responsible for design and Meredith Kidby manages the website. None of this work is paid.

As our conversation moved towards a close, Musgrave voiced his hopes that he might sometime soon be able to take a sabbatical from running the press. Despite his energy and commitment, it is impossible not to detect an element of weariness. After all, running Puncher and Wattmann is not his full-time occupation; Musgrave also lectures in Creative Writing at Newcastle University, and, of course, is also engaged in writing his own work. I ask about the impact of the press on the writing of his own poetry, and he says he reckons he's a book or two behind where he might otherwise be. Given the quality of his work, this seems a considerable

loss. On the other hand, we can hope that if he is granted his wished-for sabbatical, the ground might be made up.

Though he speaks of the interest and rewards of the enterprise —not least of which are the friendships he's made—he also admits that running the press is tough and has come at some personal cost. 'You can't be cavalier', he says; 'you have to care'. He accepts that authors are 'demanding', even believes they should be so in respect for their work. But when unspecified 'falling-outs' have occurred, he has been led to question whether the enterprise has been worthwhile. On the other hand, he expresses the wish that Puncher and Wattmann might continue to thrive and outlive him. With a soft ironic chuckle, he suggests his founding and running of the press constitutes 'a weird martyrdom'. I think it's a remarkable, not to say heroic, achievement.

Musgrave is sanguine about the position of poetry within Australia but admits its relationship to an audience is problematic. He is of the opinion that this is 'an extraordinary time for poetry' and, remarking on the extraordinary dynamism in the field, suggests there are more top-level practitioners in poetry than prose. Nevertheless, he admits that reading poetry doesn't form an integral part of most literate individuals' experience. Wouldn't it be good, he suggests, if the big newspapers would give a double page spread to say six poets and recommend them to the wider public. If they only did that once a year, it would be something. It certainly would. In the meantime, if you want to check out some of the finest poetry being written in Australia, I suggest the Puncher and Wattmann website is a good place to start.

Afterword

As *Australian Poetry Journal* goes to press, Puncher & Wattmann's bestselling titles (well over 1000 copies) include *Motherlode: Australian Women's Poetry 1986–2008*; *The Puncher & Wattmann Anthology of Australian Poetry*; and Alex Jones's novel *Helen Garner and the Meaning of Everything*. Poetry titles stand at 84, with a further six forthcoming by the end of 2015. Many titles have sold in excess of the standard print run figure stated in the essay, and exceptional sales include Carol Jenkins' *Fishing in the Devonian*, Andy Kissane's *Out to Lunch*, Ken Bolton's *Sly Mongoose*, Bruce Dawe's *Slo-Mo Tsunami*, Sarah Day's *Tempo*, and Alex Skovron's *Towards the Equator*.

Joe Dolce

The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, striped and lean,
Marsupial thylacine,
What immortal mind might think
To make one such as you extinct?

Blame the bounties, blame the dogs,
Blame the sawn and rolling logs,
Blame disease, the human slur,
No one really knows for sure.

Some say the last one of its kin,
Went by the name of Benjamin.
No proof or records of that tale:
The photographs suggest female.

In what bush, in what brush,
In what dry Eucalyptus,
Nocturnal hunter, quiet and shy,
Hid thy graceful symmetry?

Tyger Tyger, striped and lean,
Marsupial thylacine,
Did we glimpse thee on that track?
Perhaps a clone will bring you back.

Kit Kelen

In my Incunabula

TV was eternity.
There was always the promise of snow.

Fingers ribbon black with fiddling,
type and leading shaky.
Some characters filled in,
keys stuck.

I never had a golfball
or anything selectric.

I was scribe of the old school,
still scribble to this day.

Kettle and fan for company.
No silent night—
my fridge was rocket ship in kitchen then.
Never quite took off.

A record would jump then
sometimes it wouldn't stop.
Into the early hours like that.
Even then were things
you couldn't quite switch off.

And on the screen for company
blue loungeroom bathing of the former age.
No true colour we could call.
Ceiling and floor shrunk.
We stared into the light

of alien transmission.
The vertical,
the horizontal—
our whole world all in thrall
to a simple dying star.

Ivy Alvarez

N

nictate:
winking my cousin's boyfriend
lifted the bottle to his lips then left

I placed my lips to the opening taste what was left behind

nidificate, nidify:
gravid guinea pig
scratches at the wood shavings
bares her teeth and tries to bite when I offer water

later, there is blood and squeakings
small, pink versions of her
a clutch of blind hunger

nidor:
garlic ginger onion frying in oil
a pang and my mouth fills with water
and my plate is as empty as I am

nidus:
eggs like shy white flags
ripen to parasites that itch the skin
stick their wicked needles in suck and feed

nigrescent:
at the world's widest circumference
one minute's sunset
is another minute's pause for breath
and then night

nival:
everything went white
my fingers my lips
even my eyes went cold inside their lids

noctambulist:
I once walked out a sleeping house
to see the moon
trees tethered their shadows
and I was the only one that moved

nodated:
in the churchyard
a tree clad in bark strange lumps like fish
trying to swim out
slowly
through the years

noddle:
the culprit don't believe it
is the one true perpetrator
neither heart nor the gut
not your spine or your spleen

your hands are blameless

the culprit is this

Vanessa Page
Manus

Simmer* | *Shimmer* | *Haze* | *Burn

Ya zamaa jaanukai... Oh my darling...
this distance will not contain me.

Slow Slower Slowest

Click* | *Fizz* | *Wire* | *Cut

Place Displace Misplace

Forget | Forgotten

sabr wukra khodai ba de sha krri
be patient. God will do right by you.

Low Lower Lowest

Ignore* | *Ignite* | *Inflame

Blank Blanker Blankest

yesterday, a tree trunk exploded into knots
and I carved your name upon my body

Quiet | Disquiet

Wire Wired Heywire

Space* | *Between* | *Mirage

Wait. Waiting

bakhshana ghuarrum Forgive me.

Long Longer Longest

Fence | Difference

Differences

Bake* | *Broil* | *Burn

Silence. Silent.

za ta der yadawom... I miss you so much...

Hard Harder Hardest

Rage* | *Cry* | *Sleep

Breathe. Breathing

bakhk'hena ghwaarrem I'm sorry...
I feel you, now, here next to me.

Small Smaller Smallest

Dead* | *Empty* | *Nothing

Drowned.

Drowned.

Drowned.

Forgive me... habiib albi

za la ta sara meena kawom
I will always love you.

Tom Morton

November

Now is the time of jacarandas and the first heat,
Of cold beer in the garden before sunset
Slither of okra on the tongue
A parrot fussing over red flowers

Now you put on your summer dress and green shoots thrust
From the blunt phalli of the frangipani
You won't wear new clothes
And how you love it when the knives are sharp

Now Sydney opens up her arms and says
Come, all is forgiven
Forget your wintry miseries
On my bare breasts

The days get longer, a sudden heatwave
And the outrageous heavy sweetness
Of the jacaranda on the river path
Jiggles the deadlocks on
Whole rooms of me
I've not been in, this long winter

In the quarter hour before ten
The jets fall silent over Sydenham
The sirens recede into Canterbury
Our sons fall exhausted on their beds and sleep

In the mornings you draw the curtains wide
My knees ache, hair's full of seaweed
You survey your breasts and buttocks in the mirror
Like a general watching an orderly retreat

Is gravity stronger on Jupiter?
Asks younger son
So curious, so eager, so disheartened
Older son mumbles and rumbles
Gusts of raw temper like the southerly,
Lightning spiking over Botany Bay

In the twilight
Bougainvillea flickers
Purple
Jacarandas smoulder
Down the hill, on the Lidcombe line
The rails keen and moan under a freight train
Rain
Kisses the river.

Jena Woodhouse

The Zenith

Beneath my balcony, *nerantzis* breathe their bitter-
sweet perfume that blends nostalgia and spring
to haunt old Athens neighbourhoods;

locals shout their morning greetings, all as if they're
hard of hearing; church bells clang, and canine strays
volunteer gruff commentaries.

The mansion on Apollonos has orchards
fruiting on its roof—olives, citrus, laurels
crowd like spectators at balustrades;

roses crane their necks to get a clear view
of the street below, while the mansion's
genteel occupants remain invisible.

On the corner opposite, limber laundry employees
apply themselves with such zeal to the steam-
pressing of shirts and sheets, the rhythm of their work

resembles choreography: a *pas-de-deux* with ironing
boards, agility of hips and waists; their torsos in white
cotton shirts flex gymnasts' chests and shoulder blades;

deft hands reach out to empty sleeves as if
in an embrace; steam condenses on *The Zenith's*
windows like a water wraith, transforming
it from sweaty corner laundry to dance studio,
transmogrifying routine tasks to ergonomic art.

Athens, April 2015

(nerantzi: bitter-orange tree)

PS Cottier

Secondary ghosts

These are the small, mean spirits
who leave mysterious messages
on devices, translating speech
into no known language;
groff nable malp en dink?
This is no technical glitch,
but a pathetic attempt at haunting.

Secondary ghosts are a fading
of something already faded.
A memory of a scream become
a half-heard whisper—
a forgotten song with bad lyrics.
They cast no shadow,
or possibility of shadow.

These are not lions of other realms,
bursting onto the mind's savannah.
They aspire to the condition
of invisible hamsters, and strain
to leave bad smells in kitchens.
The mischief of rats is beyond them,
and their passing ruffles no hair.

They dwell just to the east of nothing,
a quiet transparent punctuation
half felt in life's written world.
In a rare moment of visibility,
they may manage to leave a mark.
Tiny passing of a secondary ghost
dwells, perhaps, at a sentence's end.

Jordie Albiston

Strontium

Sr– George Bush said ‘we are a nation of communities a brilliant diversity spread like
stars like a thousand points of light in a broad & peaceful sky’ Jr George Bush said ‘I’m
the commander see I don’t need to explain I do not need to explain why I say things’
she lies on her back watching the weirdness unfold in the air wanting an explanation sometimes men are highly reactive turn yellow & quickly decay he-is-not-he-is-not-one-of-them
she prays

January first & sorrow sorrow for the year & all that is gone ebola souls polio souls terror souls Gamboru Ngala-Mali-Jos etc Korean ferry MV Sewol Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 Air Algérie Flight 5017 Indonesia AirAsia Flight 8501 this-is-our-world IPCC severe pervasive irreversible ISIS Iraq Nigerian schoolgirls o Operation Protective Edge! o peace unobtainium! Crimea-Ukraine-Bangkok-Baghdad badness badness badness to mourn the first of January & an attempt at joy for the bits of good that got through a beatified Pope a few whales saved a FIFA World Cup the Philae probe landing on Comet 67P is it enough is it enough to love & be loved to have a life to be alive will isotope 90 always persist will our hearts have the heft to resist the new year is here MMXV 2015th of CE & AD 15th of the 3rd millennium the 21st century 5th of our time together today is a normal Gregorian Thursday to my right is a rock what does it look like to my left is the churning sea o 2015 what will you bring even your name has that post-apocalyptic ring like a John Wyndham tome or a stern Doomsday trope who are you & can you offer it {hope}

Šime Knežević
That I might fill your absence

That I might fill your absence, outline
Your body within the omission

That the space is blank, open,
Or is your blankness, openness—

You've receded in the chronological distance

It's characteristic of me to go back

I was influenced by you, your enunciation
Shaped my voice, there was gravity

I feel your body influence,
as it was wrapped stimulated
around mine, pushing me in a sway

I see this memory dimming, I see
its trajectory, omega point

I am looking for you
beneath the surface of this poem

I want you to emerge
from the smoke, the hallway
the snow, the black and white
the cheering crowd, the silent
grassland, the dining room

Alison Wong

Autumn, Shanghai

plane leaves turn, begin
to fall—a migrant sweeps
with a sorghum broom

others plant *Golden Week*
flowers—purple yellow
red flags in the breeze

over smooth stone paving
a calligrapher paints, dips
his long brush

with water

zuo zuo zuo yihuir—
sit sit sit awhile

a white butterfly, a black butterfly

erhu, wooden flute
in the pavilion a man, a woman

sing *Heaven's Road*

camphor trees now bereft
of cicadas—I hear

fathers plant a tree
at the birth of each daughter

watch them grow, fashion
a camphorwood chest

I have no daughter

along the wide path—mothers
fathers grandmothers chatter

over advertisements
for marriage clipped
to open umbrellas

male born 1989 Shanghai residency
something I cannot read

¥4,000/month
moral character something I have
to look up in the dictionary

female born 1983
US post-graduate studies?
own apartment something

seeking moral character
something something

a man appears, speaks
in dialect something something

but I am only reading—please
I am trying so hard to read

something something something he says
moral character something

Does he think I am here for my son?

Ni duo da? he asks—How old are you?
You laogong ma?—Have you a husband?

(Oh)

You, I say—I have

Sorry sorry sorry his first words in English

someone is taking a photograph
someone is having a photograph taken

the calligrapher is still
painting

something evaporates

like morning

Carolyn Leach-Paholski

Slow Life with Inscrutable Snail

The snail
is a universe without a mind
and I am a mind without a place to be today
at large
in a book that I'm writing
on somewhere else—with someone else in mind.

He has
taken the morning to move between
a potted palm and me
on one foot,
stripped to the waist
like Sisyphus carrying his stone.

In an hour
or so he has made my pot plant an indoor topiary—
a thought balloon above a stunted stem
and nothing can save it now.
His work has been done a bite at a time
and like a film run in reverse—
it's a masterpiece resolved into a doodle.

I am Issa
and feeling uninspired.
I am Bashō on a bad day rewriting Homer as haiku.
I have
sixteen syllables in hand
and a book's worth of words boiled clean of ideas.
The snail is a godsend—today any distraction will do.

As he clips
the Yucca into a cartoon tree
and I watch his work
instead of my own,
it occurs that the snail
would just be a slug without its shell.

I test this idea on him
and he thinks on it as he kneels in his shell,
his upward looking eyes on the glory of slow things.
By the time he is done with my tree
I have uncapped my pen
but the light is poor and the nib bends as I write
into an awkward bow.

Josh Mei-Ling Dubrau

Lines Written in Late Summer, Somewhere between Raworth and Larkin

for Mark Havryliv

Of course, it's Autumn
really—that just makes
the sun-patch more
intense in rarity—and poetry
is that which cannot otherwise
be said

it's not
just that vase, Philip—here's an
earnest phalanx: fragile, piece-
meal on the mantle. Leanig
too far forward. Fingering
the dust, I muse: it would
have left Keats spoilt for choice
had he possessed my heart
for retro-kitsch
as truth

the beach salt
licking lips while washing
up; this house not mine is
camphored, left at times for
weeks enfolded in
the heavy lids of Christ
in every room. Palms
and pussy-willows tucked
behind the frames—this dry
pastoral proves beliefs
will not be shed
in nascence or decay

the oldest
past's packed up for Sunday
use, or propping newer
pasts; a wireless
holds a Lego fa
rmyard holds
a collared shirt that's holding
traces of my perfume
in its folds that, filled out,
held me / holds my

life now
too in slow drops falling
on this otherwise
still pond / a total

stays contained.
Until the snap
of gloves off. History, blue
barrel of a Parker in its face,
is
blown

away

leaving

only
sunlight

on a
sink

Vanessa Proctor

Bathroom Orchid

The phalaenopsis
was an impulse buy,
a small luxury.
A guilty pleasure
placed by the sink
where only I can see,
it counterbalances
reflections of disappointment.
Artifice does not feature
in its language,
it has no critical eye.
Veins of amaranth course
through its petals
which curl towards me,
reaching out its stem
of delicate hearts
and slowly opening buds.
With its glossy leaves
and velvet tongue
it knows exactly
how to be.

Essay

The Raw and the Cooke

RD Wood

> Cold as myth.
> —Stuart Cooke, 'Return'

Stuart Cooke is a well-travelled poet. Although he now resides in Brisbane, where he is a lecturer in creative writing at Griffith University, he draws upon the Kimberley and Chile in his writing. From this experience, his project as a poet, critic and editor could be said to be one of decentring Australian poetics, of taking it away from its power bases in Sydney and Melbourne and situating it in far less familiar spaces. In this essay, I will focus on three of his works: *Departure Into Cloud, Bulu Line* and *Speaking the Earth's Languages*. While my essay is in three distinct parts, corresponding to the three books, I return to certain themes and questions throughout. In considering Cooke's works together, I want to acknowledge his important contribution to poetry in Australia. But his works are simply a starting point, a place of departure, towards a different ecosystem than what we currently have.

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Last time I went to Broome, I found myself at Krim Benterrak's house. We were talking about painting and how he had found colour in the Kimberley to have a different, though reminiscent, hue to that of his birth country of Morocco. We were talking, in other words, about the spectrum that was immediately available to us. Benterrak is the other collaborator in Stephen Muecke and Paddy Roe's celebrated *Reading the Country*, and I was reminded of this conversation as I read the poem 'Continental Loam' from Stuart Cooke's 2013 chapbook *Departure Into Cloud*. Loam, of course, has a resonance with the Kimberley. One immediately thinks of the rich red earth that is common there and the rammed earth homes that dot the new suburbs around Broome town. More specifically, I thought of Benterrak when I read the line

> makes shut and line, subsist vein: Billiton
> mines, fosforo, trails de fuego magnet smack.

The reference to 'Billiton/mines' recalls the great debates of land usage in Benterrak's home. But more specifically, and referring back to the question of hue, the word 'fosforo' introduces us to Spanish within an English language poem. This introduction is followed by 'de fuego' in the same line and the words 'espejos comiendose, opala y arbol' in the following stanza. This use of colours, so to speak, other than those we are normally accustomed to in our everyday language is striking because it introduces us to new sounds and shapes and possibilities. It will be noted in the two lines quoted above there is musicality, internal rhyme, a soft sounding middle followed by the hard sounding 'smack'. But to me, it is the Spanish that is most striking.

My first thought was: what does this Spanish word mean? And, subsequently, why is it here as a shape on the page and a sound when I read it aloud? What is to be gained from using 'fosforo' rather than 'phosphorus'? There are, of course, other meanings to fosforo than phosphorous, including being a drink in Mexico, and so they are not equivalent, not a direct meaning for meaning exchange. We also get

a different sound at the end of the word, which is important for how it works with 'fuego' later in the line. But it is also a question of how we signal to the reader a poetic device that has aesthetic and political implications. To ask it in another way, what if rather than using gouache to resemble the colours of the land, we used the raw material to paint with? What if Benterrak used ochre rather than reddish brown in tubes bought from art stores? How could we integrate found materials and what might this mean for Cooke's poetry as expressed in *Departure Into Cloud*?

While to some extent all language used in poetry is found, especially rather than lost, the language found here in Spanish and English is indebted to ecopoetics as it currently stands within a transnational domain. To dwell first on Cooke's use of Spanish, which is not altogether new in Australian poetry, we must consider what it is to use languages other than English. My issue is not with whether or not one should or should not, and I do not intend the following remarks to be prescriptive, but thinking through Cooke's work can prompt discussion of certain issues in Australian letters that are somewhat submerged. As will be discussed at length later, Cooke has significant connections to the Kimberley as well as Chile. But to my knowledge, there are no Indigenous language words in *Departure into Cloud*. Some Indigenous words have been so profoundly assimilated as to be part of Australian English—'kangaroo', which Michael Farrell has discussed at length in his essay, 'Affective and Transnational: the Bounding Kangaroo' comes immediately to mind. There are plenty of others too, and we no longer think of them as Aboriginal. But what about words in languages that defamiliarise by their newness and which throw English back onto itself so we realise that we are, in fact, in a constructed system of signs that is implicated with a whole unsettled history?

To re-phrase this, there are Spanish words in Cooke's poetry, but what of words in Kimberley languages? The point might not be that Spanish is foreign, but that it is not foreign enough to defamiliarise. It shares after all a certain colonial axis with English, which Cooke, in his monograph, *Speaking the Earth's Languages*, is aware of. In returning though to Cooke's poetry through Benterrak's painting, what might a Jindyworobak project for the 21st century look like? Notwithstanding the critique that asserts using Indigenous languages to be appropriation reminiscent of colonialism, we could imagine something might be different if non-indigenous Australians took a native bilingualism seriously. Poets can learn Walpiri, Ngoongar, Yolngu not only for the purposes of basic communication ('where fish?') but also aesthetic consideration ('fish is nice'). For example, there is no fitting substitute to adequately translate 'jalujulara' from Ngarluma. For its sense of meaning read the introduction of AP Thomas and Carl von Brandenstein's *Taruru*, but it could also be useful in a rhyme with *ngurra* meaning 'country' or any number of words in English.

To that end, the sonic resonance of many Pama Nyungan languages is very different from English—the twisty rs, the 'ng-vowel' combination, the subtly repetitive internal rhyme of words. All of which are sounds that poets could make available within a work in English, much as 'fosforo' is used instead of 'phosphorus'. Using these is like using colours in a painting that one didn't have available before—what might ochre be, say and do on a white canvas? Or what might neon enable on a bark painting? We could wish it were not a case of ochre on white

canvas, given the power dynamic of this, but the brute material facts of Australian life suggest that this is more likely than vice versa. At the moment official verse culture in this country is almost all white canvas, and when it is colour, it is not often ochre, and when it is ochre, it is more often prose. Poetry and poetics need more ochre. Without it, we are missing shapes and sounds and combinations of letters that we didn't even realise we had.

If we took bilingualism and Indigenous languages seriously we might see Ted Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia* as part of a tradition rather than as exceptional and rare. That, I think, would be altogether a good thing. And it is Strehlow rather than Rex Ingamells to whom we should look for 'Jindys' now, given his ability in Arrernte rather than his projection of an idea of what indigeneity was. Cooke could come from a different place than Ingamells, or even the ideographic Ezra Pound with his Chinese characters, but it is not up to non-Indigenous people alone to decide on the shape of the poetry to come, not up to me to say he should use Nyigina or other words in his poems. Not only do I not want to be prescriptive to Cooke, but I also do not want to repeat colonial mistakes of telling Indigenous people how they should use language. It is, though, a conversation involving all kinds of people. To that end, we might not need 'Jindys' today, but we can scarcely stand to lose the words found in languages with a diminishing number of speakers. Poetry may be one way to help keep them vital.

Regardless of the presence of Spanish and the absence of Indigenous languages, Cooke's work can be situated in the burgeoning field of ecopoetics. In 'Return', we read of 'almost country', ice, river, hill, pits, wormed. In 'Departure into Cloud', we read of rivers, reef, dogs, turtles, dogs, waves, dogs, barnacles, mountains, clouds. In 'An Ecology', we read of mountains, coasts, ocean, mangroves, crustacean, ocean, magpies, mammal, red gum. Each of them signposts and refers to the natural world and to other works for an ecopoetics reader. This is not nature as pure, idyllic, gentle, pastoral but compromised, threatening, worked over, powerful and mediated. Cooke writes on the inside flaps that these poems were written 'with' various natural places.

In regard to formal inventiveness, Cooke's work is somewhat in the middle, being neither conservative nor radical. It is not sonnets nor concrete nor conceptual, and while these poems would not be out of place in Corey Wakeling and Jeremy Balius' *Outcrop*, they are not as daring as, say, Astrid Lorange's work from the same volume. Care though has been taken in the visual arrangement of the words on the page, especially the final, page long stanza of the final poem, 'Nephology'. From this, one could imagine a more fully developed ecopoetics of the concrete—prints of the lines from tree rings and word lines arranged to resemble them for example; or an ecopoetics of the conceptual—for example, a list poem of common plants found in the poet's backyard written in various font sizes to convey what the seasons are rather than a lyric recounting the feeling evoked by chickweed in summer. One could also imagine an ecopoetics that paid attention to the material of the book—handmade work on recycled paper made on recycled presses, vegetable inks. My point is that while Cooke is an able hand within a given set of constraints, we need to see what happens when we push those constraints far more. What happens when we say the chapbook as part of an English

dominated official verse culture itself needs to be redefined? Cooke gestures toward a different orientation in his poetry, but I think the inventive elements can go quite a bit further. Benterrak, in his painting, is not invested in realism, and his colours represent those of the Kimberley, but they are somewhat weighed down by Impressionism. If we integrate not so much the Indigenous forms of the Kimberley (body painting, rock art) but the material of it, we might find an altogether different craft. That is where Cooke's *Bulu Line* is important.

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becoming rai
racing through sky
flying toward us
from far away

('Verse 2', Bulu Line)

There is an apocryphal story, often told, about Rover Thomas that recounts him standing before a Mark Rothko canvas and stating, 'who's the fella that paints like me?' This story suggests not only an inversion of assumed time and influence (i.e., not 'who's the fella I paint like?') but also a relationship between Indigenous and Western contemporary art that visual art critics and curators have unpacked over and over. But, if Brion Gysin is right that 'poetry is fifty years behind painting', what are we to do, as poetry readers, when we see Rover and Rothko next to each other? Or, as the case may be, what are we to do when we read *George Dyungayan's Bulu Line: A West Kimberly Song Cycle* next to Ron Silliman or any other paradigmatic metropolitan writer?

There certainly seems to be something to suggest that poetry lags behind painting in regards to the criticism of Aboriginal writers working with a more traditional solute than others. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra are correct to highlight that there is a continuum between 'contemporary' and 'traditional' writing, but when we read Samuel Wagan Watson or Ali Coby Eckermann, we are in a different field than the songpoetry found more commonly in anthropological journals. It is as if we are watching *Charlie's Country* rather than *Ten Canoes* or maybe even *A Walbiri Fire Ceremony: Ngatjakula*. But there has been no corresponding boom in traditional poetry or poetics compared to painting or art criticism, something pointed out by Stephen Muecke in his introduction to this volume. Leaving aside whether this is a good or bad thing and whether the economies and ecosystems of poetry and painting are actually comparable, the absence of this work is noteworthy precisely because of the proliferation of writing by Indigenous authors and notwithstanding the success of poets as part of this too. Where are, we might ask, the poetry books that go with the bark paintings? This is an especially apt question to ask given the huge 'library' of oral songlines and songpoetry that exists in Indigenous languages all around Australia and which remains a vital part of communities' lives. Moreover, criticism, as has been noted by Philip Mead, often

does not keep pace with poetry. Perhaps this is nowhere more evident than in the songlines and songpoetry domain. The question remains then: what are we to make of *Bulu Line* in a way that speaks back to the dominant mode of poetics in Australia?

I think it's valuable, in the first instance, to consider the work itself—its formal qualities, its content—rather than the identity context and the social relations of its production. There are seventeen poems/verses in the cycle, split into two parts. The first part numbers eight verses and the second nine. The length of them changes, but Cooke's translations/interpretations are approximately half to three quarters of a page, with variations in the size of font throughout. The first part is essentially a road trip, or a journey story, that begins with leaving country and ends with a return home. The second part focuses on the weather and dancing, being in part a meta-comment on the poems themselves and their open/public status. There are four main voices in the writing: Ray Keogh, Paddy Roe, George Dyungayan and Stuart Cooke and two appearances by Butcher Joe Nangan and one by Nellie Nadyuway. The poems appear in the local language (Nyigina), with explanations and commentary (a sort of 'ordinary criticism' in Broome Aboriginal English), narrative clarifications (by Ray Keogh) and finally Cooke's translations/interpretations.

Focusing on Cooke's contributions, rhyme, with varying degrees of trueness, is a dominant device (see: Verse 1: out/about; Verse 2: snipe/collide; Verse 3: making/travelling). There are variations on repetition, with slight changes to the way something is narrated within each verse. Its lack of true repetition may appeal to some, but I found its absence notable. Soren Kierkegaard's dictum that 'repetition is the reality and seriousness of life' seems apt in much Indigenous song. To jettison this does not test the reader's limit, which is a disservice. The lines are short—often no more than a few words—giving the reader a sense of disjointedness and constant pausing. Consider 'Verse 2':

> guwararrirarri yinanydina
> dyidi yarrabanydyina
> nanbalinblai yinanydina

Cooke:

> a flock of snipes
>
> flying toward us
>
> wait! they're rai
>
> fast approaching
>
> we nearly collide
>
> their bellies like birds'
>
> wait their flying
>
> belly-up

becoming rai
racing through sky
flying towards us
from far away
birds becoming rai
no more distance
nearly on top of us
watch out!
the snipes are
flying toward us
we watch snipe become rai
flying belly up...

What is previously a compact three-line, six-word, rhyming stanza becomes a twenty- line, sixty-word poem, with varying fonts, which is a major innovation in songpoetry/songcycle transcription. Cooke discusses at length in the introductory remarks the issue of translation and highlights how he is not trying to articulate an essence behind the words. Instead, using contemporary translation studies, he emphasises that the translation must deal with a surface and a surfeit of meaning on its own terms. It is not simply saying this word means 'snipe' in an essential and referential way, but articulating what the snipe as word is doing, in a different voice, with a different formal quality. The debate then, as a translator, is not about essence, or even meaning versus sense approaches that recall Cicero, but about the artifice of language itself.

We could talk at further length about the poetics of these poems, but in highlighting these few aspects (rhyme, repetition) I wanted to approach these poems in a different way to the editors and publishers of *Bulu Line*. In contrast to starting with the poems, the book begins with a full thirty-six pages of acknowledgement, preface, explanation, situation, citation and synopsis. We get to the poems only halfway through the book, and then they are over far too soon. What would this work be like if there were more poetry? Or, perhaps thinking through the constraints of publishing and working with what we have before us, what if, quite simply, the poems came first and the analysis second? What if the readers were able to make their own minds up about the poems rather than being told what they are and how to read them? All the labour of informing and framing the work means we are being encouraged to read the poems in a particular way and situate Cooke as a privileged mediator. We all have frames that we bring to the reading of any particular poems, and, of course, the editor has a certain closeness to and expertise of this material. But, what of being left to decide our own view of the poem? Why should I not get George Dyungayan's words first rather than Stephen Muecke's and Stuart Cooke's? It is as if the paternal relations of the colonial situation have been translated to the writer-reader dynamic—we need to be told how important this work is. All of which prompts

the question: is there a latent fear that the poems are actually, after all this, not that powerful?

I do think the poems have a certain power precisely for their formal, stylistic and content contributions, which I discussed earlier. But how does one justify such a subjective claim? Speaking in an undeleted, or personal, manner, I came to Aboriginal songpoetry, including songlines, through Ngarluma family members of mine. Carl von Brandenstein's *Taruru* was the entry point even after I had an initial encounter with Jerome Rothenberg, compiler of the anthology *Technicians of the Sacred* (University of California 1968), which contains songpoetry amid a whole host of other 'world' poetries. My involvement in songlines rather than songpoetry—and there is, I think, a rather important distinction to be made, a distinction that is somewhat glossed in *Bulu Line*—has been peripheral. But I have heard live the personally authored song forms of *junba* in the Kimberley and *tabi* in the Pilbara and attended male initiation ceremonies, including my brother-in-law's, in Roebourne. But, for the most part, my involvement with songlines has been mediated—homemade recordings from lawmen, archival tapes, AIATSIS publications. Songlines are for the most part held in trust and are often closed in contrast to many public songs. In any case, *Bulu Line*, if it is a songline (as Deborah Bird Rose suggests on the back cover) or a *nurlu* (as suggested in the introduction) or inhabits some space within/besides these 'ideal types' of categorisation, would seem to have a different set of relations to that of liberal Western authorship and ownership, the precise calibrations of which depend on its form. The author is dead then, but not as we know it. That George Dyungayan and Stuart Cooke's names appear on the cover suggests a different process than older published songlines, which involve an attributed, usually non-Indigenous author and an unnamed primary interlocutor. When one reads further, it is apparent *Bulu Line* is a work of collaboration between many people, reminiscent of *Reading the Country*. It would be incorrect and vulgar to point out, Mudrooroo Narrogin-like, that it is compromised because its predominantly non-Aboriginal editorial, publishing and readership exploit 'blackfellas'. There is a set of important social relations here and this is, perhaps, an exciting contribution *Bulu Line* makes to official verse culture without us necessarily worrying about the process of shifting commodities from periphery to metropole. I do hope though that it sells well in its West Kimberley heartland and that Cooke's essay at the front changes the discourse of reflection in the book's home country. What is gestured towards, however, and what to me seems to be the most thrilling aspect of talking with Indigenous people in my own experience of songs and an area of great potential, is the sort of 'ordinary criticism' that accompanies these texts. Everyone has a critical eye, everyone has an opinion, and people do not simply sing and forget to interpret the poetics of the verse. Roe and Nangan have their own poetics in this (particularly Verse 9, 13, 14). Drawing on this to critique what official criticism is in Australia would be is a major contribution of *Bulu Line*.

Read alongside ethnopoetics, particularly Rothenberg's work, *Bulu Line* has a certain, focused, close-in power and definiteness. But read alongside anthropological archives or ethnomusicological studies, both of which offer substantial and

involved variations on songline and songpoetry transcription, it seems less revelatory. Berndt and Strehlow both offer substantial work, and there is that of Alan Marett and Sally Treloyn more recently. But these have rarely been read as poetry. Re-reading their texts as poetry opens up new possibilities—not only for thinking of where *Bulu Line* fits but also through poetics itself, particularly in its Zukofskian upper register where it approaches 'music'. What songlines or songpoetry as poetry might do is recalibrate the limits of repetition, the range of sounds that count as rhyme, the importance of sequencing as well as our concepts of nature poetry, ecopoetics and surrealism at the very least. If, as Les Murray has said, we must pay deference to the senior culture, there are worse places to start than *Bulu Line*. But in the archives and in communities, there are far more places too.

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In Chilean-Australian artist Juan Davila's painting 'Sentimental History of Australian Art' from 1982 and acquired by the Museum of Contemporary Art in 1995, prominent painters' names are written, their iconography is appropriated, and the colours are garish and bright. The politics is complicated but displayed clearly as a white man stitches the leg of an Aboriginal man in traditional body paint wearing a Ned Kelly helmet. Sentimental painting in Australia is the object of scorn and colonial relations contemplated. The point might not only be that sentimentality is to be mocked, but that the form the mocking takes needs to matter as well. If *Departure Into Cloud* engages with an ecopoetic register that plays with some parts of form and a morsel of bilingualism, the form of the academic monograph is unchallenged in *Speaking the Earth's Languages* even as it is thoroughly bilingual in content. Monographs, particularly on poetics as it exists in institutions of higher education, have been for the most part formally conservative. *Speaking the Earth's Languages* has no excessive and deconstructive use of footnotes à la David Foster Wallace or elliptical structural devices *à la* Charles Bernstein. Despite its formal stagnation, the content is potentially revelatory in the context of Australian official verse culture.

Judging by the reigning paradigm of published poetry reviews, official verse culture in Australia is still in thrall to the UK, Ireland and the US. The world in this configuration is decidedly hegemonic, and this observation holds, for the most part, for those from *Quadrant* to *Overland*. Australian readers are very rarely assumed to engage in a sustained manner with those in our region or the Caribbean or even Russia for that matter. Reviewers do not suggest that John Kinsella's latest work recalls Caesar Vallejo for example, let alone more contemporary poets in India or Madagascar. Even Bonny Cassidy, in her response to Andrew Riemer, argues that

> if criticism ignores the relationship between poetry written in Australia and correlative literary traditions in the modern English-speaking world, it has little hope of properly considering how contemporary local poetry comprises its own multifaceted tradition, ancient and modern, streaming in through various linguistic, political and cultural forces.

As true as Cassidy's statement is, we need to think of traditions in translation. What of all the languages other than English that matter for poetry written in Australia? This Anglophonic hegemony is not aided by the structural barriers to 'world' poetry here—educational regimens that teach Shakespeare and the Romantics in high school, and Australian greats and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E in university, a lack of bilingualism and funding for Asian and Indigenous languages in particular and a self-perpetuating myth of isolation from our roots in Europe that lingers in the dustier corners. *Speaking the Earth's Languages* is a sharp and subtle rebuke to this, and to my mind, Cooke's strongest contribution out of the three considered here. Given his position at a university, there is no reason that his innovations cannot, or indeed have not, been disseminated in a more structural manner than this book alone, which is something I would personally welcome.

Although each of the chapters on individual poets is strong, there are problems, particularly of frame, with Speaking the Earth's Languages. It is interesting to me that Cooke chooses to start his work with the theory rather than the poetry. Analogous to *Bulu Line*, we are being taught how to read from the beginning rather than being left to encounter the material ourselves. I understand that this is one point of criticism—of being taught how to read a poem—but by having an epigraph from Maurice Blanchot, we are, paradoxically, very far from Indigenous poetry itself. The second epigraph, taken from Rothenberg, is the same as Stephen Muecke's in 'The Great Tradition' (published in *Cross/Cultures* a year later in 2014) and also directs us away from the poetry regardless of Rothenberg's status as ethnopoetic authority. Of course we need critical distance. But we also need to foreground Indigenous voices *as a type of poetics itself*.

Cooke argues that

> The central argument of this book is that a nomadic poetics is essential for a genuinely postcolonial form of habitation, or a habitation of colonised landscapes that doesn't continue to replicate colonialist ideologies involving indigenous dispossession and environmental exploitation. (5)

It is doubtful who would agree with 'indigenous dispossession' and 'environmental exploitation', but nomadic poetics might not be the most appropriate form of engagement for people from, say, Ngarluma country, given the different experiences of life there. It remains unclear, for example, how long is too long to stay in a place to be considered a nomad or what sort of mining agreement is amenable to an aspirational life for an Australian Indigenous community. While there may be a first order sociological connection between nomads and hunter/gatherer societies, and hence account for the deployment of Pierre Joris's nomadics, I am interested both in what the *zeitgeist* is at a broader level and how a specific type of poetics can change material conditions. Poetry's claim must be as a way of creating critical consciousness that refuses binarism as well as easy foundationalism. If 'it is crucial that the nomad poet never sit still' (32) why must we 'rest' at camp at the end of a day's walk? The question, as I signposted before, is one of time. This is where Indigenous connection to country

is paramount—there is authority to long connection—and while I do not want to set up an ill-conceived counterpoint to nomadism here, nomadism as Cooke reads it might not be an adequate discursive tool for categorising a multiplicity of Indigenous experiences.

Speaking the Earth's Languages is also an application of Gilles Deleuze, and to a lesser extent Felix Guttari. There is, if not a hegemony, at least an influential presence of Deleuze in Australian poetics from Muecke to Mead to Clemens, as well as in other disciplines—in the work of Ian Buchanan and Ian Cook, for example. But here, I felt that Cooke's reading *sans* Deleuze was more impressive. His chapter on Judith Wright is engaging, nuanced and generative, and though not without some reservations, I was for the most part convinced. It is telling that this is the chapter when he performs close reading rather than invoking a metropolitan vocabulary as a method of explanation. Readers with an interest in Australian poetry will want to seek *Speaking the Earth's Languages* out for this chapter on Judith Wright alone, but in re-framing Australian poetry, we should also turn to the very good chapters on Paddy Roe and the Kimberley, and Lionel Fogarty. Finally, one small but noticeable problem was the overzealous copyediting that had changed Krim's name to Kim throughout.

In juxtaposing Fogarty and Paulo Huirimilla, Cooke makes the identity of the writer important in a functional way—it is important to connect two Indigenous experiences for a political imperative. But also, in negation, we can see the resilience of nationalism as a category. We can consider Australian poets together because we all vote, we are all concerned with a shared polis. That is not to say there is not a transnational public space, say 'the West' or 'former colonies' or 'settler societies', but that in invoking this we might not have a political capacity that is immediately useful. It may be a question of responding to, say, multinational corporations via the mechanisms of the nation state, including taxation and legislation, rather than the transnational, ineffectual resolutions of the United Nations. Either way, categorisation glosses some important aspects of lived experience—in Australia we all vote, but we don't all vote in the seat of Curtin, which is to say perhaps you and I are less connected than Melbourne and Copenhagen, that we can do more travelling within the nation than beyond it. In other words, there is less distance to go between Kings Cross and Charing Cross than Kings Cross and Fitzroy Crossing. This is essentially a cultural observation rather than an economic or political one. And it is with politics that poetry and poetics must concern itself if it is to matter. This is not so much a question of politicians writing poetry, of reviewing Clive Palmer or Bob Brown, but of thinking through the affiliations, organisations, structures that have been assumed as natural, of thinking then of a critique of legislation as the unacknowledged poetry of history. This is where Cooke's criticism is important, of poetics as a critique of nationalism without necessarily relying on the substitution of Western, bourgeois liberalism, petulant anarchism or self-indulgent and myopic libertarianism. *Speaking the Earth's Languages* relies on categories that re-impose, or cannot escape from, the colonial typologies, but it resists and changes them in an exciting and structural way.

Before we go any further, it is important to note the resilience and capriciousness of the nation. The nation has always engaged with trade, and so we should study the interstitial spaces a la Paul Gilroy. The nation has always been porous and so we should study the liminal borderlands *à la* Gloria Anzaldua, someone whose absence from Cooke's work is felt keenly. But at the level of representation, this has not always been the case. Poetry, and poetics, as the helpmate of nationalism is long past. But in everyday life and important rituals, people are remarkably nationally bound, and poetry and poetics is grounded by this fact. I am not an apologist for the nation, but I think the work of poetry, as the research and development wing of language, is about critique rather than authentic, heartfelt, beautiful self-expression that is blind to social reality. 'Indigenous' might not be a term from which we can study together Mapuche and Kimberley, but in studying them together, we get towards an Indigenous poetics that takes nomadism as a precursor and burnishes the kind of critique Cooke has been motioning towards.

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It might not so much be a question of needing the publication of more Indigenous poets, more George Dyungayans, though I would encourage that precisely because it would change the discourse. It might be about reframing certain language acts to be poetry. Hence, we might talk about writing in anthropological journals as poetry. For example, we might find embedded in *Oceania* songpoems that were recorded as folklore or just plain data, which may in turn defamiliarise our current concepts of the history of indigenous writing. Secondly, it may also be about resituating existing poetry in a different field. Hence, we might put Oodgeroo Noonuccal in a global context of decolonisation as Ben Etherington has suggested, which may alter our reading of her and of postcolonial studies in general. This is where *Speaking the Earth's Languages* becomes important. The aim then is twofold—to redefine what poetry is and what we read Australian poetry as. Connected to the second imperative might be attempts to continue decentring transnationalism away from the UK and North American sphere in order to create a diverse and dynamic *poesis* that opens up and productively redefines our own work. Cooke has started us on that path—with *Bulu Line*, we have new poetry; with *Speaking*, we have a new field. And that is a worthwhile and productive endeavour, which hopefully will bring new and old work into the light, and which will continue to inform Cooke's own poetry, which already has a careful consideration of form and the vast power of potential.

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But then I dreamed the same back
all covered in skin tags
and that was pretty challenging

but I think it was my body
and him sleeping on it
fronting the world

maybe just wanting to
I don't know
the dream is the image

in an upstairs rank of some helpline
was it my happiness?
I don't knit

but I think it was my bed
and him sitting on it
facing the wall

all that stupidity
I relinquish to mindlessness
simplicity and shallowness and smooth geology

and me behind his naked back
I don't know
maybe touching

I did the song of his body
the beautiful silken song
standing up on a platform

all that skin
I resort to metaphor
sun and shade and smooth grass

and me behind his naked breath
I don't knit
maybe testing

Ian C Smith

Cat's Breakfast

I live day-to-day, ritually, I suppose;
slough off sleep, get up, compose our breakfast
bustling creakily, kettle on,
open the back door, light thickening the day.
Miaow, I greet our cat, to feed him.
Mrkgnao, he responds ghosting inside.
I have started re-reading Joyce again.

Jonathan Hadwen

Coming to Bed Late After Reading Wang Wei

It was a warm day.
I took the morning off work
just to be with the rain.
You were sombre when you left.
One of us
    has to take this world seriously.

*

There is a possum on the roof tonight.
If I ran away into the mountains
how many animals
    would share my hut?

*

I slip into bed.
You were sick today
    and will be grumpy if I wake you.
Still,
    it's worth it for a kiss.

*

So many things still to say,
about the mess of it,
the mess of me.

I went off into the mountains.
You followed me.
We walked back down together.

Anna Ryan-Punch
All that time

All that time ago we came here
and grew each corner of
the room with tiny wax lights,
suddenly in the biggest space
we had ever seen.

All that time ago we said
to hell with the furniture!
then rejoiced in the language
of mattress salesmen, pot plants
and one too few cabinet toggle-bolts.

All that time ago I didn't know
when I would see you next and it
broke something
something fixed
each minute to hour.

All that time ago we
found our jumping-off place.
We did this to become the
kind of people who would
later think it impossible.

Ron Heard

currawongs

they call from the dark
of a fig tree

they call from a high branch
of a hoop pine

they call in flight

rolling rhythms
that could be part of
a sea shanty

five birds
dominate two suburbs

adding consonants I hear
thirty-three thirty-one
thirty-three thirty-one
Dolores Dolores

my mathematical self
wants a more interesting number
can it be sixty-five sixty-one
no
the vowels are insistent
it can only be
thirty-three thirty-one
though another call is
three to the eighth

I think how I love these
random moments of delight

but my sceptical self says
projection personification
what do you know of a bird's mind?

I listen again
without preconceptions

pure listening

(three to the eighth
Dolores Dolores)

unmistakable delight

Brett Dionysius

The Shadow Gallery

for Nathan Shepherdson

It starts with a sun. A cutlass of light
slashes at your head & runs your shadow
up your body's length; a pirate's black flag.

When embracing your lover, your shadows
fall in love again & meld into each other
like droplets of dark water pooling.

Shadows are where the old gods took refuge
hiding in plain sight. They are immortal so
long as there is a body of faith. You are not.

Your shadow sticks to you like a pilot fish
or a lamprey. You sustain it & take it for
a ride. Your shadow cannot carry you.

Gravity does not affect your shadow. It is
not a thing as we know it. It does not have
molecules, only the shadows of molecules.

The fundamental laws that govern
the universe, do not govern it. You are
the event horizon to your own black hole.

When you look up at the night sky
the dark bits you see between the
pinpricks of stars are not shadows.

Shadows are not dark matter.
Shadows are not dark energy.
Shadows are their own quanta.

Your shadow is shackled to you by
leg-irons of light. At night your shadow
escapes only to be caught by dawn.

At dawn your shadow lies around
you like the negative of the chalked
outline of a freshly murdered body.

Often other people's shadows will fall
across yours. There are no sparks as in
the flesh. Only a dark meshing of gears.

Your shadow can walk up walls & cliff-
faces. They are like beetles; electrons are
powerless to keep them from climbing.

In the late afternoon your shadow mutates.
They are dark furred lycanthropes that grow
three times your size & stalk behind you.

Shadows fear total eclipses of the sun;
totality is their version of Armageddon.
They are often black-bagged by the moon.

The sun's atmosphere, its pink corona
is your shadow's idea of God. It's gaseous
core is a searing translation of heaven.

Clouds trick shadows by making them vanish
into the earth's top hat. Who's to say where
the magician's cape ends & its shadow begins?

Your shadow has limbs, a head, a trunk
but no tongue. It is noiseless like Charon's
black sail that propels him across the river Styx.

Your shadow likes to pose with you in photos.
In old age your shadow will even try to prop you up.
In death, your shadow folds around you like a dark wing.

Lorraine Haig

Living in the cracks

after Ali Jane Smith

after Laurie Duggan

I'm starting to imagine my mother's
life is taking a different course.
Was it her or me that lost the car
in the underground carpark? She tells the story.
I am her daughter, is she my child?
Memory unravelling when she tries to recall
the restaurant's name, or the street it's on.
The car wash—she was supposed to remember
how to get there, to wind the windows up.
I'm living in the cracks between two lives
can't bring myself to say she should be assessed.
The missing house keys are found in the grass.
I miss the exit thinking of her and go around again.
Waking to a new day when the earth wobbles.

I'm starting to imagine my mother's
in the underground carpark. She tells the story,
the restaurant's name, or the street it's on.
I'm living in the cracks between two lives.
I miss the exit thinking of her and go around again.
Life is taking a different course
I am her daughter, is she my child?
The car wash—she was supposed to remember,
can't bring myself to say she should be assessed.
Waking to a new day when the earth wobbles.
Was it her or me that lost the car?
Memory unravelling when she tries to recall
how to get there, to wind the windows up.
The missing house keys are found in the grass.

I'm starting to imagine my mother's
waking to a new day when the earth wobbles.
Life is taking a different course,
I miss the exit thinking of her and go around again.
Was it her or me that lost the car?
The missing house keys are found in the grass.
In the underground carpark she tells the story,
can't bring myself to say she should be assessed,
I am her daughter, is she my child?
I'm living in the cracks between two lives.
Memory unravelling when she tries to recall
how to get there, to wind the windows up,
the restaurant's name, or the street it's on.
The car wash—she was supposed to remember.

I'm starting to imagine my mother's
memory unravelling when she tries to recall.
Can't bring myself to say she should be assessed.
Life is taking a different course—
the restaurant's name, or the street it's on,
the missing house keys are found in the grass.
Was it her or me that lost the car?
The car wash—she was supposed to remember.
I miss the exit thinking of her and go around again
in the underground carpark. She tells the story—
how to get there, to wind the windows up.
Waking to a new day when the earth wobbles,
I am her daughter, is she my child?
I'm living in the cracks between two lives.

Eleanor Jackson

Moiré

Though, probably, it's just a rumour
there is a bus driver who says
that there was once seven minutes of

silence at Pine Gap.
Not any particular time ago
that's classified

but the power went out,
as power is always threatening to do
but never doing often enough.

In the poetic pause between
the outage and the backup,
there was a music -

the kind that humans have hardly seen.
Some sort of parallel architecture,
sympathetic and erasing, a void attacking,

reconstructing the night with
silence and confession.
Both of them unhurt, or just unheard.

Wives told husbands they didn't love them
children told parents they hated them
grandparents told the night they'd be happy to die.

Officials said it was only an interference pattern,
the decay of unobserved existence,
not the tree nor the wood nor the falling.

Andy Kissane

Waiting

At the appointed hour the houses migrate,
walking on their pincer legs with the surety
of a crane, taking up different allotments
in the same street. We wake to an aria
spilling from a neighbour's window, thrumming bees
who cannot find their nest, their queen.
A man's barnacled voice counts off the names
of the ships in the bay below, while the scent
of coffee wanders down the cobbled alleyways,
drifts under umbrellas and plays hide and seek
with the vanishing shade. Later, we take out
a rowboat, oars slipping under the glassy surface
of the sea. I scale and gut the fish as you build
a small fire in the bow and we savour the idea
of freshness. Eating the blackened skin reminds me
of the fruit bat who snoozes all day in the jacaranda,
then makes whoopee at night, crying out
in a language that inhabits this space beyond sense.
Apprehension comes slowly, it's a physical thing,
like the heart beating in the chest, the body
awake to the presence of disease, the bluetongue
basking on the sandstone with one eye open.
So much of living involves learning how to wait,
without knowing exactly what we are waiting for.
The purple blossom sticks to the wet bitumen
in a pattern that intrigues, that appears theatrical.
We leave the darkened cinema with our senses
stretched, footsteps echoing insistently behind us,
the headlights of a Volkswagen trailing our car
as we head for home. We manage to lose them
at the traffic lights, wondering if any
Tectonic plates have shifted in our absence, if
our house is where we left it three hours earlier.

John Stokes
She feels him at a seaside motel

That vicious know-all, fright

lights up windows

leaps up to watch

night retake a street

Nothing's changed.

She starts at the pick of
old dreams
shrinks at shadow-voices.

The curves of his buttock

and the moon

are the same

as they always were.

All is what it seems.

Gail Hennessy

Meeting Place

where the wrought iron shadows
lie over the stone floor
the sea rings like a bell

she listens to the sea in his chapped ear
they lie, embraced, their backs to history
the sea spins its mirror over their heads

as the hill and the houses slide
into a chasm of waiting to be something else
a quick grey day of long calling echoes
drifts from far faint hills to catch and fade

the house is smudged with lamps
in a gold skin of light
through the great windows, bright with bottle panes
with dusk and firelight wavering low
the sky darkens like wet cement.

Framework for Cento

1–2	Emily Ballou, 'Definitions for Happiness' from *The Darwin Poems*
3	David Campbell, 'Watercolours'
4–5	Les Murray, 'Cycling in the Lake Country'
6	Jennifer Rankin 'Sea Bundle'
7–8	Jennifer Compton, 'Rongotai'
9–10	Margaret Scott, 'At the Salmon Ponds'
11	Robert Gray, 'Gardenias'
12	Gwen Harwood, 'Carnal Knowledge II'
13	Kenneth Slessor, 'Nuremburg'
14	Christopher Brennan, 'Towards the Source, 30'
15	Kevin Hart, 'The Sea Voyage (Bonnard)'

Dael Allison

Max after surfing

On Olive Cotton's photograph of Max Dupain

summer curls from the page.

he is back, skin taut with salt, half-smoked
cigarette clenched in the vice of two fingers.
blood still pounds to the muscular clutch
of waves. back, in the dim room where she

sleeps. naked. humid. sheets rumpled with sex
pushed back. he grasps the wooden bed end
half turns from her, back to the turmoil.
light shafts from the window, a bright

weight upon her. it is nineteen thirty nine.
newly married, the horizon in his mind
glitters with change. one of them will leave.
max in chiaroscuro, his thoughts in shadow.

waking, she thinks nothing is shuttered
from her. she reaches for her camera.
stay there, she whispers. *stay like that*.

Essay

JS Harry (1939–2015)

Nicolette Stasko

When my friend Jann Harry died peacefully in her sleep on Wednesday morning 20 May 2015, after a long and debilitating illness, I realised that I had 'known' her for almost thirty years. When the *Age* obituary editor asked me what her date of birth was, I wondered if I knew her at all—I certainly did not know her birthday or much *about* her for that matter. Her poetry often deals with that conundrum: how little any of us really knows about each other. This suggests a few things. First, that personal detail was unimportant; for Harry it was the poetry that mattered—it was all she had to say and as much as she was willing to reveal. (It has been remarked that she was a poet first and person after.) Secondly, as suggested by her use of initials, she was a very private person. An early bio note tells a great deal about the poet's modesty and this intense sense of privacy: 'The elusive JS Harry was born in [...] South Australia [...]. Since then she has been sighted at odd festivals and seminars but never pinned down. When conversed with, she is usually on her way out. She hides in a post office box in Randwick'.[1] In a speech at a Sydney memorial service held for JS Harry, on 9 June 2015, Emeritus Professor of Australian Literature, Elizabeth Webby rightly noted that Harry's reticence and dislike of publicity meant that perhaps she was far less recognised than she might have been otherwise.

The use of initials also fulfilled another purpose. I remember when Harry was to launch my first collection in 1992. A couple of well known male poets came—as they told me—not because of my book but because they wanted to see if JS Harry was male or female. It seems there were bets on about this. Harry used JS as a pen name from the beginning of her career. Besides protecting her privacy, it was a way to shield herself from the anti-female attitudes of the then rather chauvinist poetry establishment. When she began publishing in the early 70s, there were very stereotypical ideas about the way women wrote and what they wrote about. Harry smashed through these prejudices. Bev Roberts described her as 'one of Australian poetry's 'great transgressors', and reading an early poem from the 1985 collection *A Dandelion for Van Gogh* reminded me how shocking and somewhat disturbing her poetry could be and yet how acute.

> do you really want to stick neon lights in my cunt
> & worship there for the 364 other days?
>
> (from 'mrs mothers' day')

Or the confronting 'tunnel vision', one of her best-known poems here quoted in full:

> SUPPORT SYD VICIOUS
> CUT A SLUT
>
> JESUS SAVES AT THE WALES
>
> WHO ARE YOU IF YOU'RE NOT?
>
> CREAMINESS CONTROLS YOU

OR YOU CONTROL THE CREAMINESS

screaming without words
she runs through the tunnel
straight at them
shock opening like flowers
on the faces of the oncoming
motorists
her purple dress is ripped
to the waist so it has
become skirt only
her bare round creamy breasts
assault the pity
& the rapist
behind the many
masks of 'motorist'
her face is contorted in
the scream everything
in her life is concentrated
behind it

she is either stoned out of her mind
just raped
so hopeless in her life
that whatever happens
will be better
drivers make
stories up
to fit some fiction
to the picture

it is 12 o'clock noon tube
white fluorescent
inside the road tunnel
she is running on
into the citybound traffic
cars part noiselessly
around her the traffic
streams into the city &
her bare feet & bare
breasts & scream
continue outwards towards
rushcutters bay & later
on to rose
bay if she makes it
drivers leaving the tunnel

blink at the sunlight
her image is off
their eyes but she is running
inside them as they enter
the city
all day they wonder
did somebody
rape her? again?
did she find
shelter?

her feet were busted
by the road—they were
bleeding
did some christ-of-the-tunnel
get out of his car
& kiss & wash her feet? *risking*
causing a chain
of deaths
to do so?

she is gone . . . going home
through the tunnel
drivers see
SUPPORT SYD VICIOUS CUT A SLUT'S
become 'feminised':

SUPPORT C.S.R ROT
SYD VICIOUS WITH SUGAR

& JESUS FUCKS AT THE WALES
WHO ARE YOU IF YOU'RE NOT
MY GREAT AUNT FANNY

a female
form
its flesh & rags
in fragments
sea-sucked
purple
is fished
out of the
gap-
wash by the calm
voice of-the-evening-news
a fortnight later

Another simple fact I didn't know was that Harry was born in Adelaide and eventually moved to Sydney in early adulthood. It seemed as if she had always lived in Sydney, although the poetry again reveals that there was no doubt extensive travel at some time. A perhaps little-known poem 'Working in the Clichés of the "Apple"' indicates a familiarity with New York that is probably not coincidental, as are the numerous poems about California and Japan. I did know that at a young age she began submitting her stories and poetry to children's magazines with notable success—often the prizes being much-coveted books. This was clearly something she thought important as her nephew and niece recall that her 'love of language, philosophy and intellectual thought was infectious [...]. Every birthday and Christmas, we would receive a pile of carefully chosen books suited to our age and interests'.

Although she had a variety of jobs, including educational bookselling, 'writing between them and sometimes during them', Harry's first allegiance was always to poetry. Eventually, she was able to devote herself full time to writing. Her first volume, *Deer Under the Skin*, published in 1971 as one of the first in the 'epochal' UQP paperback series edited by David Malouf, was awarded the Harri Jones Memorial Prize and chosen as the Poetry Society's Book of Year. This important volume helped pave the way for poets trying to discover new ways to translate the Australian experience. Harry went on to produce eight more books to continued admiration and critical acclaim: *A Dandelion for Van Gogh* (1985) was shortlisted for the National Book Council and the Adelaide Festival Poetry Awards. The title poem of her fourth book, *The Life on Water and the Life Beneath* (1995) won the PEN International Lynne Phillips Poetry Prize; and the 1995 Penguin *New and Selected* was co-winner of the NSW Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize.

JS Harry's study of grammar and philosophy prompted some of her most original and imaginative poetry. As early as 1989, she conceived of the eponymous Peter Henry Lepus, a philosopher rabbit of insatiable curiosity. According to Harry, 'it was a way of looking at different kinds of situations and in some ways of inviting readers to look at things from different points of view, to imagine what it would be like to be this creature, this rabbit who is trying to understand humans, and starts out very naive and gradually changes as he encounters things'. She first took Peter to Antarctica and Japan, then through meetings with Mother Teresa, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Bertrand Russell and the vagaries of the Australian literary scene and landscape. The first Peter Lepus poem she actually sent me was 'Calcutta', and I can remember my amazement at the originality of the rabbit concept, finding myself laughing out loud as I read it. Little did I know it was the beginning of many such incredible poems. Peter Henry did not in fact start out as a 'Creole of mixed ancestry'. Harry originally had in mind the Peter Rabbit of the children's books, but her attempt to gain permission from the Beatrix Potter estate was rejected with such ferocity and threat of lawsuits that it left her with a life-long terror of copyright.

'Calcutta'

French beans think they are on the wrong land mass
& wither into dessications of homesickness.
Peter Henry Lepus gets lost in 'Calcutta'
on his way to visit Farmer McGruber's vegetable patch.
It is not clement for lettuces in 'Calcutta'
or carrots either. Unfortunately
it is very unclement there
for the famous fat little British rabbit.
He is pursued by hordes, who have
bones poking through the lines of their arms.
Very unfriendly. While running
lappity lappity—rather fast—to get away—
he cannons into the lower portion
of some hard legs hiding under a sari.
When Peter looks up—he sees a warm face
rumpled with brown hillocks & little friendly furrows
like a dug vegetable patch in Farmer McGruber's garden.
Peter is pleased to see it—& is 'rescued'—
grabbed by his ears—rather roughly—he feels—
by Mother Teresa, who plonks him sternly
into a liquid-textured lapin version
of the miracle of the bread & the fishes.
Peter isn't hungry anymore—& neither
is 'Calcutta'. No one
has camomile tea, after supper. French beans
have finished withering. They are dead. 'Calcutta'
is doing very nicely & thanks you for asking.

Harry's sympathies for the plight of victims in the Middle Eastern conflicts eventually landed Peter Lepus in Baghdad, where he experiences—along with such companions as news reporter Max, Clifta, a huntsman spider and environmentalist Braid—the horrors, violence and inhumanity of war, in contrast to his encounters with Oxford philosophers AJ Ayer and JL Austin. Peter Porter commented that 'the further Harry seems from taking the horror and extremity seriously, the more the poem insists that, while language can never intercept an incoming missile, it can light up a moral scene as nothing else can'.[2] These poems were eventually collected in *Not Finding Wittengenstein*, which won the *Age* poetry Book of the Year in 2008.

Dorothy Hewett described her as 'a skylarker with language, stylish, intense and original'. Harry's interest was always in the way language is used or actually 'uses' us, and she was impatient with muddy or clichéd thinking ('the baby, with the bath-water, thrown out') and the reliance on slogans and platitudes that are prevalent today. For Harry, 'meaning' (whatever that is) was on a relative continuum from one to ten, and, more than once, she quotes Bertrand Russell as an epigraph to a poem or book:

> A word has meaning, more or less vague; but the meaning is only to be discovered by observing its use; the use comes first, and the meaning is distilled out of it.

So many poems are concerned with this subject that it's only possible to give a few examples:

Her bottom –
like a Sherman tank?

What would that look like?
. . .

Those words,
directed towards
her flesh,
suggest a drift
backwards
into history Imaginations,
travelling out, dredge pictures
of Vehicles – Military. Mind as reader
runs through memory: *which*
famous Sherman
was the tank
named after?
How did it move?
Which model Sherman
WAS THE PASSERBY
THINKING OF?

(from 'Drift')

The difference
between a chimney & a ferry
is that one carries an insubstantial 'substance'
in a vertical direction without moving upward
& the other carries solids
in a horizontal direction by its own movement

When a ferry moves the people on it
are 'funnelled horizontally' through space to a point
that may be measured with a piece of string
& found to be a measurable distance
from the place the ferry-with-the-people-on-it

started from

(from 'This explains . . .')

it is strange to speak
of the hill as 'rising'
when the hill
stays exactly
as it always has

(from 'the hill')

For Harry, every poem is a testing ground for the meaning of words or ideas and not a syllable is treated lightly. This exactitude, which was not an affectation but an indication of her moral integrity, resulted in the unusual typography she deployed, which so delighted her readers and exasperated her critics. She also had a remarkable sense of cadence. Anyone who ever heard her read knows what I mean. Even when she was very ill, and her poems were read aloud to her, she could pick a misstep or a false line break. Her use of the line is/was masterful—moving easily from the shortest, one word only, to the very long—often necessitating a turn (depending on the size of the page), which was sometimes a real frustration for her. Harry could naturally employ slang and scatology in her poetry but just as easily move into a lyrical mode, as in the end of 'tunnel vision' (quoted above). 'Roost' from her last published collection *PublicPrivate* (Vagabond, 2014) is one of many examples of this lyricism:

the rain
making little
brown steps
on the roof
henlike
one
following
after
another

then the bees
arrived in the kitchen
clambering
round the weathered
edges of the crack

through the crack
behind each bee
as it climbed
you could see

a wide splinter
of the pearl-grey sky
some
early spring-
sun
behind it

you don't
need money
to imagine
the rain

making rooster-red steps
on the roof
over the kitchen

then
through the iron roof's
russet lace
on
to the floor below
water
slowly dripping

JS Harry was the most human of poets. Her nephew and niece remember her not so much as an award winning poet but 'our somewhat eccentric Aunt' who was their babysitter for much of their childhood. 'Like all good aunts she didn't worry too much about usual childhood restrictions; bed times, dietary requirements, and programed entertainment, were out the window. If we wanted chips and chocolate for dinner, generally that is what we got!'

As the title suggests, *PublicPrivate* contains beautiful and poignant lyrics and an elegy for her late partner and fellow poet Kerry Leves and also illustrates her wicked humour and thoughtful critique of government machinations:

Past Politics East Coast Crude

Say anything
to win, m'boy,
and afterwards we'll see
if we can come good
with a few
bacon rinds
for the 'ham'
of y' promises.

Whatever the size

of the next fella's ham
before the election

say what y'hafta
to make YOURS
look bigger heftier –
doesn't matter –
later
when y'r in
yer treasurer
'll strip
the wasteful
minorityinterestskin
and trim
the porky
party platform fat
off the 'beast' y've promised.
He'll pop it in his costing oven
and bring it out –
well-cooked –
cooled –
dried –
shrunk –

a twentieth of
promissory size –

no matter –
a sniff
is as good
as a feast
of smells
to the hungry, m'boy,
and sure

we'll all be that

after a bit
of time's
gone by – and things
've got worse
as we knew they would – course y'll hafta
throw us a few choice cuts
after y' get there –

with a lean beast

y' get less meat

whoever is
doing
the carving,

know this –

y' being
run
by the country.

This last volume also confirms Harry's great love and respect for Australia's flora and fauna, which characterised her poetic career. Her attentiveness and extraordinary descriptive abilities bring to life even the most minute seed or insect, all of which she found equally important in the grand scheme of things. The brilliant poems observing the antic behaviour of birds alone could form a substantial volume. Concern for the environment and nature's innocent creatures were essential to her poetry, as was her sometimes ferocious criticism of unthinking destruction caused by technology and mass progress.

the deer under the skin

Standing at the top of the hill
pricked by the wind/ pricking to it
the sun shooting weirdly/ flashes of silver
the light through the clouds/ like a glare off ice

With the clouds/ herded-heavy/
grey-white/ wind-harried/ running before it/
flat as a dog

Trying to take in the light/
to clasp the wind and grasp hold/

Skin . . . the pine-patterned plain/ dark green
miles of it/
goldlakes of cleared-land
the sneaking pines circling upon it

Somewhere there — deer too/ feeling this wind
standing breathing listening hearing . . .
no sound/ brown pine-needle-soft/
nothing but the wind the green shushu . . .
sudden/ the whack
of a rotten-limb's drop/ the startling

bell-magpie startled at last . . . /

Having run with the deer always . . .
pine-shielded on a path apart/ . . . when startled
the fences were often too tall to leap to Escape
. . . sometimes to get there . . .

Lately the deer have been too short
for the top barbs of all the fences
palpitating gently
they run turn stand and are smashed
Soft-dead they flow to the guns

In a recent tribute, Ivor Indyk insightfully recognises that 'if one were to make a single claim for Harry's significance in Australian poetry, it should be that she was our first and foremost *ecological* poet. She wasn't a "nature poet", in the way that this term is used to describe poets of an earlier generation like David Campbell or Judith Wright. Though she shared the visual acuity of the one, and the passion of the other, her poetic idiom is distinctively contemporary'.[3] Indyk explains that Harry's poetry 'is a movement outwards from nature to everything which impinges on it, including the imagination and its contents. It is this movement, this expansiveness, which [...] describe[s] her achievement as ecological'. A poem from Dandelion is a striking example of this. Rather than a simple description of pelicans on a lake, Harry follows the observation through to the consequence of human actions, which besides affecting the water quality and therefore the pelicans, in turn ripples outward to note the effect on the human offenders as well. And it is important that the lake is not just any lake but the famous 'disappearing' Lake George (outside Canberra), which is a complex micro eco-system of its own.[4]

time in a pelican's wing

lake george's
pelicans

stationary
as elders or royal relations

immobilised
by an absence of light

stand formal

like knives & forks
stuck upright
in mud for the night

day will have them up
using themselves
differently

spooning mud
water vegetables
& fish

so what

if they've been having
the flavours of the
lakes they fished in changed

as the nameless
brands of water

were formed & disappeared

on this continent

for 30 or 40 million years

they have followed water
scooping fish frogs crabs to live
to here—

today lake george
is the clearest of soups—

unknowing

as the tide's pollutants move
on the shore-crabs
as the effluent flows
down the rivers & creeks
as the agricultural chemicals
wash off the land
into streams

what time is left
in the flight of their wings—

unlike humans or sun
they are not
big drinkers of lakes

they will dribble back the water
keep the fish

we are joined to them by ignorance
what time is left in anyone's drink

For Harry, 'humans' (I can't recall her ever using the word 'being'), for all their power and stupidity, were simply part of the ecosystem, no more no less, and she often observed them as curious creatures strangely bent on their own destruction. The three-part scathing, but often hilarious description of a car collision, 'Report, From The Outlands, Mating Habits There Being In A State Of Flux' begins:

They've learnt to humanise
machines & build
    their people
out of used, car-parts—the spares;
their car 's 'an almost friendly beast'. They bolt
their people's quick-fiat hearts
still to a frame of mechanised lies.

And finishes 'This poem ends by a pile of cooling scrap'.

Always generous with her time and attention, the extent to which Harry supported literary journals and fellow poets would probably be little known. She subscribed to most of the publications in Australia and often did not accept payment for her published poems. A member of many organisations, including the Australian Society of Authors and Pen International, Harry also bought (and frequently read) almost every book of poetry published in the last decades, whether she knew the poet or not. She edited the Friendly Street Poets' anthology and, until she was unable to do so, regularly attended their annual events. She was often asked to judge poetry contests, which I tried to discourage since her empathy for poets enabled her to find something good in every poem regardless of its faults, to the neglect of her own work. Like the 'comma wars' described by her friend John Stephenson or what I called 'battles of the full stop' concerning her own poetry, it might result in weeks of debating the pros and cons. This hesitation to judge and resistance to closure is expressed in numerous poems:

now if you could...

when the poem is finished
it is set hard
like a hot pour
of errant
Wollongong Crude
that's been, inadvertently,
trapped, flowed, slowed, cooled —

& impossibly surprised —
by itself —at itself — at finding
a roughcast pig-iron self —
in a part-cracked
one-off mould.
it is **too** set.
now if you could
you would
ruffle its surface up
poke a gum twig
where three or four
hot disturbed black
biting ants're
angrily rushing about
— there — for it to chew on —
into its mouth —
& plant a wad of pliant
drawl-enriched
minty-green chewie
somewhere about
that an imaginary hand
has just
removed, from an
imaginary mouth.

Never didactic, Harry maintained throughout her career that she wrote 'with the hope that there should be room in each poem for the imagination of the reader to work in'. Robert Adamson remarked 'I remember reading poems of hers twenty years ago [...] her poetry haunts and invigorates [...] her work has enriched the way we write poetry in this country'. Associate Professor of Literature and author, James Tulip, wrote early on that 'her intellect and literary sense are close to virtuosity and establish her claim as successor to Judith Wright and Gwen Harwood'. JS Harry fulfilled that promise. Until the end, in spite of increasing physical difficulty, she continued to work on what will now be her final book and the last adventure of Peter Henry (Giramondo Publishing, forthcoming). Her loss to Australian literature is immense, and she will be greatly missed by her family, friends and many admirers. Fortunately, we have been left with the gift of her astonishing poetry.

Books by JS Harry

→ *The Deer Under the Skin*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1971.
→ *Hold for a Little While and Turn Gently*. Sydney: Island Press, 1979.
→ *A Dandelion for Van Gogh*. Sydney: Island Press, 1985.
→ *Selected Poems*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1995.
→ *The Life of Water and the Life Beneath*. Pymble: Angus & Robertson, 1995.
→ *Sun Shadow, Moon Shadow*. Sydney: Vagabond, 2000.
→ *If... And the Moveable Ground and Other Poems*. Warners Bay: Picaro Press, 2004.
→ *Not Finding Wittgenstein: Peter Henry Lepus Poems*. Artarmon: Giramondo, 2007.
→ *PublicPrivate*. Sydney: Vagabond, 2014.

Endnotes

1 *Mrs Noah and the Minoan Queen*, ed. Judith Rodriguez, Sisters Publishing, Carlton, 1983.
2 Peter Porter, review of JS Harry, 'Not Finding Wittgenstein', *Australian Book Review*, no. 294, 2007, p. 46.
3 Ivor Indyk, *Sydney Review of Books*, http://www.sydneyreviewofbooks.com, 05/06/2015.
4 Lake George is actually a geographical depression that turns into a lake when it fills due to heavy rainfall. There is always water, which is surprisingly saline, below the lake floor. Changes in water levels, while not instantaneous, are dramatic. When full, the lake reaches a size of about 155sq.km, but when the water dries up, the lakebed is used for grazing.

Shari Kocher

Foxstruck

Dinner done, dishes draining, the fire
a red glow in its dark box, I step outside
beyond the porch light, the grass
stiff with frost in the home paddock,
the night sky shelved but for the bright paw
and nose of the Dog Star chasing a hare
in the scudding dark, the almost
forgotten name of a flagship tossing
into view in a time before typhoid,
cholera and sweetened damper, the gorge
rising in the dip where shots rang out
last night, our feral neighbour licensed to
kill anything that moves, floodlit
and whooping just beyond our fence line,
which a deer can clear in a moment if only
she knew she'd be safe here, but what's a fence
in a forest of stars? The cold eats fingertips
and ankles. If I had flares, I would light them.
Makes no sense how we got here. Makes
perfect sense: a fox, right in front of me.
Three red paws on the ground, one white
lifted in mid-step, a thousand tiny
hairs aspark in the moonlight.
Breath a small vapour, electric.
Eyes like river stones, that old language
of fire held high in the brush-stroked tail
pulsing between us, two feet of charged
ground sunk without sound in a heartbeat,
the mist made mystic at knee-height.
Foxstruck. Standing alone in a paddock
pouring electricity under a night sky
blinking cold atoms without answer,
blood quickening the slow burn of fox
tricky as history, the fire before and after.

Julie Maclean

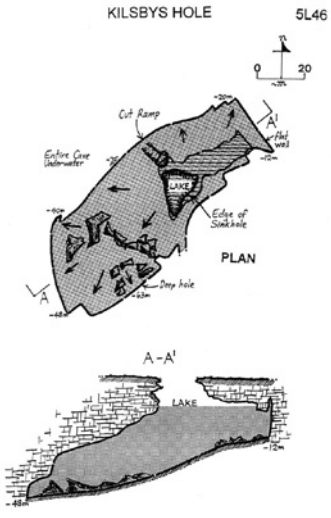
Vagina Dentata

After Kilsby's Sinkhole, SA

Sag, Snake, Swallet, Swallow...
How do they avoid it—this heavenly pit lurking beneath *desire paths*?
Breeding ewes cluster as they lamb and wool
but they don't fall in.

Divers canoe the limestone yawn,
drop to John Deere harvesters, bull skulls and barbed wire slung
down this marvellous hole.
Some take time out from iPhones to bask like wobbegongs.
Young soldiers—finned and slippery nose into tunnels where algae, *moss-to-be*,
nibbles patiently on limestone, biding its time.
They are lulled.
Sinister minerals from this portal make a womb fit for a platoon.

Horses put hooves through the green veneer.
A thousand tonnes of rubble make no plug in it.
Boys who would be men drown in it, knowing it's there.



[Map ASF Grade 44, P.Stace & P.Horne, CDAA Res. Group, 1983]

Charlotte Clutterbuck

Stopped watch

> Like a watchmaker, God was forced to intervene in the universe and tinker with the mechanism from time to time to ensure it continued in good working order.
> —Isaac Newton
>
> The Blind Watchmaker
> —Richard Dawkins

Not blind—vanished like the profession.
He or She or It or What just gone away
about some business other than mine

the watch decaying
no spindle, no strap
to bind it round a wrist

tarnished by sweat and dirt
silver plating abraded by cufflinks
knocking against walls or bark.

The big, black hand can be moved
round the segmented worm biting its tail
that marks the minutes on a circle of paper

turning the small hand wilfully through hours
marked by obsolete Roman letters—I and V and X
stiff lines and rigid angles to chisel into stone—

none of the roundness of Arabic
the openness of Zero
the ease of calculation.

Without coil or battery, no persuasion
no jiggling of the knob can budge
the second-hand, made of different metal

its Japanese movement stuck
at 12 seconds past what
unticking hour?

Not blind, just silently gone
about a to-do list other than ours

attending to the biology of galaxies
astronomy of cells.

Tessa McMahon

Take No Prisoners

It was the sisters' turn on the rope.
We *eevy-ivy-overed*, and skipped
all in together this fine weather

captured by the slapping rope's elipse.
Elsie, the eldest would give us news
of their father, a prisoner-of-war

confined, she said, in a bamboo cage
smaller than the scoop of a skippy rope
and tortured each day by the enemy.

With younger sister in meek support,
Elsie would then begin her questions.
One at a time ... and where's your father?

Dad's Triumph cycle had left his spleen,
and more, spilled on the Great Ocean Rd.
I'd mutter ... *at Fords... for Manpower,*

then add ... *My uncle's in New Guinea!*
We never queried Elsie's reports
about her father's dreadful ordeal.

She took us prisoner at each recess,
doing her bit, as mother and aunts
gave white feathers to the baker's boy.

BN Oakman

What to say?

Celebrants often ask the bereaved
to speak to a coffin
as if the dead might hear them still.
I've heard protestations,
excuses, wishes things
had been different,
the odd imprecation,
assorted verse, declarations
of unending remembering, never
accusation or condemnation.

And what might I say to you
when you no longer hear
my voice? Might I
intrude so much as a word
somehow withheld
over thirty years and not
proclaim my indolence, not
corrupt my tears with neglect,
not betray the perfect poem
of our silence?

John Carey

Theatre

In Zuckmayer's *The Captain of Köpenick* an ex-general,
now Kommandant of a Prussian prison, has a company of
toothless old lags riding brooms up a ramp to re-enact
a famous cavalry charge: 'Ah, my brave lads!'
drools the ancient general, 'What a fine body of men!'

In a Brendan Behan play, a stage direction:
a nun in full habit shuffles on to the scene and in one
swift movement, removes the habit to reveal
a man in a shabby suit who informs the audience:
'I'm a secret policeman and I don't care who knows it!'

From Joe Orton: a young expectant mother
without benefit of wedlock, is counselled by a woman
Social Worker of sinister gentility and born-again smugness:
'Now don't get me wrong. There is no more beautiful sight
than two young married people making love'.

From Howard Barker, a scene set in the vault
of the newly established Bank of England: a dissipated
Charles II, a louche mistress, a wide-boy cockney courtier
and the sudden irruption of a furious Yorkshire merchant:
'Piece of paper be buggered! I want to see my money, I want to touch it!'

Howard Barker again. A conference in the Kremlin:
Churchill, Stalin, a nervous foul-mouthed interpreter
and a bewildered Scottish comedian. (Stalin has been
misinformed that Churchill loves Scottish comedians.)
'I can't fucking translate that! This bastard will kill us all!'

An Oz sample? Not easy. Dead-pan lines. Have to be there.
From Williamson: the middle-aged son tells his father that
he has just left his wife for his mistress. That night, the old dad
catches him *in flagrante* on the sofa with yet another woman,
half his age. The patriarch shakes his head: 'Just not good enough, son'.

Eileen Chong

Bee Music

Find someone like yourself. Find others.
Agree you will never desert each other.
— Adrienne Rich, 'Yom Kippur 1984'

It is two o'clock in the morning.
I am reading poetry and drinking.
My man is drinking alongside me

and playing his records—glossy discs
heat-pressed and read by a needle,
an anachronism in our time. Thirty-

five years ago today my friend
was born, later to give life
to two who will become women

in their own right. I have made us
cocktails: aniseed and blackcurrant
with smoky bourbon; orange peel,

cognac and brown sugar. A voice
like cracked pepper—barley as fine
as seed pearls slipping through

my fingers. Earlier we watched larger-
than-life bees circle on screen
and the age-old wrestle between logic

and emotion, truth and fiction. He
was so tired he slept through most
of the movie—asking me afterwards

What was it about? I said: the sun;
a man and his regrets; a plant
and its roots; a train and a woman...

The music—my words on this page—
A man and his woman, this persistent beat,
these half-sounds I utter under my breath—

Anna Jacobson

Villanelle

'What's for dinner?' they ask—the hundredth time.
Her bones ache—the oven is hot.
'A chook', she lies, 'with thick bread and old wine'.

she can't stand the brightness of the lime,
wonders why it doesn't turn brown and rot.
'What's for dinner?' they ask—the hundredth time.

At six o'clock she prepares the brine,
wipes down the bench to get rid of the grot.
'A chook', she lies, 'with thick bread and old wine'.

She doesn't want to cook, is sick of the mime.
They'd settle for fried eggs, wouldn't give a jot.
'What's for dinner?' they ask—the hundredth time.

She winces—their look is canine.
She's turned into a cooking robot.
'A chook', she lies, 'with thick bread and old wine'.

She wonders if she left if they would pine.
They don't know her suitcase is packed with the lot.
'What's for dinner?' they ask—the hundredth time
'A chook', she lies, 'with thick bread and old wine'.

Jelena Dinic

Hotel Room Nightmare

We fly high to find the lost.
Outside, the last bits of clouds.

Illusions of faces and places.
No breathing spaces left.

I wear a dress out of the suitcase.
He buys us time at the Grand Millennium.

Behind the brass hotel door
with others in identical rooms

we unpack two hearts
we forgot we had

and let them bleed their weight
down the sliced floors.

I watch him gasping for air.
He watches me too.

Philip Neilsen

A Philosopher in the Brothel

I'd heard that you can pay just to talk
and it turns out to be true, which is a relief,
but she keeps interrupting me with questions
I can't answer and suggestions for being-in-the-world
that never occurred to Heidegger.

She says a lot of clients babble about carpe diem
but wouldn't know a joyful moment from a teapot.
I mention Freud, how flesh and fluids
distracts from anxiety about our extinction.
She laughs and agrees that seems about right—
so much denial on hands and knees, but death
will still take you with your legs or arse in the air.

Nietzsche's Übermensch could forgo transient pleasure:
I suspect he had the same trouble as me getting it up.
But then she paraphrases Marcus Aurelius:
let every action be done as if it were your last,
do everything out of kindness,
because the glossy famous and suffering nobodies
are all now less than puffs of smoke.
And, she whispers, remember Boethius,
nothing can rise without a cause.

So a cause I find in beauty and survival,
this moment with her soft hand upon me.
Neither bold nor coward I shudder,
let go of thought, the golden mean.

Finally, a limp rubber and late deposit,
this short walk to the car
under a sun which also will die,
but happily,
long after my afternoon tutor and I.

DJ Huppatz

Breakfast with Frank

—after Arundhathi Subramaniam

It's not quite snowing when eggwhites
enter from the diamond window door
and Grade A Fancy whipped cream
confidence and stainless steel shine
aren't enough to unsmudge my ruminations:
Do only women have legs on TV?
Do the French know about the toast
they left at the next table? Do the Greeks
behind the counter know where
they hid the Parthenon key?

Outside, everyone seems to have a direction,
no one pauses to absorb the squeaky clean
House of Lever, maybe they're already
thinking about what's for lunch. Not

me, I'm still at the Stone last night,
nerves twitching on John Zorn's vibrato
fat and wide like a melancholy duck
stuttering to work in camouflage pants
a long-necked matzo ball solo on
a turkey bacon flight to the last westbound
whiskey bar in Hell's Kitchen deep in
the stacks at the Strand Bookstore somewhere
between History and Philosophy when
time crystalised and you were there.

Then a guy sits down at the counter
and looks just like any other guy,
no one even notices that he looks
the same as the guy who just left.

Virginia Jealous

Being outside

In the courtyard
beyond food stalls

a young man
raises his head,

howls like a dog.
A ragged pack

lies at his scabbed feet.
Dirt is embedded

in his skin, under his nails.
It looks as if he has grown here,

as if wherever he is
he is always outside.

Ron Pretty

Sister

for Saroja

She had and doesn't have a sister:
the photo reveals a small dark face
and all her childhood, how she missed her

In bed at night, she'd always whisper
a prayer for her she yearned to embrace
She had and doesn't have a sister

No matter how they tried to twist her
she wouldn't give up that wild goose chase
for all her childhood, how she missed her

Her adoptive parents couldn't resist her
demands to go to that distant place
where she had and doesn't have a sister

Year after year, she'd always insist her
parents search for that lost child of grace
and all her childhood, how she missed her

If they'd met, she would have kissed her
but mother and child were gone without trace:
she had and doesn't have a sister;
and all her childhood, how she missed her.

David Tribe
To Radclyffe Hall

I look into your well of loneliness
to see you thrashing out to stay
alive. Your body, fine-boned, angular,
flat-chested, in tailored suit and tie
contemptuous of feminine mystique,
looks otherwordly through refraction
in the cold congealing water.
Above it your strong head
tosses defiance at a callous world
that looks down on your suffering
with arms extended in abhorrence
not in help. Where are your
friends, I ask, with ropes
to toss to you or other
means of rescue that I lack?
How can you be alone, full
of compassion, sense and mellow
words to hold true friends,
rich and sophisticated to attract
acquaintances?... I see. The world
felt nervous with a woman born
into a study, not a kitchen
or a nursery; making no marriage
vows, yet not a spinster; living
with one who couldn't be
a wife. Where is she now? –
in fact, forgotten more than you;
in fiction, thrust into the sun
to find a man and earn stiff
nods from hard humanity.
Some of your friends and fellow-
sufferers climbed after her while
others sank below the surface,
drowned in despair or drink. Maybe
some knew a secret happiness.
Now only you survive
in memory, explorer-missionary,
sinner-saint, too proud to die.

The Best Australian Poems 2014 and *The Best American Poetry 2014*

Caitlin Maling

The Best Australian Poems 2014 is a democratic, reader-oriented anthology. Indeed, in the submission call-out, editor Geoff Page specified that 'submissions should be able to be enjoyed by "general readers" who don't necessarily read much poetry, as well as by those dedicated ones who do'. From this, one could level the charge that what is 'best' equates to what is easiest or accessible. Yet Page draws wider terms for himself in his introduction, defining a well-written poem as that which 'creates a small world of its own which coexists essentially on the same level as other successful poems, both now and over centuries'. The characteristics of such a poem are left more opaque but alluded to in his statement that he chose to assemble poems that make an impact 'most typically through their evocation of deeply shared human experience and emotion' and that his aim is to have poems that are 'both reader-friendly and of high aesthetic quality'. It appears that what is being strived for in the anthology is quite Romantic, a timeless poetry capable of uniting humanity.

The best of these best poems live up to the aim of marrying accessibility with aesthetic. In Anthony Lawrence's 'Lepidoptera', elegant tercets are offset by enjambment, contributing to a surreal but simple narrative of ordering live ornamental butterflies for a wedding:

One by one they expired. They died as brooches
on the neckline of dresses. They shivered

on palms. A swallowtail unfurled the lavender stem

Of its proboscis. I swear, the academic said, it sampled
the rare vintage of my sweat, and swooned.

Sarah Holland-Batt's 'Approaching Paradise' is similarly convincing in its tight quatrains, which, coupled with the use of repetition and rhyme, give the poem a liturgical feel unsettled by the content of the images: 'A shark's slit corpse gapes pink on the jetty', and 'Men with knives kneel down like seraphim'. Of equal strength are the long lines of Jennifer Compton's 'The Frankston Massage' and the re-envisioned sonnets of Peter Minter, joanne burns and John Tranter.

Perhaps the most unexpected aesthetic strength of the anthology is the selection of prose poems by Cassandra Atherton, Lisa Brockwell, Samuel Wagan Watson and John Foulcher, demonstrating the versatility of the prose poem as litany, monologue, word play and narrative respectively. Atherton arranges paratactically a series of punctuated short clauses, so the potential sprawl of the prose form is contained and contested. This is uneasy prose that does not make an argument, yet the simple syntax of each clause communicates to even the least sure-footed reader of poetry:

Names make you attached. Even if you aren't so attached to your own name. You connect. Like a dog collar and leash. Dog tags. Names are important.

What each of the poems highlighted above does well is establish a tension, often narratively, but also through an attention to language that counterbalances prosody with image, or line with syntax. These are poems that allow for ambiguity. Interestingly, the poems that do not succeed as well are often overly sentimental or, for lack of a better critical term, overly poetic. Such is unfortunately the case with often brilliant Bruce Dawe's 'Present Continuous Santa', whose rhymed and measured quatrains ventriloquize Santa in a predictable way: 'Once upon a time, the Christmas season/ Had a particular beginning, *and* an end;/ Nowadays it seems, for some odd reasons,/ Those supermarket blokes aim to extend//my special *niche*'.

There is much of the familiar plain-spokenness we expect from Australian poetry. This is put to good use in poems by Dennis Haskell and Joan Kerr who use everyday diction to describe difficult and fundamentally irreducible emotions, following the Empsonian maxim of putting the complex into the simple (Kerr: 'my father has no common sense/ I have learned this early/ the house is falling down/ around our ears'). Other poems are not as successful where the plain language stays simply plain. These poems attempt to reach for a powerful, simply put truth but when unsuccessful feel constructed in the manner of a joke leading to a punch line. To greater or lesser degrees, this was the case in Joe Dolce's 'If Hitler was also spelt Hiedler' and Peter Bukowski's 'Portrait of a divorce, Hurstbridge, Melbourne, 1973'.

It is interesting that one of the more dominant themes or perspectives a reader takes away from *The Best Australian Poems 2014* is of history, or to put it another way, the collection feels retrospective beyond the one year time frame indicated by the '2014' of the title. This is a function of Page's acknowledged intent to include poets long on the Australian scene and of mixing 'meter and rhyme along with the Anglosphere's current free verse orthodoxy', and there is some fine traditional versification included in the rhymed quatrains of Jakob Ziguras and Kevin Hart, among others. A sense of retrospection also appears through the themes and subjects emphasised. There is a substantial section of mixed quality wars-of-the-20th-century poetry coupled with an arrangement of poems looking back at other aspects of that century. Some of the war poetry steers too close to the sentimental, such as Alan Gould's 'Charlie Twirl', which is not helped by pairing war-time sentiment with an extremely dominant rhyme scheme where 'This is the Street of Hullaballoo/ when poor link arms with the well-to-do,/ two Diggers drunk beyond all help,/ vast crowds a-sway like ocean kelp'.

Turning to *The Best American Poetry 2014*, this difference in timeliness is most immediately apparent. *The Best American Poetry 2014* is clearly of its particular moment. Series Editor David Lehman begins his introduction with a discussion of Twitter, technology and its impact on poetry, before detailing changes to the arts education system in America. Guest Editor Terrance Hayes eschews a traditional intro for something more post-modern. Inspired by David Foster Wallace's maxim that readers are rarely interested in the introduction, he invents a sprawling false interview with familiar imaginary academic 'Dr Charles Kinbote' (of Nabokov's *Pale Fire*). In both introductions, it is apparent that a different readership is being addressed than in Page's, a readership that might be expected to be familiar with Lehman's extended references to Snow and Leavis's two-culture clash, and to get Hayes's Kinbote joke. The poetry that follows is, in general, as can be expected from the introduction, more challenging, guided by Hayes's acknowledged bias towards 'linguistic fleetness'. Reading through the poems, I recalled Joshua Corey's statement on the north American post-modern pastoral, that it has an 'allegiance to the movements of language'; this collection displays a similar allegiance. The poems are rarely still, jumping from image to image propelled by a distinct, often bluesy,

musicality, so in Douglas Kearney's stand-out poem, 'The Labor of Stagger Lee: Boar', we encounter the quatrain

pig prey to piggishnesses. get ate from the rooter to the tooter.
I'm a hog for you baby, I can't get enough of the wolfish crooner.
the gust buffeted porker roll in the hay or laid down
in twig rapine. let me in, let me in.

and in Nathaniel Mackeay's long poem 'Old Time Ending', the music of tight internal rhymes and short lines: 'Reluctant light light's/ evasion, faces lit. Soulin'/ one of them called it'.

In his introduction, Hayes talks of loving the 'moment of "not knowing" more than the moment of "knowing" in a poem', and there is a different type of clarity, and attitude towards clarity, at work in *The Best American Poetry 2014* than in *The Best Australian Poems 2014*. Often, as seen above, there is musical clarity, and in other poems an associative imagistic clarity, as in Mary Ruefle's poem, 'Saga', where 'Being particular has its problems/ In particular there is a rift running the length of Iceland/ and so a rift runs through every family/ and between failed as a feud./ It's called a saga'. This type of associativeness is not for everyone, and I imagine that many readers opening the book and encountering, by virtue of the alphabetical ordering, Armantrout followed by Ashbery in the first three poems might be put off although there is much to like about Armantrout's playful lines ('It's lonely in a song/ about outer space'). There are other poems that do veer too close to elliptical such as Adam Hammers' 'As Like', where the repetition of the image of an accordion is not quite enough to guide the reader through the poem: 'In times of the most extreme potatoes/ My hair is very thin,/ Almost ink-like./ Space is like an accordion,/ Accordion-like./ But also, our fingers become accordions'.

Similarly, while there are many exceptional formally inventive poems that tackle present issues in new and revealing ways (for example Jon Sand's 'Decoded' or Ray Gonzalez's 'One El Paso, Two El Paso'), there are poems that are perhaps too indicative of this particular kairos, such as Kiki Petrofina's 'Story Problem': 'Try to release your Life Token without locating it/ Then press ESC to affix your nightmare to a plane'; or Rachel Zucker's 'Mindful': 'I run & the running [GPS: average time]/ [activity started] [GPS: per mile] then a snow-/storm no school I cried & said *Mayor Bloomberg*'.

The editors of each collection have made very different choices when it comes to how to approach what is 'best', Page striving for what might be best across time, and Hayes for a deliberately diverse mix of what is best of the right here and now. If, as Pound says, poetry is the news that stays new, then the potential fault in Page's approach is to bring us old news, and in Hayes's to bring us something that will last only this one day. Part of the news that *The Best American Poetry 2014* brings us is through pairing author bios with a short exegesis by the poet on their included poem. Hence, we learn that to Steve Scafidi, 'writing poems (and reading them) always involves being lost. I like that the word "bewildered" echoes the first syllable in "wilderness". I like that the word "wilderness" has an anagram for the word "deer" near the centre of it. In this poem that deer is dead and death always bewilders. I write this poem constantly'. These poetic statements and the lengthy introductions to the volume deepen the context for the poems, granting the reader insight into how poetry is being conceived of in that particular year. There is room for the development of similar commentary in the Australian volume without it turning into something too prescriptive of the reader's experience.

Read side by side, the two collections deepen and complicate one another. It would have been interesting to see more of the virtuosity and linguistic invention of the American volume in the Australian. We see inklings of what this could look like

in the poems by Michael Farrell, Jessica Yu, Maria Takolander, and Kevin Brophy's wonderfully strange litany 'How old are you?' where the age 8 is summarised at the end of the poem as 'And the goldfish, they're right, it's the most beautiful answer/ to the question everyone asks you'. Yet, while the American volume has this sense of musical propulsion, it could have made room for more of the stillness of Robert Adamson's masterfully quiet 'Garden Poem' or the gravitas of Clive James's 'My Home', which ends the Australian collection on the lines 'We fade away, but vivid in our eyes/ A world is born again that never dies'. It's paradoxical, but I feel that these changes could be accommodated through shortening the Australian volume and through extending the American. Working from a much smaller population of poets, the Australian volume manages to be of approximate equal length to the American, and this leads to a slight feeling of repetition. This is not aided by Page's choice to group the poems thematically, which also raises questions about whether a more diverse mix of poets and poems might have been possible. Cut back, or diversified, it would feel like a more varied collection. As it stands, *The Best Australian Poems 2014* does offer much to the reader, everyday or otherwise, particularly in quiet moments where the resonance of seemingly simple lines such as Treddinick's ('But I'd be no other man than this./ This looted self, blessed by theft,/ this harbour for love's worst scoundrels') can be given the contemplation they deserve.

→ *The Best Australian Poems 2014*. Ed. Geoff Page. ISBN 9781863956970. Melbourne: Black Inc. 2014. RRP $29.99

→ *The Best American Poems 2014*. Eds David Lehman and Terrance Hayes. ISBN 9781476708157. New York: Scribner. RRP $US 35

Witnessing History: Denise Levertov

Felicity Plunkett

The glued spine of my school copy of Denise Levertov's *The Freeing of the Dust* (1972) is collapsing, holding some pages brittly, spilling others. Since the poems seemed to my seventeen-year-old self to be all about schism—things caught between falling apart and holding together—the physical object has come to express the riving currents of the poetry.

'The Woman' dramatises a split self: 'the one in homespun' faces 'the one in crazy feathers' who 'wearies herself perhaps' but 'has to drive on', returning to address this final question to a lover: 'Can you endure/ life with two brides, bridegroom?' Another poem, 'Don't You Hear That Whistle Blowin'…', ends with words to the same bridegroom, who is directly addressed in the poem as Mitch. This evocation of Levertov's husband Mitchell Goodman suggested non-fictional underpinnings to the poem that disturbed my nascent awareness of poets' constructions of personae.

That year I studied Sylvia Plath, TS Eliot and Robert Browning. Whoever was setting the texts offered treasures for the novice poetry aficionado, especially in terms of masquerade and performance: the drama and flux of protean, unsettling poetic speakers. Alongside the shifting eyes of J. Alfred Prufrock, the Duke of Ferrara, Porphyria's murderous lover and Lady Lazarus, Levertov's singular poetic 'I' stared

back, never flinching.

The speaker of 'Don't You Hear That Whistle Blowin'…' wakes from a dream of watching dawn trains with her husband to find herself alone; at

just the beginning of a long train of times I'll turn
to share a vision with you and find I'm dreaming.

Poems about separation sit quietly alongside poems about the Vietnam War:

Smart bombs replace
dumb bombs. 'Now we can aim
straight into someone's kitchen'

('May Our Right Hands Lose Their Cunning')

Facing the evidence of destruction, a photographer uses up film and fury on

...bombed hospitals,
bombed village schools, the scattered
lemon-yellow cocoons at the bombed silk-factory

('In Thai Binh (Peace) Province')

There is no energy left to search for synonyms, no appetite for metaphor, as in Neruda's image of the Spanish Civil War in 'I'm Explaining a Few Things': 'blood of the children ran through the streets/without fuss, like children's blood'. Neither poet allows metaphor to take the reader's attention away from the work of witnessing history.

Yet Levertov's speaker also sees resilience, imagined in the vision of

a boy and a small bird both
perched, relaxed, on a quietly grazing
buffalo.

The Freeing of the Dust found its way onto the NSW Higher School Certificate text list just over a decade after its publication, and its poems have remained, on and off, these days as part of an elective called Navigating the Global. In the context of a striking and dispiriting underrepresentation of contemporary poetry, the poems' tenacity is remarkable. Part of the explanation is logistical—texts remain for equity reasons because schools can't always afford to purchase new books. Another part, though, is this poetry's capacity to speak to students. Today, I will mark exam essays about Levertov, and tomorrow I run a workshop on her work. The publication of a magnificent *Collected Poems* by New Directions in 2013 sits alongside my battered Levertov paperbacks. They lean against its strong spine that will easily outlive me.

Many Australian poets have read Levertov's work, and others met her when she visited Australia. She is mentioned by Garth Clarke in Brenda Beaver's obituary as one of many guests at Bruce and Brenda Beaver's home who shared poetry, wine and food, alongside James Dickey, David Malouf and Michael Dransfield.

Despite this, since her death in 1997, Levertov's work has receded from view in the United States, a point made by various commentators such as Mark Jarman, who questions whether the 'eclipse' in Levertov's reputation is typical of a lull after a writer's death: 'a necessary period of forgetfulness, a sort of anti-wake, waiting for a new generation to stir up the ashes'. Jarman argues that the eclipse, in Levertov's case, began before her death, and resulted from such forces as her refusal to

engage with feminism, her late-life adoption of Christianity, and that 'she did not see the way Language poetry would ascend in the academy' (np).

Dana Greene's biography, *Denise Levertov: A Poet's Life*, envisages a complex poet who at once resisted biography as '"sensational", "prurient", "overly subjective" and "gossip"… created in an attempt to "suppress", "invent" or "judge"' (3), was outspoken in her view that 'Both poetry and life fade, wilt, shrink, when they are divorced', yet insisted that 'I have always written out of my own experience' (3).

Greene's subtitle suggests her focus, described later as 'the making of Levertov as a poet' (49). Instead of beginning with birth, it begins in 1936 with a twelve-year-old Priscilla Denise ('Denny') Levertoff sending her poems to TS Eliot, editor of Criterion, and eliciting an encouraging response. Greene notes that her subject 'baffled herself and was baffling to others', and stresses that 'what remains… is her work.' *Ars longa*, she writes, *vita brevis*. She returns to Hippocrates' phrase as a full stop to the main body of this biography.

Greene keeps her eye on Levertov's baffling and contradictory aspects. A poet who altered her surname to resist identification with a troubling sibling and went on to translate herself continually, Levertov was the English-born child of a Welsh mother and Russian father. She traced her poetic lineage to ancestors Schneour Zalman, said to be able to understand the language of birds, and Welsh tailor Angell Jones, who 'stitched meditations into coats and britches' (5). Her Jewish father Fievel adopted the name Paul and came to believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, conceiving of himself as a Jewish-Christian scholar and clergyman. He eventually became an Anglican priest. Levertov as a child reported seeing a small man in a peaked cap coming over the garden wall, and would continue to affirm the possibility of 'entertaining angels unawares' (14).

Marriage to Brooklyn-born Mitchell Goodman two months after their meeting in Geneva led Levertov to the United States, where, in 1949, following an earlier miscarriage, her son Nikolai was born. Although by now Levertov was beginning to make the creative connections that would propel her work—Robert Creeley, William Carlos Williams and Robert Duncan—she was exhausted and demoralised by the couple's poverty and the demands of everyday life, reporting in her diary 'black venom rising' (37). It was Williams who reminded her to 'practice, practice, and practice' (47). Unique as a foreign-born woman in a poetic era in which most poets and editors were men, Levertov's status as a member of the Black Mountain Poets was, according to Greene, tenuous, though it is crucial to the Levertov legend.

Troubled by ongoing money problems, the couple sought various compromises, moving from New York City to a farmhouse in Maine in the early 1960s, at about the same time Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes made a similar move from London to Devon.

Although Greene keeps Levertov's poetic career in focus, considering key relationships with Muriel Rukeyser and Adrienne Rich, and noting an impressive accrual of publications, honours and grants, her gaze takes in the poet's troubled marriage and complex relationships, including one with Australian writer and academic Ian Reid. Greene offers a blunt coda to Levertov's description of her 'many love affairs': 'all of which failed'.

While this suggests a quaintly conventional belief in The One (on Greene's part, not Levertov's), the poet's more adventurous experience is tempered by evidence of her own conservatism. In a letter to her lesbian friend Carol Rainey, Levertov opines that 'homosexual experience was a phase of adolescence' (138). It is this kind of evidence, along with the idea that Levertov was 'angry with Nikolai since his childhood' that contradicts the writer the poems suggest: outspoken against injustice, willing, if necessary, to further her work as an activist—first against the Vietnam War, later against the proliferation of nuclear weapons—at the expense of finessing her craft as a poet.

While some critics have celebrated the politicisation of her work, others have decried it. Greene cites Levertov's friend Hayden Carruth's summary of this

criticism: the poems are sloganeering, self-righteous, bad prose, stale, boring, depressing, etcetera. A tension between the lyric and didactic tugs at the poems, and remains the focus of ambivalence in her work's reception.

Levertov's poetry increasingly imagines the smallness of individual lives. We are 'dustmotes in the cosmos' (here, her words echo Joni Mitchell's 1970 song about a Woodstock the singer didn't attend: 'We are stardust/ Billion year old carbon'). The larger thing for Levertov becomes the divine You of Catholicism, and the best we can do with our lives, she suggests, in 'Variation on a theme by Rilke', is

to offer up
our specks of life as fragile tesserae
towards the vast mosaic

Levertov was organising Poets for Peace rallies as late as 1991, when the US attacked Iraq at the start of the first Gulf War. She also founded a Pax Christi group at Stanford University.

Her 1992 essay, 'Biography and the Poet', underlines her dislike both of confessional poetry and of 'sensationalised life-writing'. The publication of Diane Middlebrook's *Anne Sexton: a Biography* (1991), which included notes from Sexton's psychiatric records, provided part of the impetus. Here, the public poet articulated her protectiveness of the artist's right to privacy.

To 'gain a tauter hold on Levertov', writes Greene, is 'to discover that she remains elusive, much like the mountain—present and absent, her person never fully grasped, but only pointed to and honoured' (234). Greene's image of Levertov's death—her friends gathering 'in the chaos of grief' at her hospital bedside, Nikolai 'spontaneously [chanting] one of his poems for her', waiting for her to regain consciousness after a last-ditch operation—is at once an image of the tenacity of the living, and Levertov's final elusiveness. Levertov was never to regain consciousness. At least in Australia, though, what Eavan Boland calls the 'wayward music' of her poems fares 'forth into the grace of transformed/ continuance'. *Ars longa, vita brevis*.

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Don Juan done by Divers Hands

Julian Croft

There are fifteen divers hands (thirty if you're a pedant) responsible for this continuation of Byron's Cantos about the loves and adventures of Don Juan—all of them written in ottava rima, and all of them with the same energy and wit as the original, though not, perhaps, in many cases, with the same fluency and grace. It's a remarkable undertaking, and something that, once dreamt up in the pub after a big session, might seem a fine thing to do, but oh my God, what are the chances of your fifteen mates delivering the goods? But they have.

When I say a continuation of the original, I mean in the stylistic sense, not the narrative. We don't find out what happens with the ghostly Duchess of Fitz-Fulke where the original ends, thanks to Byron's untimely death, but we do find out a lot of what's gone on in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first to our romantic hero. And there's a lot of it: he's been in outer space, in Budapest during the Velvet Revolution, in Hell of course, in Greece during its present crisis, even in Australia (thanks to Tim Thorne), I won't list them all, but obviously the contributors were given a free hand to do what they will with their poor hero, and, as one of them recounts, the editor said Byron never worried about the plot, so why should you? So don't expect the whole to run seamlessly from beginning to end, for like the original with its rabbit jumps of narrative, its long and sometimes tedious (am I allowed to say that?) digressions, this modern epic has a life of its own rooted (and the vernacular is also freely used in Byronic manner) in our here and now.

And while I'm on digressions, can I digress? That great master of digression Laurence Sterne figures as strongly as Byron as an example for Ian Duhig (despite Byron's strictures on Sterne's hypocrisy for whining over a dead ass, while doing nothing to get his mother out of debtors' prison), in a great play on current reading and writing strategies in the opening two stanzas of his canto:

If *canto*'s rooted in the Latin word for song,
  it harmonises here with English 'cant',
so often wriggling on Lord Byron's prong
  and target of the *Tristram Shandy* rant
where he deems critics most display this wrong—
  forgive me if I play too much descant:
digressive faults, like Byron's, caught from Sterne,
so to our tale directly do we turn:

I—straight away some critic's handbag flies:
  we're in a fight about identities,
my narrative presumptions, lyric Is ...
  Considering the practicalities,
I opt for 'I' here to ventriloquize
  my prejudices, whims or views.
'Je' est un autre! Rimbaud said (I keep
such quotes to hand to make myself sound deep).

But that's OK, because we're talking here about the epic, and not the lyric solipsism of twentieth-century poetry.

The tone of this passage is representative of several of the cantos: playfully contorted witty conversation straining against the corset of the form, echoes of Coleridge's descriptions of Donne 'wreathing pokers into true-love knots'. Byron solved the riddle of a discursive style in a serpentine syntax, and so did Auden in his Letter to the same Lord, though Auden's is far more urbane and transparent (but in a seven line stanza!). Also, mid-century, Alec Hope's 'Letter from Rome' had the same ease and fluency. It seems that in the early twenty-first century, the head of pressure, political, aesthetic, and moral, is far more difficult to contain.

But there are other cantos where plain style reigns. George Jowett tells a well-told story of a marriage undone by a philandering Donald Johnson in a remarkably elastic use of the stanza in which he conjures up convincingly two very different voices: the world-weary muck-raking journalist keen to get the dirt on Donny Johnny the incestuous, infamous Disc Jockey, and the injured husband Alf:

And as for Donny, I despise his sort,
  Self-centred hedonists, you know the kind,
Who'll never spare even a single thought
  For the broken hearts they've left behind.
It's just a silly game to them, a sport,
  And once it's done they put it out of mind.
No, Donny's never for a moment paused
To think about the hurt and harm he's caused.

'Oh come on, Alf. You're crying. Don't take on so.
  I'm sure what you have been through has been tough,
But really, there are limits Mr Jonso.
  It's time to call a halt. Enough's enough.
It's over, Alf. Forget it. Julie's gone so
  There's no point in dwelling on it. Yes it's tough
But just accept it now. Your ex is gone.
What can you do? Get over it. Move on.

In a recent review in *The New Statesman*, George Szirtes, author of Canto 12 in the present work, wrote:

> In the 1960s and the 1970s, form was generally considered an irrelevance to be jettisoned for something that could be extracted from it. Form was anti-modern [...]. The contemporary counter argument is that form is not decoration but process, an aspect of meaning not to be detached from the whole.

Nowhere is that more apparent than in Szirtes' contribution here. His canto is an account of the summer of 1989 when suddenly the iron grip of communism on Eastern Europe was broken as floods of Ossies from Eastern Germany passed through the open border between Hungary and Western Europe. Restraint and freedom are the theme as Juan presses on with an affair with Heidi, party insider and ex-wife of an old aristocrat, but underneath it all an unreconstructed nationalist. The pull and push between the freedom of breezy unconstrained tale-telling and the restraint of the stanza neatly characterises the tensions in Eastern Europe prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the canto ends with the national celebration of the Revolution of 1848. Form is certainly process here:

Explosion on explosion! Light for hours
  Of night! It's dizzying and transformational.
The human mind is in hock to the dark powers

Of the grandiose and the irrational.
Here is a symbol locked inside the showers
Of red and white and green, the national
Colours of 48, the last great glorious
Revolution that failed to be victorious.

What of the rest of the continuations in this collection? They're all entertaining; in fact, the wit and energy of the whole is quite extraordinary, and very readable. It makes one wonder why long poems in traditional stanzas (loosely followed) are not more popular. I particularly admired Andy Croft (no relation, alas—I wish I had a modicum of his *brio* with his account of Don's time in a writing group in prison), Claudia Daventry, Amit Majmudar, and Sinéad Morrissey. And it's a triumph despite the humility of Andy Croft to Milord in the Prologue:

Since we, who hang out with the pedestrian Muses,
Could never hope to catch the winged steed
Of your iambic metre as it cruises
(At eighty thousand feet!) we knew we'd need
Some help to rouse your hero from his snoozes
And bring him up to date and up to speed.
You see, despite the catch that we've just landed,
We still can't match what you caught single-handed.

→ A Modern Don Juan: Cantos for These Times by Divers Hands, edited by Andy Croft and N. S. Thompson, Five Leaves Publications, ISBN: 9788-1091017005, £14.99

Contributors

Jordie Albiston's latest titles are *XIII Poems* (Rabbit Poet Series, 2013) and *The Weekly Poem: 52 exercises in closed & open forms* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2014). She lives in Melbourne.

Dael Allison edits and writes poetry and prose. Her poetry publications include *Shock Aftershock* and *Wabi Sabi* (Picaro Press, 2010 & 2013), and *Fairweather's Raft* (Walleah Press, 2012).

Ivy Alvarez's second poetry collection is *Disturbance* (Wales, UK: Seren Books, 2013). Her work is published in journals and anthologies in many countries and online, with individual poems translated into Russian, Spanish, Japanese and Korean. www.ivyalvarez.com

Adrian Caesar is a Canberra writer. His latest book of poems is *Dark Cupboards New Rooms* (Shoestring Press, 2014); his novel *The Blessing* is forthcoming later this year from Arcadia.

John Carey is an ex-teacher of French and Latin and a former part-time actor. The latest of his four collections is *One Lip Smacking* (Picaro Press, 2013).

Ken Chau is a poet living in Melbourne. His poems have been published in Australia, China, France, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, UK and USA. His collection *Possible Lyrics for Chinese and Western Pop Songs* (Bendigo Publishing, 2015) won the inaugural Vox Bendigo Fyffe Prize.

Eileen Chong is a Sydney poet. She won the Poets Union Youth Fellowship in 2010 and was the Australian Poetry Fellow for 2011-2012. Her first book, *Burning Rice*, was shortlisted for the Anne Elder Award 2012, the Australian Arts in Asia Award 2013, and the Prime Minister's Literary Award 2013. *Peony* (Pitt Street Poetry, 2014) is her second collection. eileenchong.com.au

Charlotte Clutterbuck is an essayist and poet. She won the David Campbell Prize in 2009 and has published three collections of poems: *Soundings* (Five Islands Press, 1997), *Ion* (Piccolo Press, 2012) and *Brink* (Picaro, 2013). Individual poems have been published widely in Australian journals, newspapers, and anthologies.

Jennifer Compton lives in Melbourne and is a poet and playwright who also writes prose.

PS Cottier is a poet who lives in Canberra. Her latest publication is a pocket book called *Paths Into Inner Canberra*, published by Ginninderra Press (2015).

Julian Croft has been publishing poetry for over 50 years; his most recent collection is *Ocean Island* (John Leonard Press, 2006). He lives in northern NSW.

Jelena Dinic arrived in Australia in 1993. She writes in Serbian and English. In 2014 she received the Fellowship for Residency at the Varuna Writers Retreat in the Blue Mountains. She lives in Adelaide Hills with her family.

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 published by Walleah Press in 2013. He lives in Riverhills, Brisbane.

Dan Disney currently teaches with the English Literature Program at Sogang University (Seoul). He is completing a book of villanelles and is co-editor, with Kit Kelen, of *Writing to the Wire* (forthcoming, UWAP).

Martin Dolan is a Canberra poet who moonlights as a public servant.

Joe Dolce, born USA, moved to Australia in 1979, becoming a citizen in 2004. His poetry appears in *Best Australian Poems 2014*, was shortlisted for both the Newcastle Poetry Prize 2014 and the Canberra Vice Chancellor's Poetry Prize 2014. He won the Launceston Poetry Cup, at the 25th Tasmanian Poetry Festival.

Josh Mei-Ling Dubrau holds a PhD in Creative Writing from UNSW. Her critical and creative work has appeared in *Overland, Southerly, Cordite*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Australian, The Night Road* (Hunter Writers Centre, 2009), *Computer Music Journal* and *Poetry and the Trace*. She is currently working on her first collection of print and electronic poems. Of her contribution in this issue of the *Australian Poetry Journal*, she writes, 'The poem was strangely inspired in equal measure by the sensations I felt in a moment of time, and a short Marjorie Perloff article contrasting Tom Raworth and Philip Larkin, which I had been reading at the time'. Her interview with Julie Chevalier appeared in the previous issue of the *Australian Poetry Journal*.

Michael Easson is recently published in *Poetica Magazine, The Chesterton Review, Eureka Street*, and the anthology *New Voices* (Wellington Square Press, Sydney, 2014). He is a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) and a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (FRICS).

Jonathan Hadwen is a Brisbane poet. He has been published in *Westerly, Stand, Mascara, Cordite*, and other publications in Australia and abroad.

Lorraine Haig lives in Richmond, Tasmania. Her poems have appeared in anthologies and journals. Her first solo book of poetry, *An Ocean of Sky*, was published by Burringbah Books (Hobart, 2014).

Susan Hawthorne's most recent book, *Lupa and Lamb* (Spinifex, 2014), was written while in Rome as the BR Whiting Library Resident. Her previous books include *Limen* (2013), *Cow* (2011, shortlisted for the 2012 Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize), and *Earth's Breath* (2009, shortlisted for the Judith Wright Poetry Prize).

Ron Heard enjoys life in Brisbane amongst the heat, rain and roof possums. He edits *The Mozzie*, an independent poetry magazine that publishes over 400 poems per year. He has published one collection, *river, she-oak and wind* (Post Pressed, 2007), and a verse novel, *The Shadow of Troy* (Gininderra, 2011).

Gail Hennessy is a poet who has been published since 1976.

D.J. Huppatz is a poet who lives in Melbourne.

Kevin Ireland was born in New Zealand. His 20th book of poems, *Selected Poems*, appeared in 2013, followed by a new collection, *Feeding the birds*, in 2014.

Daye Jeon is a freelance translator; most recently, her co-translations appear in *World Literature Today*. She holds a Masters degree in English Literature.

Jackson won the 2014 Ethel Webb Bundell Poetry Award and came second in the Glen Phillips Poetry Prize and the Karen W Treanor Poetry Award. In 2013 Mulla Mulla Press published her second collection, *lemon oil*. Jackson is the founding editor of Uneven Floor poetry blogzine (unevenfloorpoetry.blogspot.com). Visit her at proximitypoetry.com

Eleanor Jackson is a Filipino Australian poet, performer, producer and broadcaster. Her work has been published in *Overland, Arc Poetry Magazine, Going Down Swinging, Peril Magazine, Scum Magazine* and *Cordite Poetry Review* and elsewhere. She has a keen interest in long-form, collaborative performance works and is currently Artist in Residence at La Boite Theatre in Brisbane.

Anna Jacobson is a Brisbane poet, writer and artist currently in her final year of creative and professional writing at QUT. Her poetry has been published in literary journals including *Cordite* and *Rabbit Poetry Journal*. www.anna-jacobson.com.au

Virginia Jealous is a writer based in Denmark, Western Australia. Her work includes travel journalism, essays and poetry. She is currently preoccupied with, and is writing about, the extraordinary poet Laurence Hope (Adela Florence (Violet) Nicolson), who died in Madras in 1904.

Christopher (Kit) Kelen's latest book of poems, *Scavenger's Season* was published by Puncher and Wattmann in 2014. His new collection, in Indonesian, *Kidung Alum Terbuka*, was published in Yogjakarta this year.

Andy Kissane's fourth collection of poetry, *Radiance* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2014), was shortlisted for the 2015 Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry. He has also published a book of short stories, *The Swarm* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2012). He was the winner of the 2013 Fish International Poetry Prize. http://andykissane.com

Šime Knežević is a poet and playwright from Sydney. His poetry has been published in *The Next Review* and *Going Down Swinging*.

Shari Kocher's poetry has been widely published in literary journals in Australia and internationally. Her first book, *The Non-Sequitur of Snow*, is forthcoming from Puncher & Wattmann. www.carapacedreaming.wordpress.com.

Martin Kovan is a writer and research scholar in ethics at the University of Melbourne. His short fiction, prose-poetry, poetry, journalism, essays and academic non-fiction have been published in Australia in *Overland, Cordite, Westerly, Tirra Lirra, Antithesis, Peril* and *Southerly*.

Carolyn Leach-Paholski has published poems in a range of journals and anthologies. She has also written a Commonwealth Writers' Prize short-listed novel, short stories and is a regular contributor to *Slow Magazine*.

Lesley Lebkowicz has published poetry and prose (fiction, reviews, translations) and won some awards for these. Her last book, *The Petrov Poems*, (Pitt Street Poetry, 2013) was shortlisted for the 2014 ACT Book of the Year and won the 2014 ACT Publishing Award.

Julie Maclean is the author of *When I Saw Jimi* (Indigo Dreams, UK, 2013), *Kiss of the Viking* (Poetry Salzburg, 2014), and *You Love You Leave* (Kind of a Hurricane Press, USA, e-chapbook, 2014). Her work appears in *Poetry* (Chicago) and *The Best Australian Poetry* (UQP). Blogging: www.juliemacleanwriter.com

Tessa McMahon, retired teacher and Braidwood poet, has been writing poetry for around twenty years, and has given many readings. She has been published in *Eureka Street, Poetrix, Page Seventeen* and the Canberra Anthology, *The House is Not Quiet and the World is Not Calm*. Her first collection, *Observations*, is in preparation.

Caitlin Maling is a Western Australian poet whose first collection *Conversations I've Never Had* was published through Fremantle Press in 2015. A second collection *Us Girls* is forthcoming.

Tom Morton is a writer, radio producer and teacher. His audio fictions, co-produced with Stuart Brown as tomstu, have been broadcast on Radiotonic and Soundproof on ABC Radio National. A South Australian by upbringing and inclination, he lives in Sydney with his partner and two teenage sons.

Philip Neilsen's fifth collection was *Without an Alibi* (Salt, 2008). He teaches poetry at QUT and the University of Queensland.

BN Oakman is a former academic economist whose poems have been widely published in Australia and overseas. His books include *In Defence of Hawaiian Shirts* (IP, 2010) and *Second Thoughts* (IP, 2014).

Geoff Page lives in Canberra. He has published twenty-one collections of poetry, two novels and five verse novels. Recent books include *1953* (UQP, 2013), *Improving the News* (Pitt Street Poetry 2013) and *New Selected Poems* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2013). He edited *The Best Australian Poems 2014* and *Best Australian Poems 2015* (Black Inc).

Vanessa Page is a Cashmere-based (Queensland) poet who has published two collections of poetry including *Confessional Box* (Walleah Press, 2013), the winner of the 2013 Anne Elder Award. *China Bull*, her collaborative non-fiction poetry work, will be published by Work + Tumble in 2015.

Felicity Plunkett is a poet and critic. She is the author of *Vanishing Point* (UQP, 2009), *Seastrands* (Vagabond, 2011) and the editor of *Thirty Australian Poets*, and Poetry Editor with University of Queensland Press.

Ron Pretty's eighth book of poetry, *What the Afternoon Knows* (Pitt Street Poetry) was published in 2013. A revised and updated version of his *Creating Poetry* was published by Pitt Street Poetry in 2015. He spent six months in Rome in 2012, courtesy of the Australia Council.

Saxby Pridmore is an academic psychiatrist born, raised and aged in Tasmania, Married with two adult children and squabble of grandchildren. He has authored a handful of textbooks and over 200 peer-reviewed papers.

Vanessa Proctor writes free verse and has a special interest in haiku and related forms. Recently, she has acted as sabaki, leading haiku groups in renku, linked verse. Her poetry has been published internationally, and in 2010 one of her haiku was inscribed on the Katikati Haiku Pathway in New Zealand. Her latest publication is the echapbook *Jacaranda Baby* (Snapshot Press, 2012).

Anna Ryan-Punch is a Melbourne writer and critic. Her published poetry includes work in *Antipodes*, the *Age*, *Overland*, *Island*, *Southerly* and *Westerly*.

Pam Schindler is a Brisbane poet, librarian and bushwalker. Her first book of poems, *A sky you could fall into*, was published in 2010 by Post Pressed. In 2013 she went to write for a month in a Scottish castle, as recipient of a Hawthornden Fellowship.

Ian C Smith lives in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria. His work has appeared in *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore*, *Rabbit*, *Regime*, the *Weekend Australian*, and *Westerly*. His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy* (Ginninderra, 2014).

Nicolette Stasko's first collection, *Abundance* (Angus & Robertson, 1992), won the Anne Elder Award. Subsequent collections include *Glass Cathedrals: New and Selected* (Salt, 2006) and three chapbooks, most recently *under rats* (Vagabond 2012). Other work includes fiction (*The Invention of Everyday Life*, Black Pepper, 2007) and non-fiction (*Oyster*, HarperCollins, 2000). She is currently an Honorary Associate in the English Department at the University of Sydney.

John Stokes is published widely in Europe, the USA, Japan and Australia. He has won or been shortlisted for many major prizes and has represented Australia at international festivals. His latest book is *Fire in the Afternoon* (Halstead Press, 2014).

Lise Temple is a South Australian artist. Her landscape paintings respond to the colours and broad shapes of the South Australian Mid-North. Her work investigates the temporal nature of viewing landscape.

David Tribe, Sydney-born and Brisbane educated, has been writing poetry for 70 years. His volume *Why Are We Here?* was published in 1965 by Outposts (London). His poetry has been broadcast on BBC and ABC radio, published in newspapers and magazines across five continents and in anthologies in Australia and the UK.

Alison Wong lives in Geelong. Her novel, *As the Earth Turns Silver*, won the 2010 New Zealand Post Book Award for Fiction and was shortlisted for the 2010 Australian Prime Minister's Literary Awards. Her poetry collection, *Cup* (Wellington, Steele Roberts, 2006) was shortlisted for Best First Book at the 2007 Montana New Zealand Book Awards.

RD Wood writes for *Cultural Weekly*, edits for *Peril* and is on the faculty of The School of Life. He recently joined *Cordite Poetry Review* as Commissioning Editor. See his work at www.rdwood.org

Jena Woodhouse held a 2015 residency at Camac Centre d'Art, Marnay-sur-Seine, France; other residencies include a Hawthornden Fellowship (2011). She has been a student and translator of Russian literature and has lived and worked for extended periods in Greece. Her poetry volumes include *Eros in Landscape* (Jacaranda, 1989), *Passenger on a Ferry* (UQP, 1994), and *Farming Ghosts* (Ginninderra, 2009).

Ungyung Yi's translations of contemporary Korean poetry appear in *World Literature Today*. She is a Ph.D. candidate (English Literature) at Sogang University, South Korea.