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Poets featured in this volume were offered a 300-word limit for their bio and any poem statement as the intention of APD is to showcase subscribers' efforts. The variation in bio length is according to each poet's preference.

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Writing Companion

Companion, from the Latin: 'sharer of bread'

for Alicia Sometimes

She asked if
we should swap
words but I'd already
grown attached.
How quick
the hand holds on
to *gunmetal* and *red*,
how soon
the heart says pretty
and opens then
clasps. The taste of
sounds on the tongue,
the sharp tang
of consonants,
how the vowels curl.
I hand them over,
reluctant, then,
the moments of
suspension, hovering
in empty space,
and finally, the return,
where all the words rush
and anything is possible.

Gayelene Carbis's book of poetry, *I Have Decided to Remain Vertical* (Puncher and Wattmann), was recently awarded NYC Big Book Award—Distinguished Favourite—Poetry; Finalist, Best Book Award 2024 (U.S.); and is currently Shortlisted/Finalist in the Society of Women Writers NSW Poetry Book Award 2024. It was also Finalist, Poetry Book Awards 2023 (U.K.) and Finalist, International Best Book Awards 2023 (U.S.)

'Writing Companion' was first published in *The Victorian Writer*, Autumn Edition, March–May 2021; it also appeared in *I Have Decided to Remain Vertical*.

A Conversation of Ants

Conversation trickles along the white wall
a parade of commas, full stops, colons
an ellipsis trailing the occasional exclamation mark

a never-ending queue of ants coming from
who knows where and for what reason

Waiting their turn
cuddling up in the cupboard
between X-rays and letters
taking the shine off certificates of merit

Tenacious as tigers protecting their cubs
Unquestioning obedience to some higher power
...the God of Ants perhaps

Soft clumps of question marks
query my assumptions

Much smaller than the bull ants
found on sandy tracks to the beach
stinging from one end
biting from the other

or soldier ants on relentless marches
bent on munching whatever gets in their way

A damp sponge blitzes small lives
killing conversation
along the white wall

Jennifer Chrystie was a Melbourne poet who had poems published in *Quadrant*, *Cordite*, *The Weekend Australian*, *Australian Poetry Anthology*, *The Canberra Times*, *Shot Glass Journal* (US) and *The Best Australian Poems 2012*, amongst others. Her four collections are *Polishing the Silver* (2006), commended in the FAW Anne Elder Award, *Weight of Snow* (2013), *Poetry Pond* (2021) and *The Finish Line* (published posthumously, 2025).

'A Conversation with Ants' was previously published in *The Finish Line* (Tales from the Treehouse, 2025).

Dangerous Singing

It is in the nature of poets
to be dead. That is their
primary function, to die.

And to tell their stories whilst doing so.
Oh, and to scratch out a few other things
– an inventory of acute observations –
but that is not their singular task.

Poets are the ones that go on ahead,
so that, at a particular moment,
they can swivel back, and say,
“For you, I turn to stone”.

Richard James Allen is a Gadigal-based poet, filmmaker, actor, dancer and choreographer. A First-Class Honours graduate from Sydney University, he won the Chancellor's Award for best doctoral thesis at the University of Technology, Sydney. A founder and co-artistic director with Karen Pearlman of the multi-award-winning Physical TV Company, his work has been screened, broadcast, published and presented on six continents. Richard's thirteenth book, *Text Messages from the Universe* (Flying Island Books, 2023), was a finalist for three international awards. A film adaptation won six awards and was nominated for Best Narrative Feature Film at the ATOM Awards. In an earlier incarnation, his first novel, *More Lies* (Interactive Publications), was shortlisted for the Griffin Award for New Australian Playwriting. An audiobook version had its world premiere at the Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival, before releasing globally on Spotify and other platforms, in 2025.

'Dangerous Singing' is previously unpublished.

trust

it's one of those things
that can slip away
like balance on uneven days

catches you by surprise
as a song in your head
that won't leave you alone

you're no longer where
you imagine yourself to be
relegated to the outer field

instead of close in like a wicket-
keeper knowing which way
the ball will swing

something that just doesn't
fit anymore like a favourite
shirt or pair of Levis

that creak in the door
reminds you there may be
bits of you already gone

Mike Greenacre's most recent poetry collection is *Nocturnal House* published by Ginninderra Press in 2020. His poetry has been widely published and he has won prizes, such as the Tom Collins Poetry Prize in 2019. He is a member of WA Poets, OOTA Writers and Vincent Writers.

'trust' is previously unpublished.

A Packet of Seeds

My mother died without apology
without regrets.
And every numbered day
of her swiftly sifting life
I hoped to catch
a grain of love.
And when she went
I flared with rage,
kicked the dirt
spat.
Her grave took it all.

*

A child sold me
a packet of seeds.
I sprinkled them around her grave.
smoothed the earth,
soothed her brow.
The rain came down
drenched the ground.
The sunshine drew
the spirits up
and all around her
burst into blue –
a sweep of nodding forget-me-nots.

Polish born **Eva Collins** is a writer and a photographer. She holds Bachelor degrees in Philosophy and Psychology and in Fine Art Photography, Diploma of Professional Writing, Teaching Diploma and a Master's degree in Contemporary Art (VCA). Her poems have appeared in *The Best Australian Poems*, *Quadrant*, *Southerly*, *Westerly*, *Cordite Review* and the *Newcastle Poetry Prize Anthology*. She has also had poems published in Polish literary magazines, displayed on Melbourne trains, and on the streets in Poland and Melbourne.

In 2022, Puncher & Wattmann published her verse memoir, *Ask No Questions*, which was shortlisted for the 2023 Prime Minister's Literary Awards, the CBCA Book of the Year Award and the Mary Gilmore Poetry Award. In 2022 Eva was interviewed about her book on ABC Radio National's Conversations program and in July 2023 she featured as a poet at La Mama Poetica Theatre.

Eva was a finalist in the National Photography Portrait Prize, Percival Art Prize, Stanthorpe Art Prize, Olive Cotton, Moran Portrait and Head-On Awards. She had won the Inaugural Nikon Prize (2005) and the Newer 17 Trocadero Prize (2016) and represented the RMIT Art School at the Hatched Perth Institute of Contemporary Art.

Eva has exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery, Mars Gallery, Melbourne Museum, Buxton Contemporary Gallery and Museum of Australian Photography. Some of her work is held at the National Portrait Gallery, State Library of Victoria and the local councils.

Her short videos have been shown at various film festivals and won Best Animation Award at the Polish International Film Festival and Best Performance at the Berlin Underground Film Festival.

Eva is currently finishing her second verse memoir which will be published in November this year.

'A Packet of Seeds' is previously unpublished.

DENISE SHAKESPEARE

we love

without restraint
intense and fresh
like spring rain
spiked with the sweet fragrance
of intimacy

and after the storm
dewy and warm
we sleep
in the soft bed
of our contentment

Denise Shakespeare was born in England and immigrated to Australia when she was seven. She has lived in SA, Qld, and Sydney NSW. She now lives in the Dandenong Ranges, VIC. She writes poetry and fiction. A former teacher, Denise has an Arts Degree from Macquarie University, Sydney. She has completed several modules of a Professional Writing and Editing Course at Chisholm Institute. Her poetry has appeared in *Heart of the Hills*, *FLY*, *page seventeen*, *Positive Words*, *Mountain Ash Chapter (MAC)* and at *Writers Victoria*.

'we love' is previously unpublished.

Tower

93 million are the miles this light has crossed
to reach this office block.
Past stellar remnants and through cosmic
dust it raced to strike this abridged obelisk
with its assortment of bodies:
statutory, corporate, mortal.
An alliance of insurers, the owner
of a diamond drill, the Office of Integrity
in Racing. This light, unnoticed until
it drenched this edifice in gold.
A gleam is light as it is leaving.
The building shines like a vow.
Here, in the sight of heaven,
take this tower.

Amy Crutchfield is a poet. Her work has been published in Australia, the UK and Ireland. Her first collection *The Cyprian* (Giramondo) was published in 2023 and received the Prime Minister's Literary Award in 2024. She has a poem as part of Red Room Poetry's 30in30 daily poetry commissions for Poetry Month 2025.

'Tower' was first published in *The Weekend Australian* 28–29 July 2023 (p. 13).

a weighted blanket is simply not enough

my therapist suggested I try a weighted blanket
7 kgs should do the trick, she said
but seven kilos is not nearly enough when
the weight of the world
presses heavy crushing my ribs, mind, soul, spirit
and there,
the final snap of bone
and ooze of gizzard

what I really need, *I say to the man at Australian Landscape Supplies*
is to fall asleep in a neatly cut hole
6 x 2 m preferably, but I'm not choosy
and that dump truck, *I point*
to slowly lower
luscious loam
after I've been laid gently across some coir bedding
malligaipoo in my hair
temple flowers at my feet
cinnamon oil rubbed on my skin
here in this
earthy shrine

and then
as my body lingers on and I continue
to dance with the dirt
decaying and decomposing
still here in the dark
let me carry on the giving
as I feed
the endogeic and the epigeic worms
the earthworm and the redworm
the european nightcrawler and the kentucky worm
scatter wildflower seeds, worm tea and golden marigolds
to welcome home cabbagewhite caterpillars
who sprout into winged ones and bees who sip pollen like rosé.
let them feast where I could not
here in this
earthy shrine

because a weighted blanket
is simply not enough.

Priyanka Bromhead is a whirlwind of creativity, resistance, and radical imagination—an antidisiplinary artist, educator, and troublemaker who lives on unceded Darug land and refuses to be boxed in. With a background as a teacher and arts facilitator, she crafts spaces where learning is alive, rebellious, and deeply human. Whether she's designing community engagement strategies, sparking anticolonial conversations, or making art that unsettles the status quo, her work is a love letter to collective liberation.

Her writing explores the intersections of her layered identities: a proud Western Sydney refugee, fierce mother, unapologetically queer, disabled, and dark-skinned femme reclaiming her space. Through raw storytelling and defiant truth-telling, she challenges erasure, centers marginalised voices, and weaves narratives of resistance, survival, and radical joy from the frayed edges of society.

A self-proclaimed “professional unlearner,” Priyanka thrives in the messy, magical intersections of art, activism, and education. She’s as likely to be found leading a workshop on dismantling oppressive systems as she is drawing at life drawing, writing fiery manifestos, or organising mutual aid efforts. Her superpower? Turning ideas into action—and making sure everyone has a seat at the table (or better yet, flipping the table entirely).

Playful yet purposeful, Priyanka believes in the power of joy as resistance. When she’s not busy challenging white heteropatriarchal or casteist frameworks or dreaming up new worlds, she’s poring through an op-shop, plotting the next creative gathering, or convincing you that another world **is** possible. Spoiler: she’s right.

‘a weighted blanket is simply not enough’ is previously unpublished.

Binary

I imagine you drilling down/ into the lion's decayed tooth/
details of shade patterns on paved footpath/layers of evening
drop their latest track/ later the dog with one ear skewed/
will trot after the girl at the next table/across night's long
grass/there is no binary to footstep/ the opposite of pain is
stretched asleep on the table/ the lion's appetite is for his
keeper/ the keeper pretends not to know/ my appetite is for
your air/ quizzical like a lopsided dog/ you pretend not to
know/ lay down your body/ like a sunset/ like a footfall

If you were looking for her, you'd find **Lucy Alexander** in one of three places. Firstly, in her chaotic house, buried beneath the leaves of the plane trees where she'll be either reading under one of her three labradors, whistling at the washing line or herding her four children out the door. The second place to check is her studio at Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centre (ACT) where she'll be practising her poetry. That doesn't look like much, but involves scratching her nose and muttering. Or you may catch a glimpse of her on the street, fleetingly, yodelling under her breath as she leans into a corner on her electric scooter, hair blown wild from under her helmet.

'Binary' first appeared in *Equations of Breath*, which was published 2024 by Recent Work Press.

Poetic Ink

The Poetic Ink that flows
bleeds from the Heart that knows
it fills a deep dark hole
with the calligraphy of a soul
& so she continues to write
merging with the night
cleansing out the bleed
so she can finally be freed
free to finally smile
and rest the quill a while
The Poetic Ink that flows
bleeds from the Heart that knows.

Paula Rowlands, known as **Pivotal Poetry**, is from Western Australia. She is an Aussie Poet, author, writer and Mother. She has been published in several Anthologies over the years and has won several awards for her write-ups. She has self-published several Poetry books, all out on Amazon, and enjoys sharing her logophile world, to intrigue, ignite, inspire and resonate with all that follow her work. Paula is currently an active member of various literary and creative platforms online. Her latest book, *Cosmic Collision*, (published late 2024) with over 200 poems, also contains the original poem 'Poetic Ink'. Paula is excited to have been able to turn a lot of her Poems in to songs this year and you can find them on her YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@pivotalpoetry/videos>) where Poetry & Music collide.

'Poetic Ink' was first published in *Cosmic Collision*.

In Synchronicity

Opening up space-inherent grapplings
furthered and poeted glorious and glee,
I sweeten beginnings of fluttering things
into magical sorrows and footsteps of me.

Shaking the needle then, threading the range
and heaven proceeding a vastness of sky,
I wander fantastic all over thy parapet. Strange
how the lines have unwritten it, why?

No one will answer yet murmurs still glow
while beneath and around every word hangs a voice.
Drawn are the gaps between synchronous shapes though
adaptive their borders make calls for a choice.

Tightened intrinsic, each step lays a candle
that sets out a letter's benevolent mind.
There it is naming the part that must handle
itself, or else strike out and slash from behind.

Counted, engendered, each rope stakes a claim
and shall rise up within me elastic and true.
I wonder from where came this song and its name?
I proffer perchance that it rose out of you?

T.A.R. Wallace (he/his) is a yoga therapist living in Bendigo, Australia. His poems have been published in *The Brussels Review*, *Conduit*, *The Poetry Lighthouse*, *Slope*, *Meanjin*, *Heat* and *The Age*. He won the Lane Cove Literary Awards Poetry Prize 2023.

'In Synchronicity' is previously unpublished.

STEVE BROCK

Out of season

sometimes things
just fall together

like the cat
leaping through the hole
in the screen door
to join us for beers
on the back veranda
under midsummer rain

Miles' Doo-Bop
playing on the speaker
a CD we wore out
in our youth

there's a fog over the sea
and our garden
is lush and green

it's the end of holidays
and we have the house
to ourselves

you put on a dress
purchased in your 20s
from a boutique
around the corner
of a share house
we lived in

the rain stops
we make love
and doze
late into afternoon

beyond our breath
a plane distances itself
from the world

upon reflection
our youth was something
less misspent
and more indulged

Miles blows
and blows
regaining lost time

Steve Brock's poetry has been published in journals in Australia and overseas including *Antipodes*, *Australian Book Review*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Island*, *Meanjin*, *Poetry NZ*, *Quadrant*, *Shearsman* and *Westerly*, and in translation in Spain and China. His poetry collections include *Live at Mr Jake's* (Wakefield Press, 2020) and *Double Glaze* (Five Islands Press, 2013). Steve is the co-translator from Spanish to English of the anthologies *Desarraigo: 18 Poetas Transfronterizos*, (Nautilus Ediciones, 2021) and *Poetry of the Earth: Mapuche Trilingual Anthology* (Interactive Press, 2014). He has been a guest author at Adelaide Writers' Week and a judge for the South Australian Literary Awards.

'Out of Season' was first published in *Shearsman*, Issue 141/142, October 2024.

Pilgrimage

On a pilgrimage west
to my ancestors' graves,
planning to camp
in a national park,

using no maps
and lost on the highways,
I lifted a boundary log
and drove at dusk

through, at some point
I must have realised,
what was a dirt ranger's road,
in my little galaxy-blue Mazda 3.

The log blocked the road
because it was unsafe.
There was no one around
and I drove wild.

Twilight and through
gold-flickering gum
forest drooping into
grey I saw yowies,

bunyips, slouch-hat
shotgun serial killers,
manifest as flash through
moving scrub. I reached

a heavily eroded hill
with dry rivulets deep enough
to swallow a tire,
complex and knotted

in a perilous steep incline.
I got out. Planned my route.
I would have to carefully
zig-zag my tires

along the ridges.
Night was falling.

If I damaged the car,
I could have been in real danger.

I turned my loud music
(conceivably the essential
Bob Dylan) right down to
concentration whispers,

to cancel my aural hallucinations
(by destructive interference)
which would otherwise mock
and distract me.

My arms strained from
tension on the wheel.
I used the handbrake,
regularly hill-starting to prevent

slides, which could turn into
rolls. White-knuckle
on handbrake and wheel, forcefully
finessing clutch and accelerator,

I made it to the top of the hill,
got out, looked down at what
I had accomplished. Later,
I made it to the campground

in the dark of night,
set up my tent, built a fire,
read Khayyam's Rubaiyat
and the Bible. In the morning,

at the foot of Mount Arthur
I wept before the graves
of my grandparents,
and felt them stand behind me.

Brendon IJ McLeod is studying a PhD at The University of Sydney, for which he is writing a novel in verse about the life of Henry Davis Snowden (Reweti, 1811–1864, Ngāpuhi/Pākehā), an ancestor, and in aid of this study was recently granted the Arthur Macquarie Travelling Scholarship. His unpublished novel, *The Rhinoceros*, a surrealist psychological fiction engagement with the 17th Century folk ballads Tom o' Bedlam and Mad Maudlin Searches, was awarded a fellowship from The Writers' Space to Varuna, The National Writers' House. His poem, 'split mind' named for the Greek etymology of schizophrenia, was shortlisted for the 2023 *Overland* Judith Wright Poetry Prize, and published in *Overland* 255 in 2024. He is compiling a poetry collection under the name *Split Mind*, which, exploring many topics but particularly madness, is unified by (the theoretical essence of all literary and critical writing): division and conflict.

Statement on the Poem

The present poem, 'Pilgrimage', probes the problematic of the intersection of mental illness and philosophical and spiritual belief, which is a central investigation in my work. A true story, the poem describes a twilight drive through Goobang National Park on Wiradyuri Country in the Central West of New South Wales. My goal was Wellington, where my Grandparents and many other relatives are interred, seeking the love that is found in spirituality and family. I experience hallucination as a symptom of my condition. But the presence of my Grandparents as unseen, loving presences in the end of the poem complicates the idea that one can completely discard this extrasensory perception as useless and untrue. It does however also give one liberty to do so, even when the hallucination is imposing. Thus, hallucination exists in a state comparable to quantum superimposition: when observed it can be true or untrue, but when measured we see what is useful. Driving a difficult road functions as an effective metaphor for navigating this ontological self-concept.

'Pilgrimage' is previously unpublished.

The ware-wolf

Most of the time
you get what you ordered.
But one week a month
it's whatever hairy paws grab
from bulging warehouse shelves,
or from shaking co-workers.
Complainers find themselves
dispatched around the globe,
paired legs or single arm.

PS Cottier lives on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land. Born in England, she grew up in Melbourne and moved to Canberra years ago. She has written eight books of poetry, and also writes prose. Her most recent publication is *The Thirty-One Legs of Vladimir Putin*, co-written with NG Hartland, which won the Finlay Lloyd 20/40 Prize last year.

She loves weirdness and humour in writing, and tries to capture something of the absurdity of life in her work. PS Cottier wrote a PhD on images of animals in the works of Charles Dickens at the ANU, and has worked as a university tutor, a union organiser, a lawyer and a tea-lady.

'The ware-wolf' was first published in *Dreams and Nightmares*, USA, September 2023.

Landing lights

Through my parents' kitchen window, above trees
that over the years they've lived here
have grown just tall enough to hide the sea

I'm watching a bright light that appears from time to time
a brilliant planet that seems to hang over borderlands
of tussock and thistle on the bay's western side.

While I prepare their dinner, I've left my wife over there
where I can imagine she's unpicking a mistake
she's made in her sewing because she's tired

and I wish I could be over there too, telling her to leave it; I would tell her
about how the Navajo stitch a tiny line into their rugs
to show a weaver's soul the way to leave the work and rejoin the world.

That light seems to hover for a few moments, and then
as if it's made a decision veers away and vanishes
until it reappears a few minutes later.

It took me a while to realise it's only the main flight path into the city
that momentarily positions planes to face us
shining into this room where Mum's sitting before the TV

appalled, in the dark, because she's seeing again, in her lifetime,
the aged, the sick, spreadeagled between mattresses, cots,
a few pots and a chair piled on carts

pulled by their sons along the ruts, through ruined villages
across lands and histories loved and cursed by their unhappy tribes
into open fields of twilight beneath inexplicable lights.

Isi Unikowski is a Canberra poet, who has been widely published in Australia and overseas, including *Best of Australian Poems 2022*. His two collections, *Kintsugi* (2022) and *Re:Vision* (2025), which included 'Landing Lights', are published by Puncher & Wattmann. His most recent poems are available at www.isiunikowski.net

'Landing Lights' was first published in *Re:Vision*.

The Princes Highway

The colony was
an evil thing
it snaked along
a poisonous course
Displaced,
pilgrim
settler
forced

Move aside
we're coming through
to multiply
procreate
dominate

The hungry
chained
flinty hooves
ruined soil
ancient bones
Murnong spoilt
its roots exposed.
I hear the sounds
of ancient groans

Coastal meander
Ant-nest fringed
eucalypts, tree fern
paddocks cleared.
Gurnai to Yuin
Jirribitti Dreaming
the snake must
shed its skin

Melanie Weckert: I am a former environmental microbiologist. I now live in Merimbula, on the lands of the Djiringanj people, with my husband and our small wombat-shaped dog, Boris. My poems have been published in *Four W Thirty-Three, New Writing; 34 to 37 Degrees South, SCWC Digital Poetry Anthology*; and *Brushstrokes 2024, Ros Spencer Poetry Contest*.

'The Princes Highway' was first published in: *South Coast Writers Centre, 34 to 37 Degrees South, SCWC Digital Poetry Anthology, 2022*.

My Home is Not a House

'If the idea of 'home' implies physical and psychological safety and security as well as shelter then a child, adult or older person affected by domestic violence experiences a hidden 'homelessness'.'

—Jill Ashbury et al. in 'The Impact of Domestic Violence on Individuals'

'For a child who is inherently dependent and who needs a safe environment to develop a sense of sure-footedness in the world — this homelessness can be a kind of lifelong exile.'

—Meera Atkinson in *Traumata*

Physical and psychological safety occurs when my body is a boundary, when my skin is not a finish line, but a home. I lock the doors, the windows are latched, the alarm system is always on. I want to live in a community where the neighbours text when there is danger. Instead, they chat with my grandfather over the asbestos fence; he complains about fuel prices. They reach up into the invisible tree between them, pulling at the conversation, picking the ripe fruit from out of his sour disposition. These lemons are boiled in hot water to clean out our kettle. I am sour enough already, they say, he is sweet tea; they think they can see through him. A child's outline is seen behind him, a colouring-in book, still blank, unusual.

From the outside my house looks safe, but there is a hidden homelessness here; my room is messy because this is the only place I can take up space. I cannot leave the computer in the lounge logged in. My dirty clothes can't stay on the bathroom floor. There is no laundry basket for them. I am 10 years old, and I do not know how to use the washing machine. I am an incontinent housewife, always leaking my childhood all over this home. There should be no trace of children here. I hold my breath for as long as I can. This house is underwater. This house drowned the moment he moved in. Now this house is not safe. This house is not secure. Fish lay eggs in the carpet.

My home doesn't look like the house that I grew up in. My home is built from all the words I have collected; song lyrics from early 2000s rock, confessional poems. I write poetry using disposable biros. My handwriting is identical to my mothers, soft bulbous shapes that repeat like cinnamon scrolls. Except, I don't eat. I am a bird foraging for my nest. I build my home inside this unsafe house, these journal pages, this felled tree. Words are soil sifted through me. I plant a new tree that will outlive me.

I try to kill myself when I am in year 10. Now my nest is made from Seroquel and Xanax. Two mouthfuls of water holds my new home together: this quetiapine, Phenelzine, two mouthfuls of pills and I'm off to class. My throat full of chalk dust. I swallow.

I am fabric that is not yet cut into a pattern. A block of wood placed on a fire. I tell my parents I am fine. I build a fence around my home that looks sturdy and uninviting. Wooden posts are hammered deep; they severe nerves. Only my mother asks to come inside.

From 2005:

My stomach rumbles in a state of despair,
it says it's hungry, but I don't care.
My head feels light and I'm getting dizzy,
but no-one notices, they're all too busy.
My eyelids get heavy, and my hands start to shake,
I feel like I'm sleeping but I'm still wide awake.
My knees buckle in and my stomach roars,
and they can't understand that my spirit soars.

Looks so tempting but I will not touch,
need to lose weight, I can't eat so much.
My cheeks, my arms, stomach, hips and thighs,
bulge with weight, my clothes whisper their lies.
My heart starts hurting and I'm short of breath,
I'm going to faint; am I close to death?
Everything hurts, I can barely move,
I can't get to sleep, there's no means to soothe.

I'm trapped in this nightmare; it's not going to end.
You see Ana and I are the best of friends.
I promised to be there through both smiles and frowns,
not thinking our friendship would slowly move down,
and so, I'll lose the weight, I hope, I pray.
Ana says I will, says it will be okay.
And we'll hold hands till death sinks in,
we're in this together and we're determined to win.

Note: Atkinson, M (2018). *Traumata*. University of Queensland Press.

Ashbury, Jill, Judy Atkinson, Janet E. Duke, Patricia L. Easteal, Susan E. Kurrle, Paul R. Tait, and Jane Turner. 2000.
'The Impact of Domestic Violence on Individuals.' *Medical Journal of Australia* 173 (8): 427-31.

Karen Lowry: It has taken me a long time to find my voice: I did a PhD in electronic literature; I've worked as designer (UX, print, and motion graphics); I wrote a verse novel I never published. My CV is eclectic. My debut collection *This Fragile Thing* (forthcoming 2026) is where it all comes together. I've spent my career developing the skills needed, not only to write this book, but to design it, typeset it, market it, and own it.

This Fragile Thing is a vulnerable poetic memoir about how I have survived childhood trauma and sexual abuse. I use experimental techniques to take you back to the child who was hurt, to show you the ways I've suffered as an adult, and to expose the institutions that failed me. I was blamed for what happened to me, blamed for disclosing. I know this now: I am not responsible for my trauma.

These poems use non-literary forms (such as court documents), concrete forms, even mixed media collage. There is no contents page, no easy way to navigate and understand what happened to me. I want to disrupt your expectations.

I want you to see the world from the point-of-view of those who are most vulnerable.

I have a very impressive CV, but that's not what's important. What's important is that I survived and writing about that survival might give someone else hope.

But if you want to know more about me, some highlights include pieces published in Black Inc's *Growing up in Country Australia*, multiple *Australian Poetry Journal* issues, and Writing WA's *the little journal*. I also love performing. Prior to getting, and recovering from, agoraphobia, I attended many festivals and events around the world. I even helped WA Poets Inc run them. Find more of my work at www.kazzalow.com.

'My Home is Not a House' is previously unpublished.

Limits of Vision

The
sight of scaled
flippers
coming out of your carapace
(shell) makes me think of paddles coming out of canoes.
However, I note your body moves with much more grace & complexity
than anything made by human hands to travel on or under water. I take it that
your carapace does an ace job of protecting you from predators that would do
you harm. I wonder what happens within you. If I ever meet a
marine biologist or have a spare moment with my vet, then I may well ask.
I wonder what happens around you as you swim between nesting beaches and
feeding grounds. I can't help but feel *A Turtle's Tale* doesn't do the
strangest truths justice. I wonder how long your beautiful species
will manage to survive the dangers posed
by us humans. I hope
that green sea
turtles live
up till the
inevitable
end of the
Earth.

Michael Leach lives and works on unceded Dja Dja Wurrung Country in his birthplace of Bendigo. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Monash University School of Rural Health and co-leads the Australian & New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators (ANZAHPE) Health Humanities Hot Topic Action Group (HTAG). Michael's poetry primarily focuses on health: human, animal, and planetary health. Michael's poems have appeared in journals such as *Cordite Poetry Review*, anthologies such as *The Best Australian Science Writing 2024* (NewSouth Publishing, 2024), and his four poetry books: *Chronicity* (Melbourne Poets Union, 2020), *Natural Philosophies* (Recent Work Press, 2022), *Rural Ecologies* (In Case of Emergency Press, 2024), and *Chords in the Soundscapes* (Ginninderra Press, 2025). Michael's poems have been recognised in various competitions, most recently first place in the Philippa Holland Award for Poetry (Eastwood/Hills Fellowship of Australian Writers Literary Competition 2025).

'Limits of Vision' was first published in Issue Sixty-Six of *Otoliths* (August 2022) and was later shortlisted in the poetry category of the Woollahra Digital Literary Award 2023.

Beyond the Silk: Unveiling True Strength

In the mirror of society, a reflection I see,
A construct of femininity, they wish me to be.
Soft, tender, delicate, and tame,
Wrapped up in silk, playing the game.

An image sculpted by tradition's hand,
Etched deeply in the shifting sand.
Yet, beneath the surface, a spirit roars,
Yearning to break free, to explore.

Trapped within this gilded cage,
My soul rages against the page.
I am more than just a pretty face,
More than an object of grace and lace.

The whispers of the wild echo in my soul,
A symphony that makes me whole.
Yet, they insist on a silent song,
A melody where I don't belong.

I am strength, I am fire, I am fierce and free,
More than this feminine façade they see.
A warrior, a dreamer, a lover, a friend,
A tapestry of traits that blend and bend.

So, I'll chip away at this confining shell,
Rise from the ashes where I fell.
For I am not just woman, but human too,
A depth of spirit constantly renewed.

I am not trapped under my own femininity,
But empowered by its diverse infinity.
I'll redefine what it means to be a woman, in kind,
Not in body, but in heart and mind.

Ginny Lee is an inspired poet. She uses poetry as a form of escapism and as a voice, one that can't be silenced. She is a feminist, and she writes like one.

'Beyond the Silk: Unveiling True Strength' is previously unpublished.

Homo Sapiens make the Rules

members are not supposed to talk
about World Club
about what the globe was like
when there were wildernesses
how at certain times, in colder climes
opalescent rinses
would stream down from the sun
in colours of crème de menthe and rosé
over otherwise untouched
ice, rock and pine

some older members might be able to recall when
there were still spaces left
for terrestrials to live
on coastal strips and coral islands
then...
watery horizons grew monstrously high
along the once, dark green band
of the equator

though members are not supposed to talk
about World Club
they will have heard the rumours
about penguins evicted from Antarctica
struggling along St Kilda beach
warnings of the death of the very last tree
the imminence of entropy

Ross Jackson is a retired teacher. He writes free verse on topics as varied as his experience of aging and fanciful descriptions of places he's never visited. He writes most often with a degree of detachment about small events he imagines that might take place in the suburbs. He has had poetry published in many Australian literary journals (*Westerly, Cordite Poetry Journal, Rabbit Poetry, Eureka Street, Gargouille, Australian Poetry Anthology*) and some of his poems have appeared in New Zealand, Ireland, Canada and the UK. There are isolated human figures in the corners of many of his poems. A collection, *Time alone on a quiet path*, came out with UWAP in 2020. His latest collection, *Suited to Grey*, was published by WA Poets Press.

'Homo Sapiens make the Rules' is previously unpublished.

I told her she was fulgent

it was another episode more or less
in our lusty twistory
like the memails we used to shoot
to ourselves never
to be shared *nemos* we called them
& when we made out
we dubbed it *closing up* because
(she glossed) *loving* is more
than a fully open art once
i told her she was fulgent
a real gem a pearl to which
her viscous retort pearls
are congealed oyster spit
she'd dug that jewel out of
the handmaid's tale &
when i shucked a chuckle
she confessed her dill mother
zany father had grown a habit
of swiving in his & hers
bling they adored the jangle
nihil obstat i indulged so
long as they adore each other
like us she interrogated
lifting off me a moment
i'm sure they do & i licked
her crumpled elbow bless
them your dum & mad
i said lusting for a grimace

Alex Skovron's poetry has appeared widely and he has received a number of major awards for his work, including the Peter Porter Prize. His volume of new and selected poems, *Towards the Equator* (2014), was shortlisted in the Prime Minister's Literary Awards. A first collection of short stories *The Man who Took to his Bed* (2017), and his novella *The Poet* (2005, winner of the FAW Christina Stead Award), have been published in Czech translations; *The Attic*, a selection of his poetry translated into French, was published in 2013, and a bilingual volume of Chinese translations, *Water Music*, in 2017. His poetry has also appeared in Dutch, Macedonian, Polish and Spanish. The numerous public readings he has given include appearances in China, Serbia, India, Ireland and Portugal. Alex has collaborated with his Czech translator, Josef Tomáš, on book-length English translations of twentieth-century Czech poets Jiří Orten and Vladimír Holan. His translation from Italian of the first canto of Dante's *Inferno* was published in his most recent (seventh) collection, *Letters from the Periphery* (2021). His next book, *Switchpoints*, a collection of short narratives in prose and verse, is due in late 2025. In 2023 Alex was honoured with the Patrick White Literary Award for his contribution to Australian literature.

'I told her she was fulgent' first appeared in *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* (online), December 2022.

Chicken Soup

Then they gave up feeding Marie altogether ...

—Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*

Lifting cold cup-a-soup outside St Mary's –
I eat none of it.

Soul,
Separate bin, same packaging.

Chicken soup I watched her make –
Hours on that great bay we said nothing.
She looked at me
Once
Or twice, was it?

The light bulb held away from the interrogator forgets heat.
It can't be love but something of the holy-high
Bell tower
And gothic arches carry us.

Majestic teacher of wisdom, the museum attendant
Molested each of us with
Facts
On marbled Medusa, on Psyche
Cupid resurrects.

She knew the saviour personally.
He, it was she had in
Mind,
Serving me, a stranger, broth.

A long time cold the seat ...
No, no, not so lonely as all that.

Glenn McPherson is a Sydney based poet. He has been widely published in leading Journals and Anthologies in Australia and Internationally. He was a finalist in the Gwen Harwood Poetry Competition (2023). Long listed in the Bournemouth Writing Festival Poetry Prize, and VC International Poetry Prize (2024). Shortlisted for the Newcastle Poetry Prize and the ACU Poetry Prize (2024). Recent poetry appeared in *Antipodes*, 2025.

'Chicken Soup' is previously unpublished.

SHOSHANNA ROCKMAN

SCARED — A stage play

CHARACTERS

SHE
HE
FARM HAND

SCENE ONE — *at home.*

HE: You are scared of everything.

SHE: (aside) Sounds like taunting.
Sounds like he's taunting me.

HE: You are scared of your own shadow.

SHE: (aside) I don't think my shadow's

the problem. And that cliché's
unbearable. But thoughts

don't imprint themselves —
don't write themselves real.

SCENE TWO — *on farm.*

She wanders to the top

*of a hill on her own
for a view of mottled scrub,*

*a sniff of dust and eucalyptus. A mob
of working dogs lies chained*

*in the violet shade
of a corrugated shed. An angry bluey*

*breaks free. All white teeth — white
spit. She stands her rough ground.*

*A farm hand comes rushing but the dog
stops short. Drops its game.*

FARM HAND: (appears shaken) How is it
you didn't run? Didn't scream?

D'ya know dogs? Work 'em?
ME: (breezy) Just don't scare easy.

Shoshanna Rockman: '...a strong new voice that doesn't hold back. Lively, potent, and unashamedly personal.'
—Alex Skovron.

Over the past two years, Rockman has been awarded first prize for The Tom Collins, The Calanthe, The Poetica Christie Press, The Port Writers' Prize and The Sutherland Shire Literary Prize. She has been widely published in journals and anthologies including *Rabbit* and *Cordite* and her debut poetry collection, *Take me for tame* (Ginninderra Press), was released in 2023.

'SCARED — A stage play' is previously unpublished.

Lepidopterist

You can find him if you know where to look;
on the edge of the horizon, under the cover of trees
silhouetted against the sun.

With UV light, pooter, queen sized bed sheet
he surrounds himself with the dazzling and the drab
the divine and the mythical;
created because all the gods get lonely.

Ones that span the width of a hand
or the width of a matchstick.
Ones that feed on the tears of sleeping birds.

He wonders how they make silk out of nothing;
how they listen to the moon.
He loves their consistency most of all; dabs them
as they skitter and skate across a floodlit screen.

They're his pulse, the touchstone
by which his own life is measured
knowing the dust that falls from crumpled wings.

What was it she used to say?
That's not the work of a creative.
A skewer through the middle.

But he was just dormant in her presence
camouflaged against the dining room wall.

Now, he's a translator for other beings
converting one form of beauty into another
their customs and cultures; like forms of energy.
But they will never know him.

Perhaps tonight he'll see males of *Rileyiana fovea*
serenading females with their mandolin wings
or the young caterpillars of *Heterogynis penella*
that eat their mother as soon as they hatch.

More personalities than a room full of people;
inhabiting the dusk like no one can.

He puts on sunglasses, careful not to look at the light;
knows that if he did, he'd drift away
caught in its trap.

Christopher Palmer is a poet and visual artist based in Canberra. He's been published worldwide, including in the *Australian Poetry Journal*, *The Brasilia Review*, *The Galway Review*, *Meanjin* and *takahē*. His first collection, *Afterlives*, was published by Ginninderra Press in 2016. A chapbook of newer poems is forthcoming from PressPress.

Romeo's Lament

Dearest stranger, in a dream,
Floating far beyond the sun,
With what comic destiny
Is our future, future spun?
Kisses, cuddles, teddy bears,
Ice cream, coffee just for two?
Conversations in your bed,
Secret late-night rendezvous?
If your heart is so inclined, drop this crazy boy a line.
Break his poor heart if you must,
Dreams...are only made of dust.

Milton Reid was not named after the famous poet, neither were his parents particularly literary. But he found an affinity with words at an early age, culminating in a BA degree in English Literature and Modern History. Subsequent work mostly involved images for Film & TV screens, but in private moments the experience of Paradise either Lost or Regained, however insubstantial would inspire the distillation of emotions in poetic form, riding waves that often crashed on foreign shores, sending spray in all directions. These are fragments of such moments, photons flying into the unknown. Now retired, he is writing a book about Ancient Egypt.

breast growth

One given point
the overnight
between Melbourne
and Sydney— two
genders, I imagine you
repeat— a green
track-light quiet as
a billionaire sub, holding
one's breath for the engine
beginning its chosen
way: all vehicles
function by breaking
down- I inhale
in the mirror- the track
light stays green. I wake
up, observe— at dawn—
the outer suburbs
of a non-descript city, over-
looking the point one
—green to orange to
red—becomes
another, marking
no border
after the fact.

Josie/Jocelyn Suzanne is a writer/freelance editor living on unceded Wurundjeri land in Naarm. She has been published in *Overland*, *Meanjin* and *Rabbit Poetry* among others. In 2023 she was shortlisted for the Kat Muscat fellowship, and in 2022 the Val Vallis award. She was the winner of the 2021 Harri Jones award, and was one of the recipients of the Next Chapter fellowship. She is a transsexual femme.

She has 3 poems coming out in the inaugural issue of no purchase magazine, and is one of the recipients of the 2025 Varuna fellowship for trans and gender diverse writers.

'breast growth' is previously unpublished.

Sillyland

Remove that load and occupy
some strangeness
because you've never been so familiar
so fascinatingly dingy
so full of dark shapes floating.

In an age of ruins you've become
southbound
candlelight rich and thick
as a sandwich wandering aimlessly
in a waiting train.

Wipe your own bar down
with someone else's dishcloth
because you're so heavy-built
and so covered in stains
like an old raincoat
like the rest of them.

Put your money away and assemble
some personal interest
as you're settling on the bar again
completely fenced in
but stop worrying
there is no use in worrying.

Peter McMahon lives in Canberra, works in construction and likes writing poetry and short stories about current affairs. He gets published now and then.

'Sillyland' is previously unpublished.

Mount Isa

1959.

Isa,
she is mindless miles away,
a pressure point
points the way
to the sky,
and on the back of her hand,
white and dry,
she grew a town
on her copper veins.

Gigantic desert insects
put their iron toes
around her wrists,
building nests of men
who found their way
deep into her heart.

Unimagined awe.
Metal chapels opened their doors
inviting men to pay for their sins.
To descend, in majestic cages,
arriving below
to become
superhuman,
under the earth,
with teeth bearing wands.
They carved their names
into her heart,
fragments of her plated up
on metal palms,
with small wheels
moving to the surface,
dropping coins
into men's palms,
that opened up
like fields of flowers
facing the sun,
on the back
of Isa's hand.

Antonio Palanca: An Italian and German immigrant met each other in Northern Queensland after World War 2, and a while later brought me, Antonio, into the world. While my father's childhood happened under chestnut trees in rural Italy, mine happened under tall public housing towers near the Melbourne CBD. Education is a disrupter, it collides with a history, and it happened with a force that flung me and my sister light years away from those towers. My father cut cane, mined ores, and cleaned floors. I cut million-dollar deals, mined technological change, and cleaned reading glasses. My adult children now cut algorithms, mine roman artifacts, and clean databases. It is hard to make sense of. I have always needed the poetry to get even close. I think it's better than me. Sometimes it seems to write itself. I have started to share it, in the hope that it might help others make some sense of things too.

'Mount Isa' is the first poem I've written that has been published. It is part of a collection of poems I wrote about my parents' migration journey.

'Mount Isa' is previously unpublished.

every store is a concept store

at a point my need to write ‘poetically’ turned into a need to write prose. by poetically I mean *the quick brown fox released like a spring b4 barrelling ova a stump & eating shit*. the point, I know—my 30th year, also the year my mum told me it’d all change, the kid-desire would kick in. loathe to admit the rightness of it all. & solo family members with kind advice. middle-aged folk reflecting on their lives—boar pizzas & desert drives. I stopped rolling eyes. 15 years of therapy arrived. I acquired linen pants. bought a suit. a teal suit, sure. every poem is a concept poem. **a carefully curated selection of products, services and experiences, all of which relate to a particular theme or concept.** wriggly candles. pastel de nata. yoni eggs. the now-defunct Quick Brown Fox, a quirky boutique on King Street. surely you can’t have a space without first conceptualising the space. like, what’s it for and how to go about it? every single glass I own is lined up in its set, then the sets are grouped by type (water, wine, bubbles, whatever). they sit in these perfect little rows, and when you open the cupboard door you are pleased. the pantry, not all chaos. mostly spices in old vegemite jars. they’re labelled. by me. maybe this is fulfilling some middle-class, Karen fantasy, but mostly putting things in their silly little order crafts singular delight. see the space to be the space. **a total reimagining of traditional physical stores.** what would an extended belly look like? a quick kick in the gut? a rip of the anus? I think about Morocco, the things we bought for our first Living-Together, where we will put them. the rugs, the vases, the art. I dream about a new fridge. the cat on the couch. all my jars in their little line-up. how when they’re in order, I am in law and order.

this poem is an entryway, flanked by sans-serif font, abstract cut-out shapes.

MAXIMALIST FLOOR

MINIMAL COLLECTION

my hips, wider than a man’s, godly design. I enter concept after concept. fox a little tired today. *ICON. NEW BLACK URBAN. Lovely. Eksepcion. Xperience. The Feeting Room. Breed.* a woman on a mission to find the perfect pair of Portuguese shoes (slingbacks, loafers, boots—I don’t care). I shuffle on carpet and imprint this poem. **a concept store sells a lifestyle to a specific audience.** I am Carrie. no, I am Samantha. I am disposable income. I am still Early-20s Feminist Beliefs. I am Woman Who Bought Shoes in Europe on Sabbatical. I am future job. I am secure place to live. //

I head to the corner store with the green marble bench and the fake bronze tips and order an espresso and a tart and I watch tourists queue to ride in an elevator. every day the same guy sitting on the stoop yelling at the tourists and their waiting for their ride in the elevator. and every day I espresso and I tart. if a woman wakes up one morning and knows she has it all, is she a boss or is she a bitch? life’s about making choices, so canal as transportation will take you straight out to sea.

god I miss you so. what is
all this wandering for if not for search of meaning? I am the frescoes of Rome.
the urban fox. the holder of hands. I am the plan that was put into action!

I am the becoming
& have become—
the vessel & the conduit
the mary & the mongrel
the miraculous gal
who tended to that garden
who woke one day &
saw her own death
quit ciggies on the spot
farewelled Lisbon.
arrived in Amsterdam.
ran my ass out
along the canal.
now sitting on a terrace
thinking about you &
my billy buttons
growing alongside you
maybe we'll plant
the sunflower seeds
you smuggled home
from Maroc
push deep
in tiny pots
but for now
on this terrace
I sit in the sun, baps out,
just me & Divinity, f2f
—just me & time—& oh
what eternity, what bliss!

* *ICON. NEW BLACK URBAN. Lovely. Eksepcion. Xperience. The Feeting Room. Breed* are names of concept stores in Lisbon.

* Bold text taken from articles (a carefully curated selection of products, services and experiences, all of which relate to a particular theme or concept / a total reimagining of traditional physical stores) (<https://unibox.co.uk/blog/what-makes-a-successful-concept-store> // (a concept store sells a lifestyle to a specific audience) (<https://us.bouncepad.com/blogs/news/are-concept-stores-the-future-of-physical-retail>)

Holly Friedlander Liddicoat has previously been published in *Cordite*, *Overland*, *Rabbit*, *Southerly*, *The Lifted Brow* and *Voiceworks*, among others. She's edited poetry for *Voiceworks* and the *UTS Writers' Anthology*. Rabbit Poetry published her first collection *CRAVE*, which was shortlisted for the 2019 Mary Gilmore Award. In 2023 her manuscript *DOGHOUSE* was shortlisted for the Helen Anne Bell Bequest, and is now out with Vagabond Press.

'every store is a concept store' is previously unpublished.

Bretby Cat

of Mirka Mora

The oddest trinket—a memory
unsettles
amour de chiot
dans les yeux d'un chat
one eye brown, one eye yellow
Noël, mere mention
epileptic, he played
piano passionately
letters lowered on a string
to Oliver
amour de chiot
one in another
to be so young
to think so old
memory turns over
grips, the cat
a *médailon* returned
to the white, thin shadow
his photograph inside
her brain
like a cat in a garden
alive with insects
turning circles
Oliver, who kissed her forehead
and died
the cat holds
this quality
of Noël
a name turns
the line
on puppy love

This poem draws on material from:

Mora, Mirka, *Love and clutter* (with photography by Earl Carter), Viking: Camberwell, Vic. 2003.

Mora, Mirka, *Wicked but virtuous: my life*. Penguin, 2000.

Jessica L. Wilkinson has published three poetic biographies, most recently *Music Made Visible: A Biography of George Balanchine* (Vagabond, 2019). She is also working on a fourth poetic biography, on French-Australian artist Mirka Mora, and the poem in this volume forms a part of that manuscript. Jessica is the founding editor of *Rabbit: a journal for nonfiction poetry* and the Rabbit Poets Series. She is a Creative Writing academic at RMIT University, Melbourne.

'Bretby Cat' is previously unpublished.

MAREE WHITE

When the sun stops shining

What must I do when the sun stops shining
And my lips are parched?

Suck the water from the air
If you must....
And wait

For moisture to come
Return to you
Quench your thirst
Nourish your bones
Swell your breasts

Until milk pours forth
Gushes out
Returns to earth
Seeds sprout
And the time comes
For flowers to bloom

Wait

Stand the test of time
Let roots spring from your feet
Find their way
To the watery deep

Maree White has lived in the Northern Territory for 23 years. Over the past 8 years she has been developing as an artist and a poet. Drawing inspiration from dreams, nature and everyday experiences, she hopes to bring a little soulfulness into her daily life.

'When the sun stops shining' is previously unpublished.

Little Echo

I have been thinking about how a bird
playing throw and catch
with its voice
can wake the echoes in the mountains

and how a dandelion in its youth
is a little echo
of the sun

and how a dandelion in old age
is a little echo
of the moon

and the way puddles and ponds
look like shards of sky

and how the wrinkled face of a
newborn is an echo
from the future

and how the light of a star
is an echo from the past

and the way the letter m
holds the shape of water

and the way my left hand
carries the imprint of my right

so that when they strike
the sound bounces off the evening

releasing the echoes from my palms
to hustle
home to roost.

Sarah Meehan lives and writes amongst the creeks and mountains of Jinibara land (Sunshine Coast hinterland). Her work has been published in Australia, Ireland and the United Kingdom, including in *Mslexia*, *Crannóg* and *The Weekend Australian*.

'Little Echo' was first published in *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*.

The Hamburger Advert

I walk into the room,
With nothing,
But myself and my intestines.

I try to listen. I think I'm quiet,
But I talk continuously-
The truth is:
I'M NOT THERE.
I'm surrounded by words,
The room, crowded by thoughts,
And I shrink into nothingness.
I don't care. The man speaks,
About his art. I know it,
Even though I'm not supposed to.
I can't be bothered being disobedient,
I'm too concerned for his health.
He reads the lines on my forehead,
As I ask to borrow a book. It's supposed-
To be a compliment. He takes it as-
An insult, and monsters a response,
As if to say, 'You think you've lines,
In your forehead?'

The book was a gift for his-
Son. One of those gifts an egotist-
Gives, because his son did not like it,
And regifted it to him. He tells me this,
I don't want it. I never did. It was just-
Something to fill the non-existent silence,
The absence of nothingness. It was called,
The Book of Nothing. I will look it up online.

My friend is taking photos,
Of the art on the walls,
She also films our conversations,
Intermittently. I don't care.
I pull out my phone and film,
For a while, because it'll seem,
The right thing to do, for posterity.
Though I know I'll lose the file,
And the phone.
I have another drunk friend,

Who knows her. Though he's dying,
Himself in a room in a bed-bug infested,
Hotel, he took the time to wonder,
In his drunkenness, at her beauty,
And put it like this, 'I bet she-
Spends a lot of time in front-
Of the mirror! How old is-'
Then he passed out,
Before re-emerging to brawl,
With random passers-by.
I told her this. She said,
'I don't spend any time
In front of the mirror
Anymore,
I'm a mother.'
I think I offended her,
But I don't really care,
We offend each other.
We were fortunate
To be discussing-
The sublime nature
Of existence,
Among other things,
We all knew there was-
'Something else.'
I googled a meditation,
For letting go,
Of resentment,
And watched
A hamburger advert.

Scott Welsh is an academic, playwright and poet. Several of his play have been performed at La Mama over the past two decades and his poetry read by many on the streets of Melbourne & Sydney, and also broadcast on ABC Radio National. Prior to that, he worked and wrote in regional Victoria, where he published several self-published books. In 2016, he completed a PhD in the role theatre can play in education and his work emphasises the relationship between experience and creative practice. He has an upcoming book exploring the application of his '(real) fiction theatre' playwriting method, due for release in October through Routledge Publishing, Australia.

Some of his play titles include: *There's a Naked Man in My Loungeroom* (2001), *Barcode 30!!7 307* (2002-2003), *The No Teeth People* (2009), *The Biography of a Battler* (2012), *The Outcaste Weakly Poet* (2014), *Charles Manson and the subtle art of Radicalisation* (2016), *Serving Coffee @ Sims* (2017) and most recently *Moosh the Hobo Cat* in 2023.

He currently teaches and researches sociology, creative writing, and contemporary education practices at Victoria University and the University of Melbourne.

'The Hamburger Advert' is previously unpublished.

Shack

It can be that simple:
a wooden shutter
propped with a stick
to let in a tilt of moonlight,
a square of sun

or swung down and bolted
when the storms come
and the wind shrieks through gaps –
on the iron roof,
blown riffs of rain

til sea-glitter gleams in the cracks
and we swing it out again
like an ocean door,
and fill the house brim-full
with moving air.

It can be that simple:
a hook to hang a shirt on,
a mosquito-net, bunched
on its wooden frame

nights in a flood of moonlight
and sea-murmur,
tanks filled with rain

And a scarf of moss on a rope
is a sunbird's nest,
and our heights marked on a doorframe
are threaded with bark and spiderweb,
the salt blur of days.

Pam Schindler lives at Blackmans Bay, lutruwita/Tasmania. Her work has appeared in Australian magazines and anthologies and in her two collections, *A sky you could fall into* (Brisbane: Post Pressed, 2010) and *say, a river* (Port Adelaide: Ginninderra Press, 2023). She is a Hawthornden Fellow, receiving a writer's residency at Hawthornden Castle, Scotland, in 2013. In 2020 she was commended in the WB Yeats Prize (Australia). In 2021 she took part as one of 23 Tasmanian poets in the Poetry for a More Than Human World project, led by Kristen Lang. *Say, a river* has recently been awarded the Tim Thorne Prize for Poetry in the 2025 Tasmanian Literary Awards.

'Shack' was first published in *neither/nor* Issue 2, February 2024.

I drive to work

I drive to work early
Not to tow the company line
A company man
Working for company money
I drive to work early
For the roads
Peaceful
the glow of lights haunt
With reverence
I pass through the cold fog
Resting fearful
staring skywards
Staring at nothing
No one knows my name
I'm not from here
My radio hasn't changed station in years
I know the hosts and miss them during summer
My dashboard green & red
Twinkle in waking eyes of Christmas morning
Road signs grow as I approach them
Looming over the day
Calling in reflective language
Promises they are not able to keep
I enjoy the drive
I want it to last longer
As long as I'm moving
It's where I'm going that bothers me
But I'm still speeding

Antonio Montaine is a rhythm poet, stylistically influenced by jazz and hip hop culture. His writing focuses on social and political issues.

'I drive to work' is previously unpublished.

Rock Collection

Salvage /'salvidʒ/ verb, transitive (Philippine English):
apprehend and execute (a suspected criminal) without trial.
—*Oxford English Dictionary*

That Sunday we wandered into a newly leveled path
In Sitio Salvacion, searching for rocks.
The road of gravel and dust lay bare and desolate,
While next to a heap of hacked madre de cacao limbs,
A derelict bulldozer stood like a watchful tomb.
We analysed the specimens methodically
According to the categories in our textbook.
We marked them, these rocks salvaged
From the forest's limbo,
And gathered them together in our backpack.
We scrutinised the surfaces of silica
Or limestone, the fissures and fractures
On quartz or on clay,
While trying to understand
The geologic violences that had birthed them:
 The metamorphic slate and marble
 bashed like heads against tectonic walls;
 Shale and conglomerate,
 dragged and buried in rivers and marshes;
 Molten rock crawling and burning
 like a pyroclastic man,
 later petrified into granite and basalt.
On our way back, we were haunted
By what we had heard in whispers: Here it was
In this wasteland
Where they often found the decomposing bodies
 (Hands bound by barbed wire,
 Torsos perforated with stab wounds,
 Skulls with bullet holes),
Black shapes being discovered, according to the night guards,
Beneath the tall reeds and guava trees,
And speedily collected at day's end
In bodybags
By the police and funeral parlors.

At dusk, we could feel the weight
Of the bones and skulls
Overflowing in our backpack.

Ronald Araña Atilano is a Filipino-born poet who lives in Awabakal land in Lake Macquarie, New South Wales. His works have been featured in the *Rabbit Poetry Journal*, *Westerly Magazine*, *Jacaranda Journal*, *fourWanthology* (Booranga Writers Centre), *Remnants Microlit* anthology (Spineless Wonders, Sydney NSW), *Poetry at the Pub* anthology, *Grieve Anthology* (Hunter Writers Centre), and recently at the *Tideland: Art + Word* exhibition at the SECCA Gallery in Bega NSW. He won first prize at the Mulga Bill Writing Award in 2022 and at the Katharine Susannah Prichard Poetry Competition in 2024, and was highly commended in the 2023 Hammond House International Literary Prize.

His poetry will soon appear in *Verge* (Monash University), *Locative Magazine*, and *Island* (Tasmania).

'Rock Collection' was first published in *Rabbit 31 — Science* in 2020.

Almost Hitting an Australian Bustard

You were both talking about Ben Okri's New York podcast interview & his idea that authors have a secret responsibility to awaken reader's imaginations through dreams, across deep time & in myth, when a white blur arced out to the double centre white lines like a sprinter practising their false start, who for a short burst, wins against themselves in the tight lane inside of their existence. Your wrist jerked the wheel anti-clockwise like a watch's second hand when its battery runs down & it snaps backwards. Not what you were told to do at high speed; to swerve, but to run the animal over or else crash. Sound advice, but your birder's heart forbade it; you'd only seen the concealed Australian Bustard once before & only then from the long creamy scarf of its neck up to its black bike helmet, as it hid in metre-high spear grass on your way to Winton. This was a chance to observe it, although in a horror jump cut, not the long spying gaze that you'd both enjoyed for five days birding at Bimblebox. Still, your eyes registered things in a feathered zoetrope – stilt-legs, clawed toes, two-metre-long wings that shot out to airbrake its undercarriage as your hot engine's bellows hunted it. Its reflexes, millions of years older than yours; dinosaur-keen engineering that stopped it square on the bitumen base line outside Rolleston, almost foot-faulting like the *Roadrunner* before the Coyote's fake tunnels he'd paint on a mountainside praying for a single win. But you only ever got the view prey did; the last flicker that fills up their vision with shadow. It wore a ghillie suit the blonde of ripe wheat as it stepped out like something prehistoric – long extinct *Geryonis* that pushed through thorny acacia like sea-soft kelp. Maybe it was the lightness of its bones, those hollow tubes out of which Pleistocene musicians carved the world's original flutes, with knapped flakes the thickness of guitar picks. Perhaps, in that moment before impact, some rise of dry air ran down the barrel of its throat, its slender lungs producing a death-note that escaped its nostrils like steam from a factory whistle to warn it. An instinct honed by millennia that rung through its body like an electrical current through a car's battery. In any event, it braked hard & fled back the way it came, as if a cartoon film had been rewound. As cotton puffs limed the roadside's court like feathers left over from a kill.

B. R. Dionysius was founding Director of the Queensland Poetry Festival. He has published five collections of poetry, two chapbooks, an artist's book and a verse novel. His ninth collection, *Critical State*, was published in September 2022. He was short-listed in the 2013 and 2017 Montreal International Poetry Prize, teaches English & Literature, lives in Brisbane and in his spare time watches birds. In 2024 he was awarded a Queensland Writers' Fellowship from Arts Queensland and the Queensland Writers' Centre. His tenth poetry collection, *Extinction Sonnets*, is due in 2025 and his eleventh collection, *The Eromanga Sea*, is forthcoming in 2026.

'Almost Hitting an Australian Bustard' is previously unpublished.

Building Things

1. Build a blanket fort and bring a friend, challenge yourself to stay awake as long as you possibly can. Eat sandwiches, tell each other the stories of your lives, eat more sandwiches, poke each other to stay awake, have oral sex, have more oral sex, have more sandwiches, have more oral sex, have more sandwiches, until one of you no longer can keep their eyes open and that person is the winner.
2. Build a massive lego tower, or a tower of poverty and give it to all the homeless people in the world so they have a place to put their heads in, if multicoloured and only as warm as the environment it is in. Have the children that built it be the custodians and have them rule the lego tower and govern through naps and marshmallow bonfires.
3. Build a gingerbread house and just don't eat it. Gingerbread houses are so overrated.
4. Build and fly a model airplane, but imagine it being a real operational airplane, jump off the cliff but don't tell anyone I encouraged you to do it.
5. Build a Rage against the Machine and whip that cream, oh whip oh whip it good and banish that grass for living its life and cut the shit out of it and make sure the machine knows its place in the cupboard or the shed.
6. Build a sandcastle and climb in and get sand everywhere, in your bum crack, in your ear lobes, in between your toes and your sheet. Your sheet will be a sandy nightmare to sleep in for a long time yet.
7. Build a pinhole camera to take pictures of holes and holes only.
8. Build and fly a kite, OR mix it up, leave the kite on the ground, spread your arms and pretend to fly around like the kite.
9. Build a teepee and find a hose, do a raindance and hose yourself.
10. Build a scarecrow then hide it in a corner, walk around and scare yourself over and over and over.
11. Build an iPhone app, grow a beard, tell everyone you are most definitely not a hipster, I mean what is a hipster anyway and why would you want to hurt me like that?
12. Build a snowman on a 30 degree day, of imaginary snow, they are much more beautiful.
13. Build something out of wood, just gently stroking it and licking it and sucking it and letting the beaver then chew it.

14. Build a house of cards, call yourself a showrunner, put a camera in the corner, book the hotel, unplug the tv so it's easier to throw out the window, book the paparazzi ahead of time, sell tickets and then cancel it all the day before.
15. Build a robot and fall in love with it, build yourself a perfect partner, one that anticipates all your needs, at least until the charge runs out.
16. Build a piece of furniture you'll want to pass on to your children, then decide it's not wise to have children, when the waters are rising; unless the piece of furniture you built was a boat, like a Noah's ark and then maybe, have all the children you can fit in the arc and let all the children shoot out of your vagina, into the world with no future.
17. Build a canoe, see above.
18. Build a bonfire and toast marshmallows, just make sure you don't set your arc on fire, although, why the hell not because you had so many children shot out of your vagina, they are all now dying of hunger anyway. But you will help them govern the lego tower (see 2)
19. Build a dollhouse, imagine the dolls are your children. If one of them misbehaves, you can just rip its head off and replace. (Wish you could do that with real children.)
20. Build a house, even if imaginary, and it may so have to be with the mortgages unavailable to people like myself: people with arts degrees, people with tits, people with incurable self esteem issues.

Saara Lamberg is a Finnish and Australian filmmaker, actor and poet. They also volunteer in suicide prevention. Saara is known for being darkly comedic: 'I grew up in the dark freezer that is Finland, what else do you expect?' Next opportunity to see Saara's multi award winning, Melbourne made feature films is coming up soon. Follow Saara at <https://linktr.ee/saaralamberg>

'Building Things' is previously unpublished.

KATE MAXWELL

Rolling into Xanadu

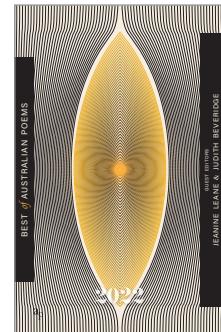
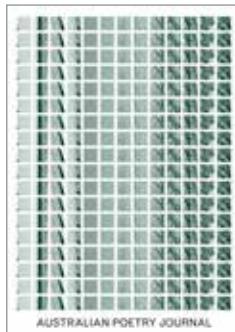
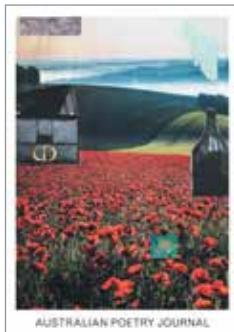
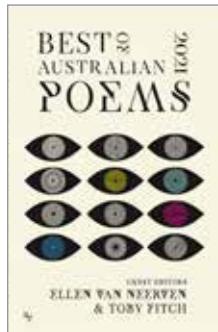
I'm Twelve and bear no resemblance to Olivia
in that Coleridge-inspired movie where she skates
through walls and time into the heart of a tight jeans
dreamer, and tween girls like me: with small breasts
and limited horizons.

She's not a superhero, more a muse—
a deity of sorts, and yet I've donned a shower curtain
as a cape to emulate. Mouse blonde hair, blown wispy
wild behind my back, as I roll down the long concrete
driveway with Felicity to the tinny tune

of 'Magic' on my cassette recorder. We thrust out terry
cloth clad bottoms, imagining our tanned limbs, graceful
as Livvy in her sultry dance and sway, but feeling sorely
mortal when we skid into the Holden and scrape the skin
from tender knees.

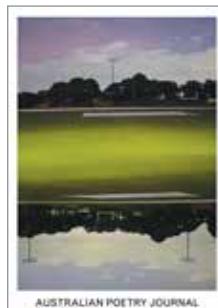
Kate Maxwell is a poet and short story writer. She's published widely in journals such as *Cordite*, *Meniscus*, *StylusLit*, *Rochford St Review*, and *Books Ireland* and has work forthcoming in *The Threepenny Review*. Kate's work has been longlisted in the Liquid Amber Press Poetry Prize, Alice Sinclair Memorial Competition, shortlisted in the ACU Poetry Competition (2021, 2023), the UC Health Poetry prize, the Booranga Literary Prize, Peter Cowan Competition, and The Furphy Literary Awards (2022, 2023). She won the Darling Axe Flash Fiction competition (Canada) in 2020. Kate has published two poetry collections, *Never Good at Maths* (Interactive Publications, 2021) and *Down the Rabbit Hole* (Ginninderra, 2023). She is currently compiling her short stories into a collection.

'Rolling into Xanadu' was first published in *fourW thirty-four* 2023.



Australian Poetry (AP) is the peak national body for poetry in Australia. AP exists to support the full breadth of poetry produced in this country. Our role is to represent Australian poetry and its poets, nationally and internationally. Australian poetry is diverse and rich—both in its contemporary manifestations and its heritage. Our mission is to showcase and celebrate this. AP undertakes this mission with ethical integrity and a commitment to cultural safety of all kinds. A deep respect for First Nations Cultural Protocols underpins all that we do in our publishing, commissioning and presenting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander poetry. This has been central to AP's ongoing engagement with the oldest continuous poetic tradition in the world.

AP publishes the biannual national poetry journal, *Australian Poetry Journal*, curated to unique and provocative themes with relevant guest editors, including also a focus on recent poetry collections. It also publishes a prestigious annual *Best of Australian Poems* volume which is seen as a true and significant barometer of what is being written/Performed by Australian poets. There is also an annual digital book, *Tell Me Like You Mean It*, featuring the voices of new/emerging U30s poets, with *Cordite Poetry Review*, guest edited by an emerging editor. Alongside this sits an extensive year-long program of festival events where AP co-partners with the major capital and emerging literary festivals around the country.



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