

GUIDE TO SYDNEY RIVERS



Guide to Sydney Rivers

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Cover image: Rick Warr

Sydney is known most widely for its harbours and beaches, deservedly so.

However, it also has a significant number of rivers and their tributaries which are collectively closer to the lives of the majority of Sydneysiders. This e-book captures some of the unique qualities of these ecosystems and the people who live near them.

Guide to Sydney Rivers has extraordinary photography. Many of our leading writers are represented herein alongside lesser-known names who have been touched by riverine insights.

Click on the links below to explore your river...

Grose River

Nepean River

Hawkesbury

Curl Curl Creek

Lane Cove River

Parramatta River

Duck River

Middle Harbour Creek

Cooks River

Georges River

Woronora River

Hacking River

CONTRIBUTORS

elbow room

they took to the river
like wanton boys to
flies tearing at the
vivid calm in their
sumo speedboats,
reputation I-III; the
big experience was
their only experience,
they were tickled pink
with their oracular
elbows whoosh whoosh
varoom varoom how
their craft chomped
through the river's history
like contestants in a
guinness book of records
tin can eating quest
the next year when
the drought set in
with meteorological
confidence they returned
in a quorum of rowing
boats gruff and jovial
as usual and carried them
over the rocks where the
streams had done
their disappearing
act, video cameras
perched on available
parts of their noses,
reputations dry and
intact

Somewhere in the
greater Sydney basin.
Previously published
footnotes of
a hammock, (Five
Islands, 2004)

Grose River

Confluence of Catchments

What becomes of each of our two rivers
once their courses begin to flow together?

You're assuming that my Grose catchment
has been behaving as grossly as I have been.

I'm regarded merely as a wrung-in tributary
in comparison to your manifold sourced Nepean.

Yet there is a confluence of our catchments
flowing through both of us as our waters meet.

We are but sediments of both southern highlands
and blue mountains introduced by riparian urging.

Our path from hereon will follow the Hawkesbury
all its zigzagged way until we're a broken down bay.

Remember when we were babbling pristeenagers
who encamped out at YMCA's Yarramundi cabins?

How it rained as if we should have built an ark
before the inundation of farms and gravel pits.

Our two rivers reared up with hormonal churning
of currents closing roads and submerging bridges.

Contrast that flood with another time when
we traipsed and dawdled along unmade sand beds.

No boulders impeded our reaches of the years
and upstream dams never constrained us at all.

Even though we are not yet arrived at the sea

we both know and feel its tidal force of habit.

Indigenous lands have been eroded from our banks,
carried away by incomers here to bottle-throttle us.

We are being drained away, diluted and polluted
while our aquatic schools are expelled to markets.

The creatures that drank from us are drying out
and we are ourselves being drained ever lower.

We still thirst for every drop of precious shared
waters in which we both floated and belly-flopped.

Whatever notes still chime from our unsounded depths?

Always as engrossed as we are neptuned in....

Nepean River

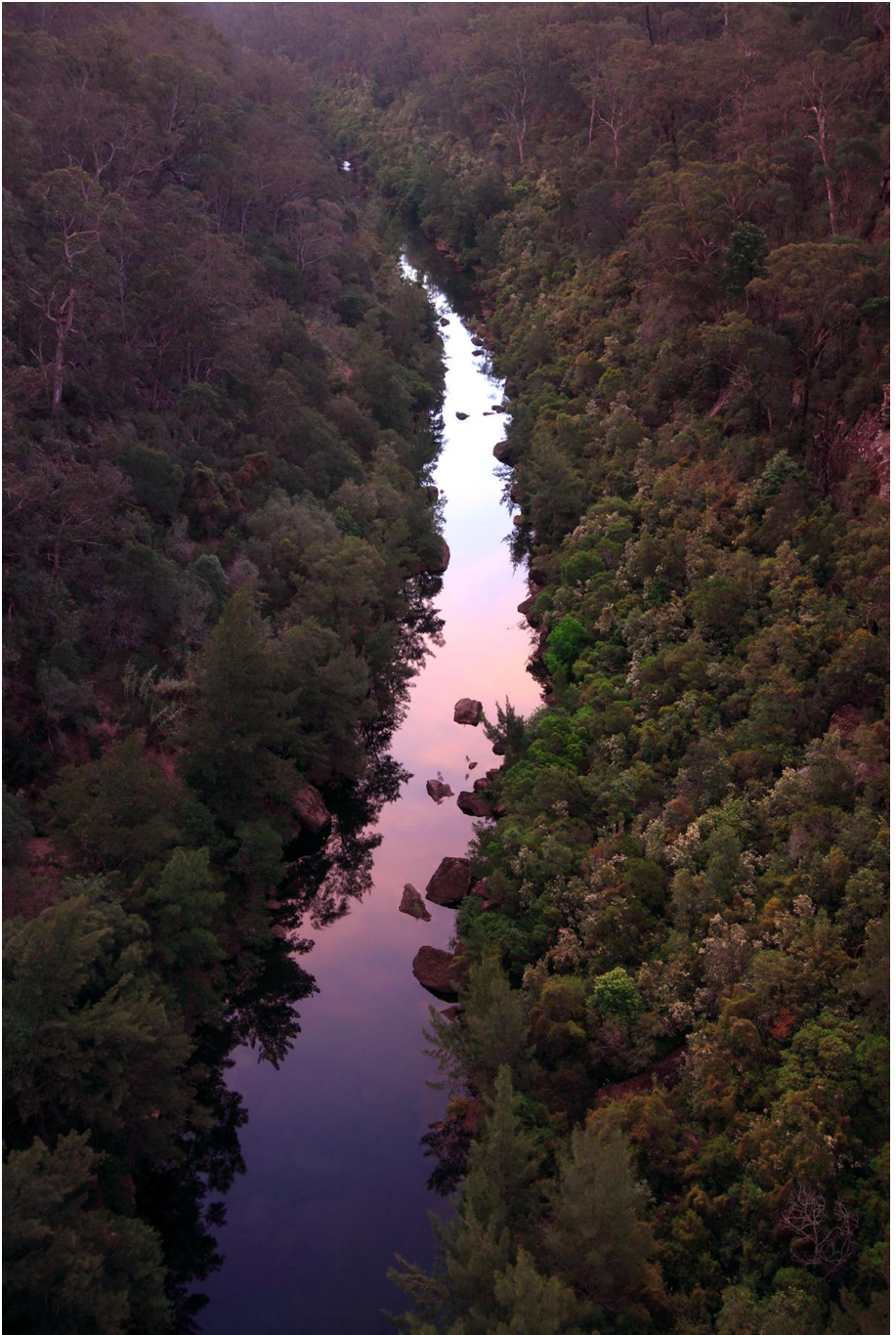


Photo: Harley Kingston

Scene of the Crime

Strolling through dusk willows
along that peaceful river
I passed the scene of headlines.
Those guddled clawmarks
down the embankment
made now a mudslide
by oblivious
kids.

A Tarzan swing hanging overhead
strangling a piece of stick
to mark the spot.
Soft slop on the water
where a fish and fly have met.

On the other side horses wander down
to sip from the calm devastation
of their own reflections,
flick ears at each ripple's ghost.
The current passing indifferent
as a Monday crowd
minding their own business,
leaving forever upstream
an unheard splash.

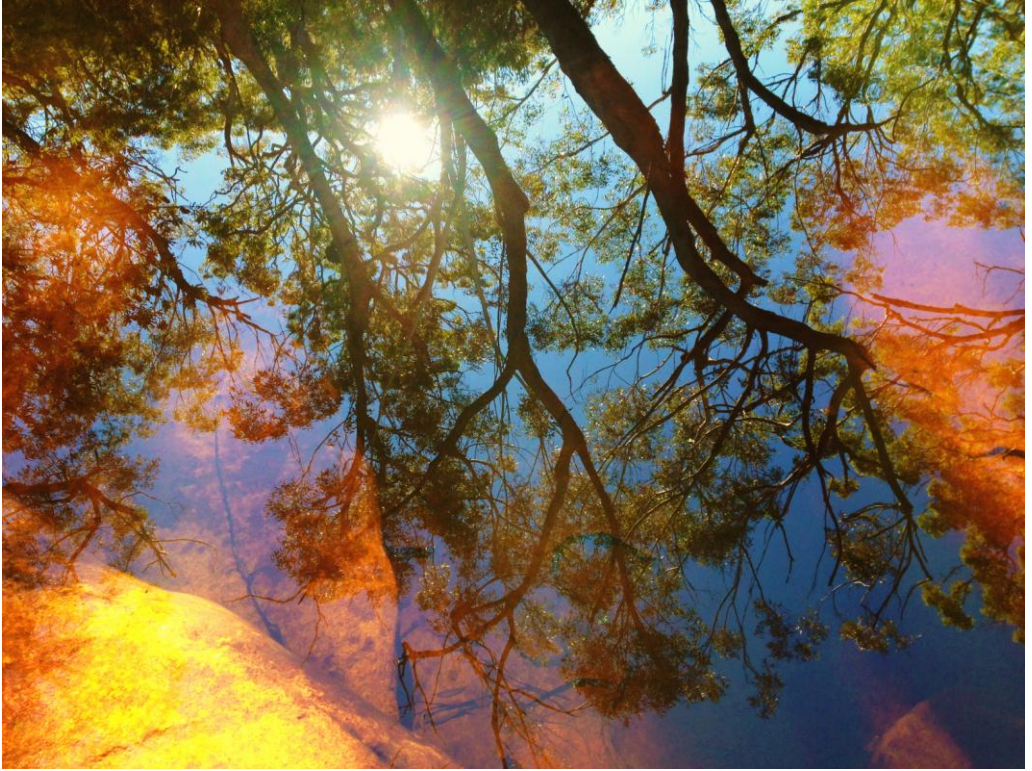


Photo: Mel Anderson

Yandhai / Nepean

in the era before we made the landscape
predictable it rained

a flood plain formed
drip to trickle trickle to streamlet
so the land was full of waterflow

a small river that never needed to be
mapped or even named
by generations who fished along its banks
who sang connection

long before it carved out its own place
through the old porous stone
which cupped it like hands together
and just as well

new generations divided the water
netting its power forgetting
to sing connection

fed it through concrete tunnels shaped
like hands firmly clasped fists
driven through towns and cities until
the landscape was predictable
the small river that had never needed to be
mapped or even named

returned streamlet to trickle
trickle to drip and the land
no longer full of waterflow

an intimate history of the suburban landscape
from the point of view of water

Skinny Dipping

Sunlight slices
down the gorge
as they strip
above deep pooling
in the high Nepean.
Discarding clothes
in shadow
of tall rocks
they scramble
boulders
to the glistening below.

Freed spirit
ricochets
around the steep divide
as they hurtle
naked
to the river's glass --
squealing
with the shock
of cold --
blurring mossy pale
in mystic deep.

A startled lyrebird
darts to bracken tuft
as bellbird warning
resonates
through towering gum.

Hawkesbury River

My Grandfather's Ice Pigeons

My grandfather would walk into the house,
on a summer evening after his work, then empty
his catch of mud crabs into the bath-tub;
they'd flow out in a stream of ice-flurry from
his four-gallon drums, then settle in a heap of
black and olive speckled claws, spiky legs
and back flappers waving frantically. One night
my mother caught me holding a broom-stick
with an angry claw clamped around it.
She ordered me to stay away from the crabs
reminding me why Uncle Eric lost his finger;
they could snap a clothes prop in two.
My mother went back to the city. I stayed
a week and my grandmother showed me
what to do, first throw one into a bucket of ice
to slow it down, then bind the claws together
with kingfisher-blue twine in a slip knot.
Old Dutch would come to take them
to the Co-op in his truck, packed into fish boxes
covered with ice. My grandfather would leave
again for his next catch, he'd take some pigeons
with him in a cage on his trawler. If he
had a good haul, he'd let one of the birds go,
when it came home it was my job to ride my bike
into town to order the ice. When I reached
the Co-op, Dutch would ask how many pigeons?
If more than one, it was a box of ice a bird.
He'd send the ice to my grandfather next morning
on the mail boat. They talk about the time
Fa Fa got drunk up the river at Spencer,
the river postman saw him through the mist
one morning, balancing on net-boards at the stern
of his boat, singing aloud, throwing pigeons at the sky.



Photo: Mel Anderson

Either Side the Horizon

In that flux of mood between seasons,
a drop in barometric pressure,
Charles Wright calculates

his prayerful observations from the back porch;
Does the grass, with its inches in two worlds, /
love the dirt?

As forward as this train say; that which stays is
moving on - days rally behind small hills,

hours decamp and move their legions
of light, trailing dark banners toward some end.

A beginning again,
that goes on and the noise of this
process, clusters into daily life -
events, associations, heaped as a village festival.

The jet-flared fuselage
of church spire, a whittled down prayer
from medieval times - forever left over
at dusk.

Arms of river water
and boats stuck there whitely like a butterfly exhibit,
interspersed of hills and grey-olive bushland

crunched into pools, shadow and rift.
River moves its argent surface into scallops of
deepest pewter.

Chalk-yellow patches palely show through
in places above the Hawkesbury and Woy Woy -
roof tops as bent mirrors

/

or overturned books.

You slow between mangroves
and pass under one rectangular office block,
one gleaming serviced apartment - balconies slotted
to face the river's sleek depth.

Either side comfortable as frontier,
as youth. The train could be wave motion.
Outside, something continues unsaid.

Ineffable sadness,

it breathes - all over again.

A landscape; processes that went somewhere:

- like the North / South grain of sandstone -

Then stopped.

from *Either Side The Horizon* (Titus Books, 2005)

Freeman's Reach, Hawkesbury River

For J.W.

Out of the silence, a team of ducks
lands on the river with a whoosh
of compression braking, drowning
out the sound of cattle chewing
on the other bank. From around
the bend a speedboat lamely chugs
upstream, then turns away, its wake
a tightening knot on the river's stillness.
Unlike the river that matched
a perfect hill, the cross-hatched
mirror now glitters fuzzily.
Poplars quiver like yellow whips.
Bee-racked, rising out of thick grass,
castor-oil plants brandish their pods,
tiny red grenades armed
with green pins. Behind us,
a hill mined by rabbits bares
its guts behind a retaining wall
of chicken wire.

Half a rampart,
the ironbark jetty warps over water
and standing at its end, a poet
completely surrounded.

Too Long We Went...

And it had car ferries then.

We drove on
Grey planks weathered as
The ferryman rangy
As river saplings,
In a battered hat with
A bit spat out!

It rained both sides and all across
Mist grizzled grey.

Dad paid the ferryman and he kept the change.
Dad didn't quibble.

The cables reached, sinewed,
Snaky, sprung,
Same as the ferryman's arms

And I thought now,

How like the Styx...

Oar Swish

Addressing an Ancestor: Matthew James Everingham 1769 -1817

'Matthew James Everingham was indicted, for that he being a profligate person, on the 17th of June did falsely pretend to Owen Owens servant to Samuel Shepherd Esq; in the Middle Temple, that he was sent to Mr Shepherd, from Mr Clermont's for Burn's Justice or Compton's Practice meaning certain books, by which he obtained the same books, value 10s. the property of the said Samuel Shepherd, whereas he was not sent with that message. Guilty. Transported for seven years.'

— Old Bailey Sessions Papers Trial No. 775

There was always the swish of oars
on a river. You lived at the Temple
near the Thames when you stood before the Bar
at the Old Bailey. Was the worse crime
to obtain two law books by false pretences

or forgery? You were fourteen or fifteen,
an orphan. It amazes me that you could write.
All you could say in your defence
'*I was in great distress*', today might imply
circumstances for possible reprieve.

Your life on water confined in a hull
for three years, awaiting travel to America
was cruel and bleak: portholes on the shore side
were blocked. At night you lay in fetid air
beside rapists and thieves. By day

you ate mouldy rations, wheeled barrow loads
of ballast back and forth, under close watch
of overseers with cutlasses winking
even in the lowest light.
Were you glad to hear you'd be sent

on the First Fleet to Botany Bay? Or,

having seen so many die, with hope departed
did you shrug, prepared to accept
inevitable ills. By and large
the trip on the *Scarborough*

was nothing more than more of the same.
When you married Elizabeth and settled
near the Parramatta River at The Ponds
of Rydalmere, searching those skies
of endless blue, did you ever wish

for the rain clouds in the grey place
you'd left behind? How you persevered
for twelve years trying to farm that sterile spot
after your firstborn, Mary, died at three weeks.
Did you think you were still being punished?

After Governor King removed you
and your family to the Hawkesbury, did you
empathise with the aborigine who speared
you in a skirmish to steal your corn?
If anyone knew hunger pangs and woes

of displacement, it was you.
When you didn't live riverside, you lived
within river view. Was that a blessing or blight?
The Hawkesbury land, rich with wheat
and maize drowned three times in 1809

but I imagine when calm came
you rowed a dinghy out midstream
cast a line and waved back
to your five children who waded
or swam at the edge, squealing delight.

Silvi's Story Concrete Paths, Peat Island Centre

1. (1994)

The Freeway from Sydney
passes our home on a castle
its soft-growl noise a lullaby
that soothes like a thumb.
Around us clear water is a screen
with boats kicking waves
colouring-in speed.

I don't need chains to stay;
keep the keys, lock the gate
sit on the beach and hear flotsam lap
strewn shells of oyster years.

Easy stains of dormitory dawn
tip my heart
and I am happy before the breakfast
then sedated,
hide in tight gardens with pen and pad,
drawing. You'll look mine?

Time is not a watch
I walk the grounds in circles,
numbers are not my flags,
but shadows and the height of waves
on Mangrove trunks,
my stories not pinched by words.

A pair of speckled ducks stand feathering
and warily catch my throw,
I watch the lapwings store their own
in the trust of grass. An azalea shines
white with hope, melons grow large
corn and artichoke
tomatoes are newly planted.

Sometimes I sit on covered verandas
and talk with friends, watch birds being busy
in a Balinese birdhouse hidden by trees.
All these things are books to me.

The laundry has the highest view on a hill
where clothes wave the wind,
I follow large blue arrows painted
on paths to the office next door
and am told where to go for my chores.
Meals call us for bells.

2. (2012)

We live in new houses now with traffic and tv.
Freedom is lost to alone.
I'm told the pool on the river is empty
waiting for a swim,
the playground has dismantled swings
but the merry-go-round works
and the three giant banyan pines
stand alert, alarmed still.

I sit inside, my pad and pen
story the drawings.
Bricks and butter all lost.



Photo: Suriya Black

New Baby

Red doors have replaced the institution green. A woman holds the baby to be named in an orange shawl and watches the yellow tinted frangipani flowers floating on the Hawkesbury river-still green as it was in the photograph taken by her in 2012. The photograph had not captured the light blue river whispers she hears.

The South Indian priest in indigo blue arrives. She shows him to the mixture of navy blue, pink and gold chairs on the grass. The child's name is spelled out in the grass with purple flowers. Is it John? Or is it Michael? Or is it a new name we cannot recognise.

Guests arrive on the gently ascending almost fairy tale road now edged with gold oil lamps and white flowers. The river blesses as she flows on, murmuring the news....

An old comb may lie at the bottom of the river...the white cross like installations still here from Peat Island's asylum days sparkle. Spectacle Island just across is ceremonial as ever.

An explosion of blue

He sits on the train to Newcastle
waiting for it all to begin
then there is an explosion of blue:
on the way to Woy Woy
a man half naked fishing in a small boat,
the large yachts upon the water.
then the Hawkesbury River
as people tend to their oyster farms,
as an Ibis fossicks for worms on the mud flat
and then it is all over as he sits on the train,
satisfied, yet wishing it all to happen again.

and leave

leave bowls of water for the moon,
take the river's truth and gift it,
see all sides of wet things,
catch the rain and wind in separate hands

leave bowls of wind for the hands,
catch the moon's truth and wet it,
see all gifts in rain things,
take the river and water to separate sides

weave water and moon,
slake the river of gifts,
seed the truth with rain,
shake the river of separate lands

sleeve the moon,
wake the river,
sift rain,
hatch and leave

Richard James Allen

The Longest River

we ride it for a while
in the life raft of this body
but its waters were running long before
we embarked upon this turbulence
channels appearing and disappearing
before the eyes of others like ourselves

its currents will stream on

levels still rising up to
swirling over or falling away from
what we perceived to be its banks
before we got off
before our crude floatation devices ran aground
before our bodies were back in dry land

Broken Bay

There's history here embedded
in these sheer rock walls
and in those fallen stones and in
this sediment.
Mangroves breathe uneasy silt.

Sit quietly by the river a while and you can feel it.

Darkinjung

Wannungine

Eora

Guringai ^[1]

The story sits in the pores of the land
dreaming its ancestors.

This is the distraught underbelly of the river.
This is where Deerubbin ^[2] fails to hold back
her shudder of sediment —
as if the undertow was too great, the undercurrent
too strong.

Sit quietly by the river a while and you can feel it:
in the dark, Deerubbin,
whispering her secrets,
relinquishing her cold bones as evidence.
Expert
eye witness.

^[1] Aboriginal tribes from the Hawkesbury region and Greater Sydney Basin.

^[2] Deerubbin is the Aboriginal name for what is now known as the Hawkesbury River – one of the first places to witness conflict between the Aboriginal custodians and the First Fleet. Deerubbin meets the sea at Broken Bay, just north of Sydney.



Photo: Jenny Pollak

On Board the Cruise Ship Broken Bay

A bowling green
Twenty feet up
And moving rapidly
Over harvest ripe
Rolling, buckling waves;
A silvery fence
Does little more
Than drape washing
Against the occasional
Elusive river opening
Or thin beaches
Basking in sun
Below dark chenille.
Some moments ago
Lion Island, sated,
Backed off, creating
This flooded paddock
Between Bouddi sandstone
And Barrenjoey cliffs,
That swell still
Serenely and vastly
Under our hull.

I Remember a Fishing Spot- Patonga Creek

(I.M of my Uncle and unknowing mentor)

I remember a fishing spot
where Uncle said 'there's a hole full of fish here boy.
There, can you see them? We can tickle their gills almost,
may even catch a few, eh?
Just ease the rocking rowlocks quiet, be careful not to scare them.
Now, squeeze the oars and drift over their slumbers
and cushion the anchor to rest.
Let the water slide from hands boy, and tie your line loopy.
'Cause in this salty summer dusk
they won't bite if it's tied too tight!'
I remember that fishing spot
where the creek jawed the bay and the hump
at its head lumped like a baby snapper.
The tide pulsed the clear veined sand and
flushed it clean, lapping it in and
spitting it out, gently, like a whiting feeding.
And where all the ancestral ancient water
was cleansed (as if reborn), in a slow oscillation
like in a mullet's gut – its primal expectation.
But now, I motor over that fishing spot,
where once I stretched the boyhood days
of my primal initiations, I now darken all the light water
and swirl the sand into murk.
The last trace of the slow flow, I make hectic.
Gone is the languid summer dusk as I push it into rapid noisy night.
I sully the fishes' resting place and scare them all away.
I may never catch any. Perhaps all the fish are dead.

Hindsight

Coal and Candle Creek
dancing in old light.
Shallow sand sifts under toes,
spiders hide in bleached bark
as we pass ti-tree tight blossom.
My grandfather, sure footed,
splashes in the shadows
seeking old haunts of Hawkesbury
sandstone.
We are hunting oysters.
Having jagged them off the rocks
he will stuff them
into long jars wrapped
in burlap, wedged in a basket;
will carry them triumphant
to his friend, a much younger woman,
while his wife
waits at home
with lemons and bread.

Home Late

In the dark, firefly light
spans the sheath we know as river

the pearl of your canoe swings again
like sleeve across the beach

drawn to lie
on grass in front of gate

as parrots finished with play
bed for the night

all we hear is the tap-tap
wood of chopping.

In the breeze of your sharing
a mellow wind side-sweeps your hair

loose strings from a vine
snake to veranda posts

your scent stands still in frieze
allows time to distil.



Photo: Jenny Pollak

Curl Curl Creek



Photo: Michele Seminara

Stop

Let's leave everything be.
Let's just stop fixing.
Perhaps if we let everyone settle
clarity will be revealed.

Today I entered the cathedral of the bush—
sought permission to walk the land; felt it granted.
Was buoyed by a chorus of cicadas ululating
their adulation to the Gaia of this world.
(On Facebook a slowed down recording of cicadas—
Oh my, what exaltation! Beyond the range of men.)

As I traipse through the bush
in my rag of a dress,
great slobbery dog lopping
at my side, a dishevelled woman
with hands clasped behind her back
like some unhinged Confucian scholar—

a brown snake crosses my path.
It's an intimate moment, as if
he has been waiting for me.
What does one do in such a moment?
Acknowledge, pass...

Let's leave everything be.
Let's just stop fixing.
I want to open like that naked flannel-flower to the sun.

Lane Cove River

fairyland

as a child i saw the faded sign
on a gate
off delhi road
just past
the brand new tv studio
& wondered where
the overgrown track
led to

walking along the river
i found the two palm trees
& weeds head high
on the old picnic grounds

there once was a wharf
& a wooden dance hall

i stare into the water
but can see only
water logged branches

without protection
european fairies
were no match
for hungry magpies



Photo: **Mark Roberts**

after rain

after rain the
scooped holes
hold pools of

fresh water from
this rock platform
you can see right up

the river see
the smoke from
the other campfires

but we are here we
know who belongs
to the smoke we

know the river the
ebb & flow
we know when

the wallabies come to
drink and when to
climb down and fish

The River

The bend of the river is silver in the late afternoon,
dissolving and reforming moment by moment.
As the willows shiver, the land is reflected
in doubled realms of light: here a pure spirit, there
an imperfect mirror.

Lean down to the passing light:
do you see a picture beneath the surface?
Is it pure, is it godlike?
Or is it an uncertain, knuckled thing
in the blue-black prisms?

A moment, scarfed in blue light. You are left behind
but be thankful (even if you do not know it)
the world continues its miraculous rushing.
Be thankful
you will never silence its silver language
or imprison its vast blue spaces.

Across the river

Wrought iron trusses stretched
between Hunters Hill and Linley Point,
the bridge took an hour to open,
four men to work the gearwheel system.
Time slowed, was somewhere else
in the tree-shaded riverscape.
You could fish there, know the tides.

Fig Tree Farm, granted to Mary Reiby
purchased by Didier Joubert
becomes the site of Fig Tree Tea House
under the replacement bridge,
the old wheel operating the opening span
stands memorial on the western bank
below the tangle of traffic.

Driving home, across steel and concrete
on lazy summer afternoons
you catch glimpses of the river.

Parramatta River



Photo: Paul Huynh

Hunt's Creek

Hunt's Creek sweats
into Lake Parramatta
like a net cloud
of clever ideas:
detergents –
since nobody
likes dirty kitchens;
and phosphorus –
so lawns might flush
to an Arklier green;
aerosols – managing
fly-borne diseases;
and cardboard, and foam –
for the customers'
comfort and gaze:
past the sour bottom
where elephant's ear
and convolvulus
smother the bank
like ideas that take off –
past firetails
in afternoon sun –
all in a tizz, to and fro –
for a roost
free from mind.

Previously published *Ground* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2015)

The Weir in the Park

Cars would drive over the childhood weir
shepherded surely to safety.

It dammed a swimming pool
near picnics under Parramatta trees
outside walls of illness.

After rain its illegal water ride
surged with bucking rubber tubes.

Father, solid like the old weir
that night all alone, ceased to remember
beneath the steady flow; the family unaware
a lurking fault was widening to fail.

We found him lost in the morning
when crumpling foundations could not hold.
Tears flow, less steady than the river.

Queen's Wharf, Parramatta

1.
twice daily on the Gasworks Bridge,
Moroccan windows of iron lace
screen me from the river,
the river from me.

I could invade the grass
 beneath these paperbarks,
straddle the sandstone wall
 that grips the bank,
drop my feet into the past

difficult
to be purely celebratory,
when heritage is a mottled eel –
beautiful but baring teeth

nothing's left to arrest a sudden plunge
 where the old wharf was,
when disembarking was an option,
like 'opening up the country'

only we stuffed that up too,
the river choking on its own silt

2.

here where the first boats moored in summer,
 fresh water ran over rocks,
brought ancestors the colour of death –
Hunter and Radley of the *Sirius*

at Sydney Cove the land mocked them,
seed rotted in the ground
and heavy rains wiped the slate clean.

hauled by invisible wires,
following the arm of the harbour
along the shining river,
the groan of ts breaks long silence.

some days, shifted out of time,
I catch the glitter of eyes
from the river, other eyes
above the middens
on dispossessed hillsides,
risk a parking fine to stare across
these tannin-dark waters after rain

there are caverns of mud under my feet,
striations of other lives,
roots of mangroves upturned
like claws of extinct animals,
ribcages opening into darkness

in holes the eels have departed,
and maybe only the kingfisher knows,
the river's depth is anyone's guess

3.
someone with a poet's impulse
must have named them, leaning over
to whisper at the last moment –
Black Swan, Gannet, Albatross
and *Bronzewing* – steamboats like slow birds
back-paddling on the silted river

but it's the *Halcyon* I think of,
that bird brooding on her floating nest
at winter solstice –
that was our Australian kingfisher,
built like a dagger slicing through water.
fitting somehow, in the register
she is listed *Fate unknown*.

backing away from the jammed-up river
downstream at Redbank Wharf, you can hear
the scrape of shovels on coke,
feel the blast of air from a bulkhead,
the push and pull
of a screwboat's unusual propulsion.
the smell of oil is ripe mangoes,
tight balls of soot blow crazily
in the air, black seed of flowers
pungent with destinations

Previously published in
Antipodes: Poetic Responses (Phoenix, 2011)
and *medium security* (Ginninderra, 2009).

By Parramatta River I Lay Down

Mrs P. Mrs A. Mrs R. R. A!
Mrs M. Mrs A. Mrs T. T. A!
chant the Westmead girl cousins
on the muddy banks of the Parra River in Parramatta Park.
Everything is Parramatta.
The lesson is how to spell 'Parramatta'.
to Little Lord Fauntleroy, the city coz
in his going-out outfit, not fit for the Parra.

Half -boys, they swing river ropes as Tarzan or Jane,
strew their bodies in the sun like a puzzle,
swim crocodiles under reeds, clap arm-jaws that clutch,
aim sharks at the Ashfield statue stuck to his ankles.

The afternoon disrobes in sequins,
the river invading him with probable snakes,
quicksands, snags, rips & curtains of weeping willow
which close on childhood & open on adolescence.
The bookish cousin
feels pages turning on the act so fast
his eyes blur with the speed of rapids projecting time
until he emerges, primeval, lays down in the mud,
exhausted & newly crawled out specimen of evolution,
girl-watched & watching, child-skin washed off in the river.



Photo: Paul Huynh

River Bed

Shallow pools,
rock platforms,
sandy strands;
never thought I'd see
you out of water
in your underdress.
Are you still a river
now that you've been drained?
And when you flow again,
so few drops will be
those you held before.
Likewise with my skin cells -
not those that wrapped me
when last I stood here.

After the party

Fish are feasting
stirring the creek's rough skin
tail fins plundering air
a roiling line past oyster shards and old tin cans
darkening the creek like wine.

It's a high tide party
mullet racing the moon
'til the tide sucks them back to the bay
and the man who counts fish declares none to be seen
in the curves of the concrete canal.



Photo: Susan Sleepwriter

Cabarita Point

High buildings smile behind short buildings.
Tall bushes wave behind small.
People speak nicely here. Dogs never run.
Teddy-bears sit out in rows on the edges of beds.
Mapless, original tangles of figroot and overhang
never existed. This has perspectives. And orientations.
Cellular shadows revolve around clocks of mock stone.
Water spools into the vanishing point of the pond
at the one constant wobble. And thought has been given
to comfort: between gate and walkway, and walkway
and bay, there are soft, moulded lawns for the bum.
You can sit out and stare at the signless here: wind
and its shadows; the tides, their impressionist bling.
Everything else is the fief of the covenant's.
All but the ghosts of the windows –
who stare but who cannot slow down –
as if they'd thought once that this scheme of enclosures
might save them: unnoticed, uncalled.

The Greenway

She's called the Greenway but her headwaters aren't green
You can't see them because they flow (if they flow)
Beneath Old Canterbury Rd as far South as Prospect Road
Summer Hill where she begins as a potential drain for
Trinity College - around her headwaters cars & buses
Full of boys with boaters & English blazers flow smoothly
Each morning through Impressive iron gates –
She meanders on beneath the tarmac doing her damdest
To erode the tramline sweeping impressively
Through an ancient cleavage from Dulwich Hill
To Central Sydney – however she soon takes a breath
& finally becomes Green – & lush along her lips as she
Breathes out leaving Old Canterbury Road
Behind disused flour silos standing erect side by side,
Sentries over an ancient swamp while to her East
Where the Sun indifferently rises a triangle of broken land
Has given birth to a brown development block
With red plastic eyes glaring without blinking,
Out of nothing into nothing.
Between the silos & the slab she rises to the surface
Although her walls are smoothed by cliffs of concrete
Decorated informally with messages of racial
Preference & amateur erotica - but unabashed
She continues (I imagine a slightly muddy sniff) ...
Onward she dribbles beneath Parramatta Road
& in full flow slices the umbilical cord between
The competing roofs of Leichhardt & Haberfield,
Finally to pass through a concrete shaft beneath
The A4 freeway into the sweet salt tides of Iron Cove

Duck River



Photo: Sheryl Persson

What's in a Name

From google earth the narrow river snakes
as it did in the long ago before the settlers came

In the not so long ago, Captain Phillip and his crew
rowed to the confluence of two rivers
then walked on to Burramatta, where eels lie down

On their return, seeing ducks rising out of reeds
and always keen to name in their own image
denied the eastern swamp hen

The river was a meeting place
border between Darug and Eora Dharawal people
carved by spirit ancestors in past, present, future

Living land of wattle and rainbow serpent
site of ritual battles, ceremony and law
one bank a special place for women giving birth

Skilled midwives practised in women's country
the place for men across the river
and on islands marriages were arranged

Now new generations from many other lands
meet beside Duck River and are welcome to country

19th Birthday

He imagined himself naked somewhere
strung up, slumped down between
the fable of one summer gone.
Teenage pump & ruin

to the promise of summer way too late coming.
Wedged down by Duck River, hoarding the sun
at angles to the wind that cuts the skin of doubt.
On a careless concrete Jamal is certain he suffers.

The river goes underground, beneath motorways & hope.
Thinking will never end - city hums, worry hums.
His parents scurry about money. Books make big promises &
girls make him mad. *It* all seems to take forever.

One day his fist ran away, he vomited on the grass
aroused & full of shame. Friends are dangerous
because they *know* him. The Imam is always going on
about subtleties. *Is everyone as stupid as me?*

Cigarettes occupy his hands,
beer his mouth - important
to distract these accomplices of love.
Apology lies open.

He wants to travel, to be a part of some *meaning*-
nothing changes while he's here.
This is no home.
The fever is in the fabrication.

But time still laughs at prophecy.
'A work in progress'. Hates his father. New friends
talk about sacrifice, the old/new clarities of Allah.
Struggle seems an easier prayer.



Photo: Les Wicks

Middle Harbour Creek

Middle Harbour Creek

The fishing I do is low-cost, low-tech
and low-yield. At the bottom of the tide,
I find a patch of sand merging into mud
near the edge of a bed of seagrass,
put an old gardening-glove on my left hand
against the barnacle-cuts,
and lift rocks, keeping the right hand free
to pin worms and lift them
or cradle green nippers gently in my palm
and slide them into an ice-cream carton.

At the rising tide, I will fish for whiting
over the sandflats of the bay
where the locals don't bother,
assuming pollution or tiddler-stripping
by migrants from the poorer suburbs.
I will pick a trail
through blackboy-clumps and Christmas-bush,
freshen the bait and throw out a handline
off an old cork-cylinder,
then troll it slowly back,
thinking with my fingertips.

In a three-hour session, I have never caught
more than half a dozen. The time I take for myself
must have been robbed from someone or something.
In the thousands of hours logged,
I could have read the Great Books,
taught my son cricket,
taken my mother-in-law shopping
or made a fortune in Real Estate.
If I have to explain myself to a heavenly Tribunal,
I hope Saint Peter is presiding
in a mood of nostalgia.

Cooks River

Cooks River in The Vale of Canterbury

"I found a very fine stream of fresh water" (Capt. Cook, 1770)

I — a contemporary reflection

Running still, old deceiver! Neither
Ebb nor flow as once for Captain Cook's men
Fresh, when a noble stream chirped and gurgled
Nourishing a native community.

What Cook detected is now concreted
By stormwater schemes, where flotsam glides.
No more painted, no more sung by poets
Plastic trash from upstream floats idly by.

Today in fading light a stillness falls
Sounds dominate in a deserted scene
Surrounding features now grow indistinct.
Shadows may suggest what went before and
Murmuring waters tell of others' tales
Thus scenes from earlier epochs flood the mind.

II — a spot known to Aborigines

I imagine kaleidoscopic change:
Now on its slow way to Botany Bay
This river drains alluvial plains
A scrawny ibis wades the shallows
Rainbow lorikeets squabble for seeds.
As the tide pulses can one not discern
The joyous cries of Gadigal children
Parents gathering mudbank shells?
A fire crackles, smoke drifts, mingling with
The indistinct sounds of ancient voices.

III — *a scene of white settlement*

The indigenous chanted “warraw! warraw!”
As boats of newbies entered their waters
Eora-hating McIntyre was speared
By Pemulwuy and the Bediagal.
But pastoralists were opportunists
Land seemed free and locals might be suppressed
Settlers dreamed of markets to be filled:
“Tame the land for productivity!”
Cottages rose amidst the wattle
Pens and barns for sheep and cattle.

IV — *the colonial period*

Springing from distant, verdant Yagoona
Washing Chullora on its southern side
The limpid Cooks struggled with exploitation.
White settlement brought so many conflicts
With land-rights claimed without foundation
Bank-side clashes over settler’s dreams
For grants of land brought recriminations
Frosty glances were replaced by lances,
Pastoralists lost some sheep for roasting;
Spearings, kidnappings were times for toasting.

V — *post-Confederation*

The kaleidoscopic view dissolves once more:
No longer crystal, green-banked and treed
This river becomes an utility
A dam is made to help with Sydney’s thirst
And new Council rules are not the first
To opt for progress while favouring man.
Commerce rules and barges ply its waters.
Silted sands stifled mangrove bushes
So wildlife struggled, weeds grew rife
The salts of industry threatened life.

VI — *the twentieth century*

Where now the boats and picnics of yore?
A tranquil scene painted by Sydney Long?
Like flood-plain and farms and even a mill,
Picnics and skiffs and swimmers have gone.
Politely ravaged by persons and pets
Its stream is now lined by outflows and drains.
Through Canterb'ry Vale the pylons are striding
And thirst for power takes much assuaging.

VII — *and back to the present*

As dusk darkens a cool mist descends
Flying foxes screech in a nearby gum
Disturbed by a lumbering 747;
Rushing planes thunder above the stream
Roar then whimper, shuddering the night air
Non-human tracers in a darkened sky
Supplanting the croak of a late magpie.
Palm fronds swish as they have for aeons.
Fast'ning my hood and heading for home
Teeming with thoughts, suppressing a shiver,
I make for my home near the Cooks River.

Photo: Julie Scully



Cooks River Sunset

In the park by the river
three islands interlooped by bridges
and a long walk of late summer
daylight unwinding through trees
beside the mudbrown river and the mangroves
the riverbank trailing its path across the greenness
much as the French artists of the last century would have
painted it

and it was Saturday almost evening
and the joggers and the rollerbladers and cyclists
in that delectable variety of attire
all skated or shone their way
into the contracting orb of brightness
gliding both earthward and skyward in their leaving

the edge of day dying into water
children gone too far along the hillside
almost there at the river's bend
the pause before the last stretch
like staring down a long silence
and bidding goodbye to sound

Reading Du Fu in summer

After Charles Wright

Angophoras wash in the breeze.
Moths climb from unmown clover
to the orange tree
where they rest, shaded.
The air cools –
a front rolls itself out,
blunt carpet, impending headache,
across an aluminium sky,

unrepeatable.
This glaze of sweat
clings to my shirt. Polycotton. *Stupid*, and worse,
curse.
The inner west ignores the landscape
it's bound to, though along Wardell Road
you might breathe in the Cooks' clogged
arvo tide, smeared with a spill of fine-grained
crap
and breeding up a smoke of mosquitoes.

Birds heap sound into the pressing change –
lorikeets, currawongs, corellas –
and lark,
curved in bug-snapping and rain-welcome,
across the voids between trees
spread from earshot's Marrickville Park, all
the way down
to the river
at Earlwood.

The bridge's pylons stir the river
into silver-
grey wings. So easy to sit here in a small crack

time, I suppose, lets drop.

 Your hair's turning grey,
somehow, you forget when, and you look
at the things you can still make out.

 Homes fall
into the fouled river and kids
 on their bikes
trundle by. The river, suburban marker,
just drifts.

Charles Wright, "Waiting for Tu Fu", *Chickamauga*

Flight to the City: White Ibis Speaks

If you could hear me, this is what I would say:
Once we were worshipped as gods,
our beaks shining like the crescent moon,
dipping into the dark Nile waters like a quill into ink.
What poems we wrote for Thoth!

My home was once a pleasant place,
cool water, lush grasses.
We ibises lived there
since Gondwana cracked and foundered apart from Pangea.
Our lives may not seem all that consequential to you talking apes,
ever busy with your plans and dreams.
Eating, mating, hatching, dying.
The endless cycle of birth and rebirth is enough for us.

Then - the water in our ponds started drying up,
the grasses browned and died.
The eggs did not hatch. We died in numbers we cannot count.
Like the stars in the sky, our bones littered the dry bare earth.

Those of us with strength enough took flight,
following the winds until
we found refuge in the filthy concrete banked river
where once the Gadigal people fished,
their children splashing in the shallows.
They are long gone from your sight.
We see their shadows under the moon while you sleep.

We, former gods in another dry land, you now revile as vermin.
Smelly, ugly, greedy.
We live off the detritus of your lives,

the scraps of food you cast away uneaten,
nesting in your rubbish.
Our young thrive on the garbage you dump.
It is not our ancient bird form you see
when you watch us snatch crusts from a bin.

Our beaks still shine under the moon.
Our numbers increase while you plot our destruction.
Too late. We are here to stay.
Our old home is long gone,
our new home suits us better now.
We have adapted. Just like you.
We are your mirror.
Living with you, we have become what you are:
Not gods, not men, refugees surviving in a hostile world.

If I could speak to you, would you hear me?

The River Remembered

The bowling club where my father bowled to a beer
at each change of end and thongs were uncouth.
An alien footy track, two sets of head-and-shouldered posts
facing across an ellipse like magnetic poles, a neon man
in black and white on a far wall.

Pacers and trotters
clopped turf into flying clods in the ring around the oval,
except on match days.

A bend where an occasional car
parked in rust and char until it disappeared unannounced,
as it had arrived, and the loamy river bottom of some past time
had solidified into concrete, the only regular flow a trickle
of run-off through a shallow centre-groove.

Around the bend
roundball fields, a racetrack, a swimming pool lofted
by a diving tower, the later stapling of an ice-rink
and a paeon to a hard-gouged history in the overalls
of a sawmill and timber yard. They tell me now, farther on,
runners beat an alternating tempo on the two shores, shed feathers
compost the surface of the water that swells and drafts
beneath boats that croft and linger in the noon-tide,
fish and fishermen have returned - I haven't.

River's Terminus

(near Cup and Saucer Creek)

"So far to go, so little to wear," she says
On this tour it is how you wear your face
and its endurance of the weather cast tears
along your distended reflection
upon the river pouring out the night horizon
by which you walk, not the anatomy sketched
of your apparel that measures your pace
in the closing of a receding distance
as the yellow glow resolute
(like some mythic instrument)
to argo-neo constellations
as fixed in the glare of their mapping
as a 1968 tourist guide to Paris and Versailles.

Face on, the bricks slumber in their rigidity
like the graves of corrugated cardboard
as temporal as Karthoum or any such sepulchre.
Bending only one way by its own pressure
stilling and spread with the night's aspirant jewels,
the city's imago diadems,
the river ceases, locked by a concrete canal
stinking as a sewer.
The path follows it, to a ragged garden
of conclusion, flowering with weeds
that beg the water and the unsustaining earth
but not the question,
"How is it that,
extending from serenity to might,
this river wearies, and is discarded?"
To ask, is, itself, out of fashion.

from The Earlwood-Bardwell Park Song Cycle

10

Always moving through the valley, always moving.
In cars, in buses and trains, sometimes on foot with the dog
leading. Or best of all on a bicycle, enjoying the track
that surges, loops and winds from Homebush Bay
to Botany Bay. Once you're in the seat and flowing
you don't have to think about pushing the pedals
and even gear changes take only a half-thought,
the thigh muscles registering a different pressure
as the bike rolls on. Past green fields that are mown
and watered for the crop of the small white ball
that is never harvested, the numbered flags
flapping in the Autumn breeze. Past the place
of the circus tent where elephants graze once a year
under electric power poles, just waiting for Jeffrey Smart
to notice them and put them in a painting.
Past the bloodwoods, ironbarks and swamp gums
planted by the Men of the Trees where the water
occasionally falls from the racecourse sprinklers
and the Sprite bottles bob and float downstream
like teal ducks. That place where shopping trolleys rust
in the mud, where burnt-out cars pause on the banks
like reluctant swimmers, where hopeful fishermen
cast and stand, showing not the slightest scrap of concern
for the chemical residues lying in the belly of the mullet.
On you go, nervously, through the dog-off-the-leash place,
and the swinging toward sky place. Cup and Saucer Creek
trickles around the Greek retirement home to greet you,
and then suddenly you see the old boat harbour, the cormorants
gathered on the grassy headland like they're going to school,
the principal a wise old pelican, the white egret sauntering
over the mud flats like a teacher on yard duty longing
for the end of lunch time. Beneath the bridge where pigeons

line up on the wire fence and on to the rubbish bins

patrolled and pecked over by grey ibis. Around the bend where you waterplaned once, losing your glasses in the puddles beneath the paperbarks, hopelessly searching for fifteen minutes until some kind man found them, your own eyes useless, your face caked with blood and mud. Ah, the river, the river, never the blue of those real estate photos, but sometimes a swamp green, there where the cockatoos screech and circle in the evenings, there below the shop of the caramel cone, the macadamia cluster, the wattleseed truffle. Rats live under this bridge, but you leave them behind, pedalling on to the park named after the stately prime minister who told us to maintain the rage, the park where the Arabs gather each year for a festival, the women cooking flat bread and marinated meat on barbeques, the children bouncing, falling and bouncing again in a castle made out of air. Here they damned the river once, then diverted it, but the old swamps are market gardens now. This place where time seems to have stopped, where it's hard to know what century you're in, where a Chinese man in a conical hat pushes a wheelbarrow through the raised beds and a woman kneels to pull out onion weed as the boats lull and drift in the canal. The planes scoot in over the home of the Dragons, so low that if you bounced off the handlebars, you might almost touch a wheel or a wingtip. All of a sudden you remember your smallness, how you are just one person cycling beside a river, how thousands of years ago this bank lay beneath the sea. You pass the old middens and the stencilled white feet hidden by concrete, this place of kangaroo grass and lily bulbs, all these places of the people who gave Gumbramorra Swamp its name—the Gwiyagal people, who were here first and are still here, who fished and lived and moved in this place, here.

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Stepping into the Cooks River

"We walked to Cooks River, which empties itself into Botany Bay, and fell in with a party of Blacks, who were fishing." James Backhouse, 1843.

A community of giants, turpentine and ironbark grew on this ridge of Wianamatta Shale overlooking paperbarks damping the tides charging Cook's River. Now metal sheeting steels its sides and rubbish accumulates from a belt of light industrial folded between acres and acres of housing. The waters have been polluted for more than a century.



"I have fished with small lures, soft and hard, up the Cooks River and have found it productive for bream and flathead. I have caught some very large flathead up there that have been missing some fins so I let go all fish caught there and I recommend you do, too." Gary Brown, 2004

Sight unseen, Cooks River

Casuarinas line the curve of reinforced river bank
shadow beneath the streamers of feather leaves
and in the brown stick litter acidic to any life
glimpses of pearl white globes,
a nest of mushrooms.

Out of the darkness
my mother spoke,
I am blind.

My sight melted, flawed like old glass
the tears catching images
of you feeling your way along the walls
sitting by the window listening to Mahler
shouting at frustration.

My flight arrangements
have been made,
a detached retina in
your only good eye.

Today the rain has washed the air
for me to swallow
above the turbid river, swirling
fast as television
the tide tugging on the mangroves
with their plastic branches.

It's so clear I see the eye of an ibis
embedded in that scaly head
the breeze lifting the neck feathers.

Later wandering over an unkempt garden
attention resting on a rose, the sun
zooming in on one red rose,
the bloom infected with redness,

the petals buried in colour,
scent barely imaginable
but the birds have a career in music.

Alternating Current

The stream of words between us
has often seemed to flow
from you to me.

You're from a talkative culture
where monologue is de rigueur.
Lacking the signposts

for back-and-forth, I retreat
into childhood muteness.
We decide

the walk downriver –
a space of green and air and water,
of walkers, joggers, bicyclists,

mynahs, cockatoos, galahs,
fish that rise
to the surface of the river,

setting off ripples,
occasionally, thrillingly, leaping beyond it –
is mine, to fill as I will.

We hit halfway,
round the posts across the road
from the chocolate shop.

Unburdened of my silence
I take your hand and listen
all the way home.



Photo: **Rod Smith**

Georges River



Photo: Ian Burrows

Ghosts along the Georges River

I was a child in the back
of our green Holden
as we idled in queue

Waiting our turn
in the sweltering heat
to escape to the coast
over the two-lane bridge

It was called Tom Ugly's Bridge
which to an eight-year-old
not skilled in word order
seemed mean to a man called Tom

I looked down on
trees dipped in water
felicitous nibbled out bays
flocked with white sails

At Blakehurst, a brown sandpapered
kiosk, like Neptune's cave
sold fish and chips
in a wrap of newspaper

And sometimes
a marvel from the river
specimens floating in a long bottle
or piled in a cardboard cake box

Oysters

Their silver grey shells
leaving midden tracings
tombstones on the rocks.

Georges River

All morning we watch the river,
the mushroom smell of mangroves
growing stickier with the sun.
The heads of divers break the surface,

just as we've forgotten,
their lips are fat and blue,
and rubbery as rivercod.
The thin arms of trees scratch shadows on the water.

Police stand in scaly clusters,
arms folded over chests, the muscles of their mouths
work in tight ripples.
Their voices brisk and stiffer
when they turn to us, and our machines.

Thick chains chafe the riverbed,
and the engine's thrumming furrows through the wetland.
No birds, it feels directed,
there are suddenly no birds
and our chatter is swept up, and darkening.

The broken cars piled up
like so many dead fish
thick and useless on the shore.

All morning we watch
the twisted bodies, dripping and slimy
from the dark water,
rebirthed, a cameraman jokes, a bit too loud.

Previously published in *Heat*.

Salt Pan Creek

Late Sunday afternoon and a day is forgiven
on Salt Pan Creek. Peace is the sanctuary of shallows.

Wilder waves ridge and surge, sending turbulence
down the straight. A breeze upsets the trailing branches.

And now a tree hits the water, dead; its many crew complaining.
Ripples cushion the violent slap. Time is not bruised.

Wind'n'tide are equal partners, washing logs creek to river
till the river runs to bay: saltwater, jellyfish and hooks.

This is nature to the uninvited. And so the river welcomes
the logs, preserved in shadow, mangrove swamp.

In the woodland, birds probe termite bark for worms.
Lizards hide. Possums hide. Ants continue in their drill.

For those who walk a river mile, who can know the next step.
Salt Pan Creek goes back as far as childhood.

Please don't dislodge these stones of remembrance:
a distant bridge, a track to forbidden land.

Light beams weave a web through fibrous peppermints
and Casuarina groves. All is caught in this binding light.

The creek reflects a visitor's youth and energy
and the need to explore. There's nothing more.

Late afternoon sun bows to the moon.



Photo: Barbara Harris

Notes on the River

1

It is not a river at all
but a question.
Secrets it will always promise
to reveal.
An infant's mellifluous endurance.
One can ask of it direction,
or turn it, this way and that,
depth-sounding its varied permutations:
progress flowing back on itself.

Pay it homage and you'll find
Hell at the end of it
and Heaven also.
Scream at it, it whispers back.
A big harbour man will never buy it,
either it's stagnant, or engorged.
A mini Mississippi
hugged by shanties, one tribe
to the west, the rest to the east.
Someone always works its curves,
some hold hands and harmonise
to a soprano line
of whistling bats in the Grand Hotel Gardens.
They know how death is lurking
in headwaters and the mouth.
A discarded brassiere
or the slough of a black snake in a rubbish bin.
When the moonlight shines
the traffic cops nod off.
Eels find their way to flood.
They dream of babies, stalk the shadows
and lay each other down in them.

2

The river stopped yesterday.
So ochreous, I had feared a complete emptying.
It was the same water today
as yesterday. The same slime-ebb
backwards and forwards,
between the left side and the right of my brain.

Yesterday I missed you, now I don't.

3

The River turns a corner
where it meets the Creek.
The moon is full tomorrow, glowing
on the inland sea.
Miraculous hydrology!
The annual mullet run begins,
so keen they'll even walk
across a minefield.
Only the very strong
make their rendezvous.
So the strongest like to say.
I will miss you
I will miss you once again;
it is not quite time
to dream.

4

This morning a man in green overalls scoops out
the river's scurf of plastic,
then a bottle, returning to the greater flow
its precious contents
with slow and infinite patience.
Magenta flowers on the wisteria.
Your student might have fallen
pregnant here,
your other student could have won

the boat race
paddling madly after fame
as if death would never win.

5

Youths cuddle and spawn,
police count their bribes, adjusting ever upwards
with inflation, and they know
road rules are for them.
The river, in whatever epic you choose,
has a sepia tone,
and content is its own reflection:
melancholy, ennui,
le carte postale de sentiment
a lithograph
of the Georges River in autumn
which, as form
somehow makes it yours.

6

Keywords:

Riverine ecosystem,
water quality index,
oyster catch,
fish biological group,
k and r strategy species
and multi-parameters analysis.

7

Marketing plans for fish scented deodorant...

8

Old timer, remember: the fish-thick-slurry
their thrashing on the gunnels,
smacking the oars.

Rigged to images like these
a theory of fluid dynamics,
digital composition,
a poem somewhere between
Baudelaire and Photoshop:

'fields tinged with red, the rivers yellow
and the trees painted blue.
Nature has no imagination.'

19th Century mezzotint
in the Victoriana Lounge.

Benjamin's "upholstered tropics".

9

What it brought you
brings all time to flow
within its banks
& nets yield fish
so tiny now their
eyes just big
enough and wide
this far - so far
up country.

10

Sutherland's illiterate boys
relay a shuttlecock
with slabs of plywood
across a street of shit,
in an allegory of youthful energy.
All will be cleared
and clean tomorrow,
and they'll be men.
This is what it brings them.
Hope's directives, the river
"which only to look upon

all men are cured".
Replenishment without
penalty.
They work its curves
and become it.
For they will become.

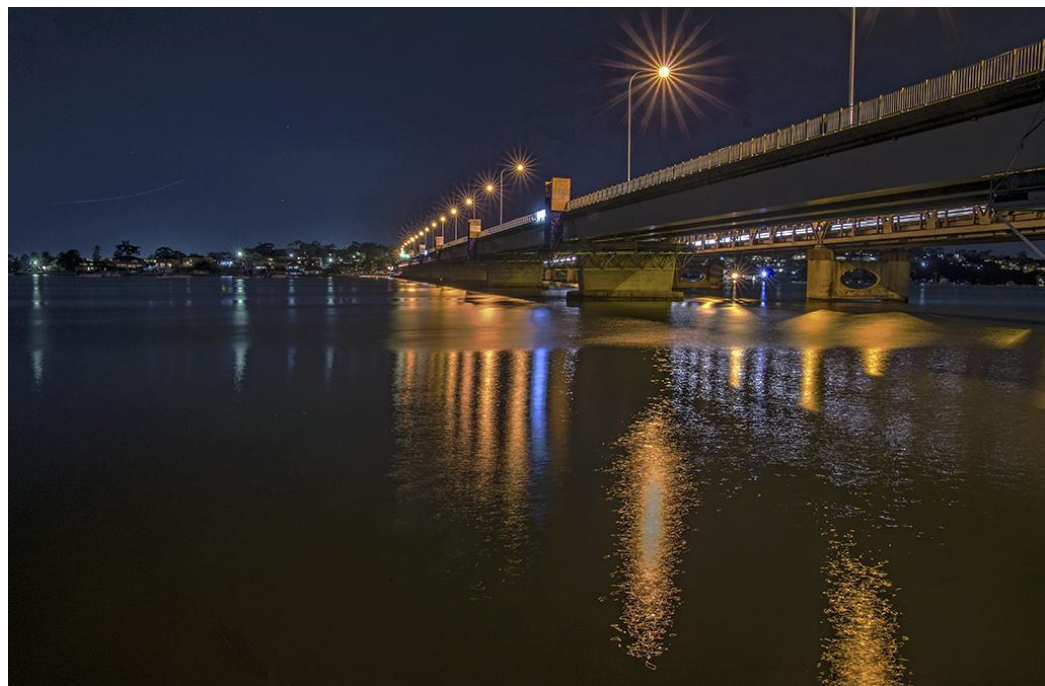
Notes

'An infant's mellifluous endurance' is a paraphrase of Lyn Hejinian: 'An infant has been crying for five hours / With seething or mellifluous endurance' *Oxota*, Book 2, "Chapter Seventy Seven: Suffering".

'fields tinged with red, the rivers yellow
and the trees painted blue.
Nature has no imagination.'

- Baudelaire, quoted in Joanna Richardson, *Baudelaire*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994, p. 116.

'which only to look upon
all men are cured'
William Carlos Williams, 'The Yellow Flower'.





Photos: Rachel Fitzhardinge

Woronora River



Photo: Cecilia Temperli

Longwall

somewhere south of sydney
an unremarkable stream is made remarkable

by its vanished water.
wander your mind on a river, how it refracts

a skipping stone, disappears quicksilver
from your hand, envelops

your plummeting
body. waratah rivulet wrote water's history in rapid

calligraphic scrawl
mirrored cloud-blow, kingfisher

impetus. it fed the woronora—damned
for the shire.

now the quick, gleaming bed
is fissured, cracked wide open. dry rust

and ochre. hard landing.
machines craze the subterranean certainties

of rock.
longwalls 20 and 21 of peabody's mine

chisel ancient strata with new calligraphies.
a shattering they'll patch

uselessly with polyurethane.
in black flooding tunnels

mudeyes and caddisflies scratch the solid
meniscus, tap vainly

for light. men crack rocks for coal
and rivers shudder.

throw a stone into water, hear only
clatter.

in sydney's southern catchment lands
an unremarkable stream

is no longer a stream.

On The Woronora

Swinging out from the jetty
her boat slides slowly with the current
outboard motor silent
she prefers to row feet braced
bare legs stretch out showing
varicose veins sun-browned

She likes to watch the movement
of her arms still able to pull strongly
feeling the oars slice and lift
hearing the splatter of droplets
before the blades cut the surface
once again

Resting on the oars for a while
she reaches tree-lined banks
as the boat drifts from sunshine
into deep shade

She breathes the clean river smell
heady as the musk of sex

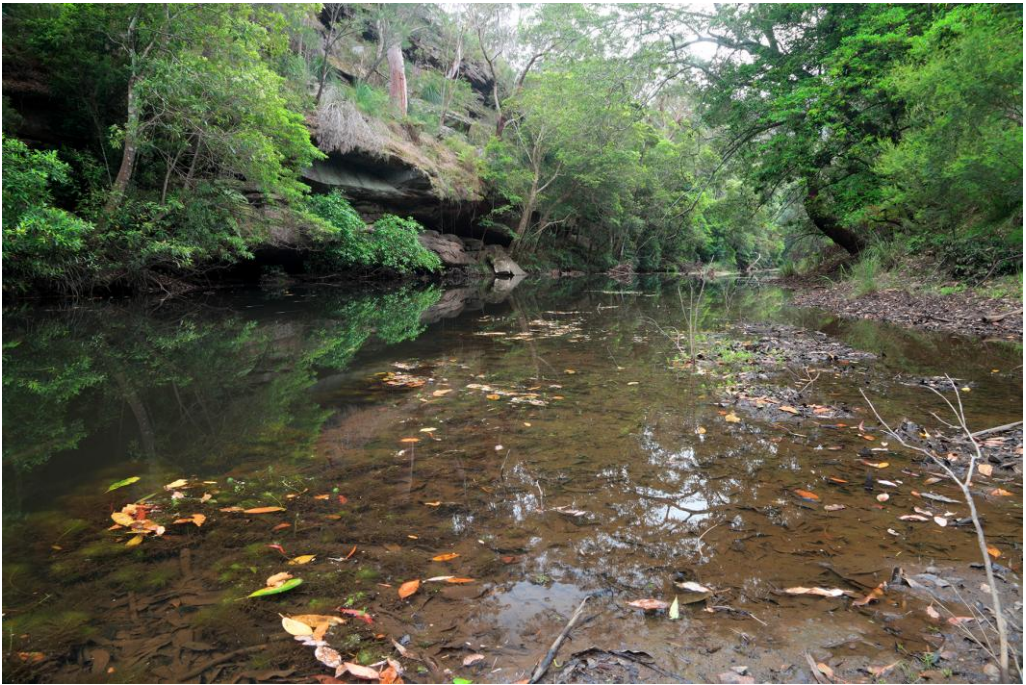
letting her fingers trail the water
softly softly
at one with the river



Photo: **Mel Anderson**

Hacking River

Photo: Harley Kingston



Ideas for Novels 6: The Hacking River

That spot
on the Hacking River
so beautiful in memory
not as great now
with its kerbs
and gutters

then
the banks were loose
grass grew into the water
you slid in
unafraid of snakes, spiders, eels
snags, no problem
the way mud felt
between the toes

the river was murky beautiful
so deep green
shaded
in the days of truck inner tubes
hanging from branches
when the abject was beautiful

parents minded their own business
only rushed in
if we were drowning
or fatally injured
and
there were injuries
even bad people
we sucked it up

lying there
in the lushness
looking up into the tall trees
cathedral-like

like so many people
before us
but unknown to us

always that lingering emptiness
where the hell are they?
why did they leave this paradise?

and the sad car park
at the end of the day

leaving behind the glowing
green clearing
where we got lost
in the grass

Waterfall

When you get the train
the train bound to
Waterfall
you never know
what you're going to
find inside

Climb on board
a band of part time troubadours
will sing for you
those old unsettled scores
when you get the train
out to Waterfall

We could go fishing
or swimming in the river
the waters cold and dark
but you don't care as you
give it all to her

And the War Artist says
that he doesn't care
about the images
Paddle with the troops
up the stony creek
making like swans

Wash away the little voice
of big time hating
afternoon is slow and
there's not too much
thinking going on

Muscovy and boating
downstream floating
At the neck of the tributary

everything is
shining

And the War Artist says
no matter what you paint
they won't come back to life
back to Waterfall

Photo: Harley Kingston



port hacking poems

1.

jet ski splashes
noise
over the boatshed
the shire comes out
early to play

still hung over
the early morning roar
reviving as strong black coffee
& you don't hear the water
or the birds
or the sound of a bream
swimming deep

2.

across the water
the national park
is burning
flames pick up
in the morning breeze
& run along the ridge

i watching the smoke
cascading across the water
the breeze already acrid

no threat to property or life
an early afternoon wind change
blows the flames back
on themselves

& all the time
the jet skis continue
a strange courtship dance

3.

last winter we took stuart's sail boat
up the bay & into the river
a homemade boat varnished & new

he taught me to tack into the wind zig zagging
across the bay until the breeze snuck up behind us
& pushed up the river to a sandback

we picnicked on wet sand in the middle of the river
sitting on planks of marine board drinking cask red
eating tomato and pepper sandwiches

the wind swung around again & we felt the dark
clouds freshen & build up as the tide turns
& the boat suggests it wants to float again

we hold the sail tight as we split the river
ropes burning our hands as the boat bursts
into the bay faster than a speed boat

we race the rain towards yowie bay
& are overtaken as we round the headland
we see rain splashes in the bay before

we feel drops lash our necks the boat
wants to keep racing but we run it
high up the sandy beach & turn

to watch lightning across the bay
& the greyiness of cloud & rain
explain why we are here

Hacking River

Where tributaries flow
Kangaroo and Muddy
and the river lives
in creek
sometimes a drought trickle
of itself
reaches down to Port Hacking
reminisces a drowned valley
where water is still clean
for all things aquatic
but where middens
gone now in the greed
of white need
dreamtime echoes the buildings of the city

In the mid-19th century, many aboriginal middens were destroyed from the Port Hacking catchment in the need for lime, to be used in the construction of Sydney.

Gunnamatta Bay, Port Hacking

float with the sticks on the stream – Virginia Woolf

loitering on a burnished deck, you know this place –
sea-grasses pollinating underwater, free-floating
Neptune's beads. dolphins scramble at the prow,
wavelets pluck the bows like a harp – somehow
you forget the renegade algae flagging you down
at the wharf, terrestrial inputs,
infilling sand smothering everything

wallowing in a slow surge from wharf to wharf
your mind strokes back through other summers,
those sticks swirling in the wake: spear-sharpening
grooves in Cabbage Tree Basin, Dharawal spirit-figures
and whales, canoes engraved on rocks, virgin forest
genuflecting in the wind, beaten-gold sunsets
and women's laughter on Jibbon Beach

the *Curranulla*'s green and gold is throbbing
over shallow waters to Bundeena.
a gull peels away from the ferry
like blown paper, lifts and settles, origami
floating on meringue-tipped peaks. only then
the backlit city rises into view, questionable,
soundless, veiled in summer haze

Previously published in *Harbour City Poets:
conversations from the bottom of the harbour*
(Puncher & Wattmann, 2009).

The River (1)

1

Sky composes
and re-composes clouds
across the river's back.

2

All day,
the wind plays across its liquid-scales
a reverie of light.

3

At midday,
from the cliffs looking down,
the river is an emerald and sapphire scarf.

4

Blue gums braid the river's hem,
a starch-white egret
is the artist's insignia.

5

At evening
black lurex is stitched
to a floating sky.

The River (2)

1

Out of the mist
origami of a white-faced heron
takes flight.

2

Along the bank
an old boatshed
leans on its shadow.

3

The keel of a motorboat
a whetted knife
opens a lesion to the sea.

An earlier version of “River (1)” was first published in
This Winter Beach (Seaview, 1999).

Photo: **Jennifer Sullivan**



CONTRIBUTORS

Susan Adams Awards 'Commended' 2012 O'Donoghue Int. Poetry Competition (Ire), 'Highly Commended', Val Vallis Award 2012, (Au), 'Highly Commended', Adrien Abbott Poetry Prize 2012, (Au), 'Commended', Tom Collins Poetry Prize, 2015, (Au), short listed, Axel Clarke inaugural Poetry Prize, 2014, 'Highly Commended' J.B. Yeats Poetry Prize 2015, (Au). Her book *Beside Rivers*, (Island, 2013) 'Commended' in the Anne Elder Award.

Robert Adamson is one of Australia's leading poets and a successful writer, editor and publisher. His books have been published in the UK and the US and his poems have been translated into several languages. He has released 15 volumes of poetry and has organised and produced poetry readings and delivered papers, lectures and readings at literary festivals throughout Australia and the world.

Adam Aitken is a Sydney based poet and works at the University of Technology Sydney. He co-edited Contemporary Asian Australian Poets (Puncher and Wattmann), and has attended writing residencies in Hong Kong, Paris, Honolulu, and Blackheath. His last full length poetry collection was Eighth Habitation (Giramondo). A memoir *One Hundred Letters Home* is forthcoming from Vagabond Press.

Richard James Allen's ten books of poetry, fiction and performance texts include *Fixing the Broken Nightingale* (Flying Island Books), *The Kamikaze Mind* (Brandl & Schlesinger) and *Thursday's Fictions* (Five Islands Press), shortlisted for the Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry. He won the Chancellor's Award for most outstanding PhD thesis at UTS. www.physicaltv.com.au

Dael Allison edits and writes poetry and prose. She has won awards for essay, poetry and an unpublished novel. Her poetry publications include *Fairweather's Raft* (Walleah Press 2012), and *Shock Aftershock* and *Wabi Sabi* (Picaro Press 2010 / 2013).

John S Batts was brought up and has lived much of his life close to rivers. In youth he was a keen if incomplete angler. After an academic career he settled by the ocean but misses the natural rhythm of rivers. He maintains it's the ideal background for appreciating poetry.

John Bennett has won major Australian poetry competitions (Newcastle and David Tribe) and works in multidisciplinary areas, including video=poems and photography. After working for NSW NPWS he gained a PhD in poetics. He now lives beside a forest by the sea, teaches eco-poetry and until recently was Artistic Director of the Bellingen Readers & Writers Festival.

Margaret Bradstock has six published collections of poetry, including *The Pomelo Tree* (winner of the Wesley Michel Wright Prize) and *Barnacle Rock* (winner of the Woollahra Festival Award, 2014). Editor of *Antipodes: poetic responses to 'settlement'* (2011), in 2014 Margaret won the national Earth Hour poetry competition and the Banjo Paterson Award.

Carolyn Bruyn is a published Sydney poet who moonlights as an archivist, historian, editor, shopkeeper and cat wrangler. She is a founding member of the poetry group, DiVerse, which reads original poetry based on art works in galleries around Sydney and beyond.

joanne burns is a Sydney poet. Her most recent collection is *brush* Giramondo Publishing 2014. She is currently assembling a Selected volume of her poems, provisionally titled *real land*, spanning over four decades of publication.

Ian Burrows <http://www.focusedphotography.com.au/>

John Carey is an ex-teacher of French and Latin and former part-time actor. He has fished the Middle Harbour area for many years. The catalogue of fish species caught there would surprise many.

Anna Couani is a Sydney teacher, writer and visual artist. Ideas for Novels is a poetry series she is currently working on. She has published 4 books that include prose fiction, poetry, a novella and a serial novel, the most recent being the bilingual English/Chinese poetry collection *Small Wonders*, Flying Islands Books 2012. Some of her out of print work is collected on her website: <http://seacruise.ath.cx/annacouani>

Michael Crane has had many poems and stories published in Australian, U.S journals including *Overland*, Meanjin the Best Australian Poems 2011 & 2014 and the Australian Love Poems. He organised Poetry Idol for the Melbourne Writers Festival and is managing editor of the *Paradise Anthology*.

Geoffrey Datson is a poet and sound artist, combining spoken word and electronica in his recordings. He has published two print collections, *Then and Then: a memoir* and *Protest Singer*. His most recent spoken word work, *An Etcher's Memory*, was screened at the 2012 QPF, and he is the editor of Christopher Barnett's *elegies/ of resistance*.

Jan Dean, a former visual arts teacher was the first female president of poetry at the pub (Newcastle) for six years. She had two collections published as a result of competitions: *With One Brush* (IP) and *Paint Peels, Graffiti Sings* (Flying Islands/Cerberus); the latter in English and Mandarin.

Tricia Dearborn is a Sydney poet. Her work has been widely published in literary journals and anthologies in Australia – including *Meanjin*, *HEAT*, *Southerly*, *Australian Poetry since 1788* and *The Best Australian Poems 2010* and *2012* – as well as in the UK, the US and online. Her latest collection of poetry is *The Ringing World* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2012).

Ross Donlon was born in Ashfield. Awarded the Dorothy Hewett Flagship Fellowship he has won international poetry competitions & is widely published in Australia & Ireland. He reads regularly in Europe. His latest book is, *Sjøvegen* (The Sea Road). A sequence from *The Blue Dressing Gown* was produced by *Poetica* in 2013.

Penelope Evans Her first poetry book *Cross-Hatched Poems* was published in 2004. Her second book *Flavour of Place* in 2014. She is a member of *The Walter Street Poets* and was published online by *Poetry Australia* and received HC in *All Poetry Competition 2012*. She has been guest speaker at Live Poets, is represented in numerous anthologies & read her poetry in many countries.

Rachel Fitzhardinge is an amateur photographer and enjoys night photography although most of her work is macro photography. She has lived the majority of her life in Blakehurst. She thinks the beauty of the Georges River is underrated.

Jean Frances work appeared in magazines across the country as she explored life and society in all its contours. Her last book was *Where She Lives* (Ginninderra, 2012).

Kevin Gillam is a West Australian poet with three books of poetry published, "other gravities" (2003) and "permitted to fall" (2007) both by

Sunline Press, and “songs sul G” in “Two Poets” (2011) by Fremantle Press. He works as Director of Music at Christ Church Grammar School in Perth.

Gail Hennessy’s poetry was first published in 1976, in newspapers and literary journals. In 2010 she brought many of these published poems together with new poetry in ‘Witnessing’, a collection which ranges across social, political and personal experience. While contributing to various anthologies she is working on a second collection.

C S Hughes grew up on both sides of the tracks in ochre towns and charcoal cities. He hoboed across the country by thumb and freight train, before spending several years in reading and study. He has lived in parks and palaces and worse places, publishes innovative poetry pieces in iBooks, and edits at nerdalicious.com.au

Paul Huynh is a self taught amateur hobbyist who enjoys both the technical and artistic aspects of photography. Working in the high pressure financial world, photography is what I do to escape and de-stress. Equipment wise I mainly shoot digital using a Canon 5D3 but occasionally I also shoot with an EOS-M3 when I can't be bothered lugging a lot of gear around. Whenever I feel like it and I decide to shoot film, I have a selection of about 10 film cameras and a myriad of films to choose from as well.

Rae Desmond Jones was born 1941 in Broken Hill, and moved to Sydney at the age of 17. After being a steelworker and labourer, he became a schoolteacher, then Mayor of Ashfield (near Sydney) for several years. He was co-editor of "Your Friendly Fascist" - a poetry magazine which offended everybody. He is retired, except for poetry.

Myra King lives in SA with her husband, David, and their rescue greyhound, Sparky. Among other publications her poems have appeared in San Pedro River Review, Boston Literary Magazine, The Heron’s Nest, Orbis, Meuse Press and Melbourne Poets Union. Myra has a short story collection, published by Ginninderra Press, who are also publishing her upcoming YA novel. <http://myrakingprofile.webs.com/> @MyraGKing

Harley Kingston is an amateur landscape and nature photographer who thoroughly enjoys photographing the many varied environments and colourful creatures of the Sydney Basin. He lives in outer suburban Sydney with his wife and step-daughter and also enjoys collecting and growing

orchids. More of his work can be seen on www.facebook.com/harlz2012 or www.flickr.com/harlz.

Andy Kissane's books include his fourth collection of poetry, *Radiance* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2014), which was shortlisted for the 2015 Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry, *Out to Lunch*, shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry, and a book of short stories, *The Swarm*. He was the winner of the 2013 Fish International Poetry Prize. He has read his work in Ireland, England, Vienna and many venues in Australia. He teaches creative writing in the community, schools and universities. <http://andykissane.com>

Martin Langford's recent publications are *The Human Project: New and Selected Poems* (P&W, 2009) and *Ground* (P&W, 2015). He is the editor of *Harbour City Poems: Sydney in Verse 1788-2008* (ed., P&W 2009). He is the poetry reviewer at Meanjin.

Mark Liston has published widely, won the 2013 All Poetry Prize and 2014 Australian Poetry 'Poem of the Year Award'. Mark was Australian Poetry Newcastle Café Poet in Residence. A collection 'Fragile Diamonds' is published by Picaro Press.

Roberta Lowing is the author of two poetry collections: *Ruin*, published by Interactive Press and co-winner of the Asher Literary Award, and *The Searchers* (Island Press). Her debut novel *Notorious* (Allen & Unwin) was nominated for the Commonwealth Book Prize and Prime Minister's Literary Awards.

Greg McLaren is a Sydney-based poet and critic whose books include *The Kurri Kurri Book of the Dead* (Puncher & Wattmann) and *After Han Shan* (Flying Islands). A new collection, *Australian ravens*, is forthcoming with Puncher & Wattmann.

J.R.McRae writes award-winning poetry/haiku [*Blood and Other Essentials...* poetry collection out soon], novels [*Free Passage*, *Cats' Eyes*] & short stories. Included in *Quadrant Book of Poetry, 2000-2010*, *Basics of Life* [ALR Anthology], *Trust and Treachery*, *Antipodes*, *Quadrant*, *Social Alternatives*. Artwork/photography features in *Musings: A Mosaic*, *Best of Vine Leaves*, *Prints Rhyming Anthology*. As **J.R.Poulter**, she writes award-winning children's books. Websites: <http://www.jrmcrae> [subversive.weebly.com](http://www.subversive.weebly.com), <http://www.jenniferrpoulter.weebly.com>

Mark Marusic A longtime resident of Sydney's inner west, Mark has previously published a book of his own poetry: *Mercurial Meanderings* (2004). In 2005 Mark edited and contributed to *A Square Circle Anthology*. Mark has also been published in numerous magazines and anthologies, and has presented and performed his works in various Sydney venues, as well as in London (Poetry Café).

Mark Miller's first book of poems, *Conversing with Stones*, won the Anne Elder Award in 1989 and his second, *This Winter Beach*, was published in 1999. A manuscript of his third book, *Scanning the Horizon*, was runner-up in the 2010 ACT Poetry Prize. Mark's poems have been published widely in newspapers and journals, and online, both in Australia and overseas. He lives on the south coast of New South Wales.

Mark O'Flynn has published five collections of poetry, most recently *The Soup's Song* (Picaro Press), plus three novels including *Grassdogs* and *The Forgotten World*. He has also published a collection of short fiction, *White Light*, (2013).

Virginia O'Keeffe is a poet whose work is grounded in place. She resides in WA but has a long connection with Sydney and the southern alps. She was shortlisted for the Tom Collins prize, has had work published in *Creatrix* and is part of the Perth Creative Connections group.

Stephen Oliver is the author of 17 volumes of poetry. Travelled extensively. Signed on with the radio ship *The Voice of Peace* broadcasting in the Mediterranean out of Jaffa, Israel. Free-lanced as *production voice, narrator, newsreader, radio producer, columnist, copy and feature writer, etc.* Lived in Australia for 20 years.

Sheryl Persson's poems have been published widely in journals and anthologies in Australia and abroad. With DiVerse, poets who write 'ekphrasis', Sheryl performs regularly at art galleries and museums. As ACDN's Resident Poet in 2011 she worked in the community developing poems in response to Auburn's cultural and linguistic diversity.

Jenny Pollak is a Sydney based artist living on the western forshores of Pittwater. She works predominantly with sculptural installation and photography. More recently she has started to write poetry and use video as part of her artistic practice. www.jennypollak.com

Mark Roberts is a Sydney based writer and critic. He currently runs *Rochford Street Review* (<http://rochfordstreetreview.com/>) and edits poetry for *Social Alternatives* journal. He also edits the occasional literary journal *P76*. *Six Months*, an extended prose poem, will shortly be published as a chapbook and he has a collection of poetry, *Concrete Flamingos*, due for release in 2016.

Margaret Owen Ruckert, educator, poet and Cafe Poet, is widely published. 110 sweet food poems populate her first book, *You Deserve Dessert*, while *musefood* won an IP Poetry Book of the Year. A previous winner of NSW Women Writers National Award, Margaret gives workshops as Facilitator of Hurstville Discovery Writers.

Julie Scully is an avid photographer and art experimentalist. She has had photos shown in the Kings Cross Street Photography Exhibition and used as book covers.

Paul Scully is a Sydney-based poet. His first collection was published by Walleah Press in 2014 and was shortlisted for the Anne Elder Prize.

Michele Seminara is a poet, editor and yoga teacher from Sydney. Her writing has appeared in publications such as *Bluepepper*, *Tincture Journal*, *Regime*, *Seizure*, *Plumwood Mountain* and *Social Alternatives*. She is co-author of poetry anthology *Bend River Mountain*, to be published by Regime Books in 2015, and her first single-authored collection will be released by Island Press in early 2016. Michele is also the managing editor of online creative arts journal *Verity La*. Blog <http://micheleseminara.wordpress.com> @SeminaraMichele

Susan Sleepwriter writes micropoetry on Twitter and reads at spoken word and poetry events around Sydney (Australia). She also writes short stories and longer poems. Susan often walks her dogs along Johnston's Creek, Annandale.

Rod Smith is 46-year-old amateur photographer from Dulwich Hill. Born in Tasmania, he moved to Sydney 15 years ago to work as a journalist. Drawn to nature, he likes to explore his adopted city and its wide and varied natural and urban landscapes, including the wilderness of its nights.

Rose van Son's poems and stories appear in *Westerly*, *Cordite*, *Rabbit (15)*, *Australian Poetry*, *JAAM (NZ)*, *Indigo*, and *Blood Orange Review (USA)*. She won places in the Tom Collins Awards and more. Her collections include *Sandfire* (Sunline); *Three in the Campagna*, and *Three Owls and a Crescent Moon* (haiku). Another collection is almost complete.

Lou Steer is a Sydney based performance poet who brings poetry to public places by collaborating on new media projects so that people can hear poetry anywhere - graveyards, paddocks, rainforests. Lou Steer's poems are published on Youtube, Soundcloud, and collected in her chapbook, *Wild Red Heart*, and the anthologies *The Last Conversation* and *On Second Thought*, published by Bankstown Poetry Slam. She is an active member of Caravan Slam Core Crew and Urchin Books Publishing Collective. <http://tinyurl.com/Lou-Steer-Slammin>

Jennifer Sullivan. A photographer based in the Snowy Mountains of NSW. She is a keen outdoors person, and has an abiding love of the mountains, including yearly visits to the Himalayas. "The camera is never far from my hand these days". A shy person, she sees photography as a way to communicate very personal ideas and views of her world.

Cecilia Temperli is a Sydney-based amateur photographer who is passionate about Australia's great outdoors and the environment. She enjoys bush walking in National Parks surrounding Sydney and also has walked in the remoteness of Australia's great deserts. She regards the beauty of the Australian landscape as a splendid natural art gallery.

Bhupen Thakker is finishing off a novel "A New Gandhi, A New Monet and Others". Won NSW Poetry Sprint. Two times NSW finalist in Australian Poetry Slam. Highly Commended in C J Dennis awards. Born in Kenya of Indian descent. Also does a bit of Finance.

Louise Wakeling is a teacher and a member of the DiVerse ekphrastic poets. She has read poetry inspired by art works at the Art Gallery of NSW, the S. H. Irvin Gallery and the Mosman Art Gallery over the past few years. and at the Sydney Writers' Festival, and has been published in a wide range of journals and anthologies, including the Best Australian Poems 2010 and in *Antipodes*. Her most recent collection is *Paragliding in a war zone* (2009), on the nexus between sport and war. She is currently working on a new collection, and plotting to transition to part-time teaching.

Rick Warr Water has always been in Rick's life. It has been either been under

the flow of his surf board or under the push of his hull or passing around his swimming body. It has been a lifetime fascination for him that he also tries to capture through his lens and the way it plays with light in an ever changing ways. It is his playground when time can be found from paid work.

John Watson is the author of *A First Reader* (Five Islands Press, 2003), *Montale: A Biographical Anthology* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2006), *Erasure Traces* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2008), *Views from Mt Brogden & A Dictionary of Minor Poets* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2008), *River Syllabics*, (Picaro Press, 2009) and *Four Refrains*, (Picaro Press, 2011), *Occam's Aftershave*, (Puncher and Wattmann, 2012), *The Tale of Gawain*, (Picaro Press, 2012), *Three Painters* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2014).

Les Wicks has toured widely and seen publication across 23 countries in 11 languages. His 11th book of poetry is *Sea of Heartbeak (Unexpected Resilience)* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2013), his 12th (a Spanish selection) *El Asombrado* (Rochford St, 2015). <http://leswicks.tripod.com/lw.htm>

Paul Williamson has published poems in *Quadrant*, *Cordite*, *Eucalypt* and other magazines and ezines in Australia, the UK, USA, Canada and on ABC Radio. Some poems have been translated into Chinese. He has three published collections *The DNA Bookshelf*, *Moments from Red Hill* and *To the Spice Islands* (2015). <http://paulwilliamson.net>

Fiona Wright is a poet, critic and editor. Her poetry collection *Knuckled*, won the 2012 Dame Mary Gilmore award for a first collection. Her essays have been published in *Meanjin*, *Seizure*, *Overland* and *Kill Your Darlings*, and her reviews and criticism have appeared in the *Australian*, *Sydney Review of Books*, *ABR*, *Cordite*, and the *Age*.

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Photo: Rick Warr

