



CLASS

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Meuse Press acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Country on which this work was created, the Bidjigal people of the Eora Nation, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.



One US commentator when quizzed on the working class of his country said “we prefer to call them people who have yet to achieve their full potential” haha.

The idea for this collection arose from intense discussions held in Canada & India 2023/2024. There has been much written about identity (for lack of a better word) in recent years. Without necessarily criticising that or excluding the interplay of factors at work, many find it remarkable at a time when wealth inequality is reaching historic heights that we see the issue of class under-examined.

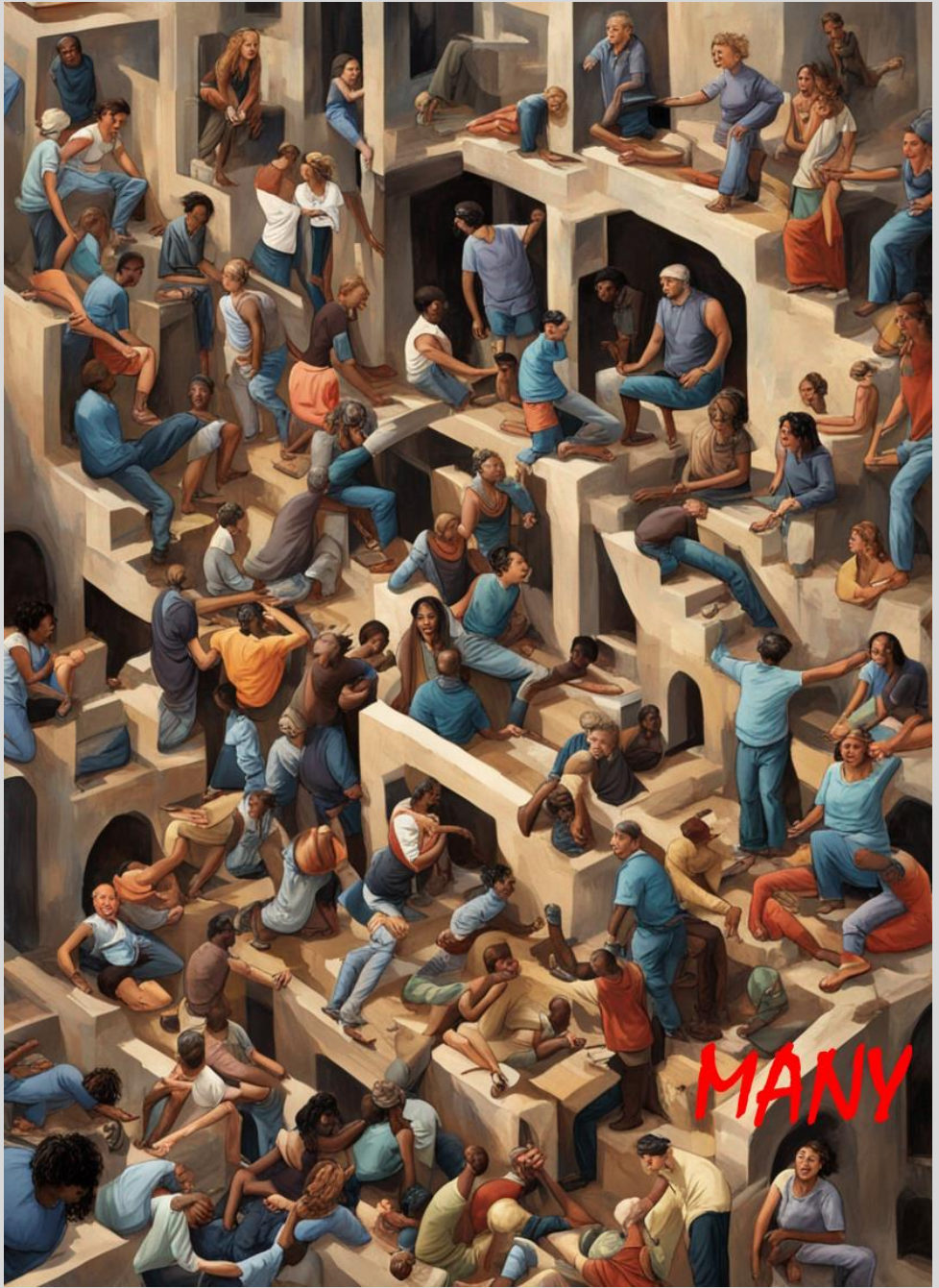
There is no orthodoxy within these pages nor an imperative for a choral polemic. Hopefully, what has emerged is a buffet of experiences, perspectives & propositions.

MANY

ONE

FEATURING WORK BY

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Fahredin Shehu, Ellen Shelley, Beth Spencer, Lesley Synge,
Louise Wakeling, James Walton, Michael Williamson
& Paul Williamson**



Woven Cities

All things
can be patched together
artfully

every street
every lane
every roof

with sinews
arteries
and muscle

cities can shine again
in the morning sun
like bones

Gabriel Rosenstock is a poet, haikuist, tankaist, children's author, translator, novelist, short story writer and critic. Irish (Gaelic) is his literary medium of choice. A recent title with artist Masood Hussain is *Love Letter to Kashmir* (Cross-Cultural Communications, New York):
<https://hyperallergic.com/875314/envisioning-kashmir-future-through-paint-verse-masood-hussain-gabriel-rosenstock/>

Fite Fuaite

Is féidir an uile ní
a fhí ina chéile
go cliste

gach sráid
is gach lána
gach díon

le féitheoga
le hartairí
le matáin

cathracha ag lonrú arís
faoi ghrian na maidine
ina gcnámha

No One Remembers

With their skin cool as a baby's,
Smelling not of the desert
But of perfume from Paris
Tourists gape at the pyramids
Shaking their heads in wonder
Muttering the names of pharaohs
Long locked in their death palace
As if they had shaken hands with
Them, as if their great-grandmothers
Were themselves haemophilic princesses.
No one remembers parched throats
And lacerated backs, tears and
Blood used to cement the bricks together,
No one remembers the slaves.

With petals in their hair
And the night as their shawl
Visitors marvel at the ruins
Divining the grand architecture
Recalling the wine, laughter,
And song flowing from wall to wall.
Preserved are the stones and
Stairways leading to nowhere
Restored are the walls – all as pale
As fallen craters from the moon.
Only the roses remain red
And the dama de noche exhale
Into the dark. The visitors shiver.
No one remembers the gardener.

With scrolls of art wrapping,
Their skulls, the dilettantes stand
Enthralled, embalmed, drowned
In the glories and memorabilia of
Shakespeare, Beethoven, Michelangelo
And Einstein and Lenin.

The dilettantes meander in and out
Of panels of greatness,
Protected from the sun and artificial light.
Walking museum pieces, they are also
Nodding pocket dictionaries,
Outlines, or whatever, abridged
And incomplete, charlatans and Lilliputians
With jaws dropped open, they wonder
If masters ever eat and fart or
If they had childhood memories to plumb.
No one remembers the mothers.

From the book *Witch's Dance at iba pang tula sa Filipino at Español* by Marra PL. Lanot. (Anvil Publishing, Inc., Metro Manila, Philippines, 2000)

Marra PL. Lanot is a poet, essayist, and freelance journalist. Her works include: *Cadena de Amor: New and Selected Poems in English, Filipino, and Spanish*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2017. *Dream Sketches*, second edition. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2013. *Darna & Other Idols*. Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2012.

**the perpetual lease
(‘he wahine, te whenua’)**

the perpetual lease
was hōhā,
a regular
state of umbrage.

a Pākehā plot
granting
apocryphal
permanence,
while spl in te rin g
Māori
exponentially
every generation.

we owned the home,
engari kāore te whenua
that clasped your tīpuna.
where stood the house,
that pledged us close
for years.

later,
whanaunga
gifted you a share,
one of dozens.
a laughable quittance
offsetting nothing
against the annual tithes.

& pathos remained.
for, while the lease endured,
our own
charter
crumbled.

you wed to your land,
and me,
 without
 matrimony,
sans abode.

he wahine, he whenua, e ngaro ai te tangata.
ehara, ehara.

[he wahine, he whenua, e ngaro ai te tangata.
ehara, ehara.
by women, by land, man is lost.
indeed].

Vaughan Rapatahana (Te ?tiawa) commutes between homes in Hong Kong, Philippines, and Aotearoa New Zealand. He is widely published across several genre in both his main languages, te reo M?ori and English and his work has been translated into Bahasa Malaysia, Italian, French, Mandarin, Romanian, Spanish. He is the author and editor/co-editor of well over 45 books.
<https://www.read-nz.org/writer/rapatahana-vaughan/>

A very long story

It was a very long story, we had to tell each other to shut up because going into details made it more unbearable, we didn't quite know how to stop, sharing the pain of it when we were together, so you could nut out what to do, next, sure, we weren't angels, and all this sounds like I was talking about another sort of world, here I go again, about something quite a long time ago, already, hey, I actually learned to 'read' the paper 'differently' by hurriedly turning the pages before I finished reading, as if that's what you do, you know, turn the pages,

It's a very long story, we have to tell each other to shut up because going into details makes it more unbearable, we don't quite know how to stop, sharing the pain of it when we are together, so you can nut out what to do, next, sure, we

aren't angels, and all this sounds like I'm talking about another sort of world, here I go again, about something only in the present, hey, I'm actually learning to 'read' the paper 'differently' by hurriedly turning the pages before I've finished reading, as if that's what you do, you know, turn the pages,

It will be a very long story, we'll have to tell each other to shut up because going into details will make it more unbearable, we won't quite know how to stop, sharing the pain of it when we are together, so you'll be able to nut out what to do, next, sure, we won't be angels, and all this sounds like I'm talking about another sort of world, here I go again, about something way in the future, a long way off, hey, I'll actually be learning to 'read' the paper 'differently' by hurriedly turning the pages before I've finished reading, as if that's what you'll do, you know, turn the pages,

Jeltje Fanoy For the last decade I've tried to document in my poetry a growing sense of powerlessness that came with the neo-liberal belief that there's no such thing as community, as well as the seemingly underlying intent of pursuing and maintaining an upper class/underclass service mentality. My early influences were traditions of social critique (Bertolt Brecht, Jacques Prévert) through popular styles and themes. I've been writing, editing, publishing and recording poetry in Melbourne since the 1970s.

We are the new proletariat

In this universe where everything is always new
we are those who must be called the new proletariat
because if the old exploitation puts on
 new masks
in our very modern times old poverty is still
 as young.

We work in workshops and on building sites, behind
 machines
operated digitally: lathes, milling machines, presses
 embossing machines
we are millions, we work for bosses,
 ill-treated underlings or multinationals
but the era of industrialism being over, we
 don't exist.

Our factories have been closed; we have been freed from
 our work
but, always looking for a job, for work
 we aren't free.
As for those of us who leave school and never get
 a job nor a real wage
there's job experience at menial tasks for next to nothing
 so we're never out of work.

We are the proletarians of the post-industrial era
they tell us the computer sets us free
but we spend our days chained to ours.
Not now just our hands but our brains and
 our nerves which become extensions of the machine.

Workers, employees, unemployed or on the brink
we are the new proletariat.
In this universe where only property matters
we don't even own

our work.

We are the new proletariat.
Owning nothing, we count for nothing.
But we are the most numerous
without us nothing gets done.
And those who own everything
must win our favour.

Francis Combes was born on May 31, 1953, in Marvejols, Lozère (France). He holds a degree in Political Science (1974) and has studied Eastern languages (Russian, Chinese and Hungarian). From 1981 to 1992, he was the literary editor of Messidor publishing house and one of the managers of Europe magazine.

Nous sommes les nouveaux prolétaires

Dans cet univers où tout est toujours nouveau
nous sommes ceux qu'il faut appeler les nouveaux prolétaires
car si l'ancienne exploitation s'affuble toujours de visages nouveaux
dans nos temps très modernes la vieille misère est toujours aussi jeune.

Nous travaillons dans des ateliers et des chantiers, derrière des machines
à commandes numériques, des tours, des fraiseuses, des presses, des
emboutisseuses
nous sommes des millions, nous travaillons pour des patrons, sous-traitants
maltraités ou multinationales
mais l'ère de l'industrie étant déclarée close,
nous n'existons pas.

Nos usines ont été fermées ; nous avons été libérés de notre travail
mais, toujours à la recherche d'un emploi, du travail nous ne sommes pas libérés.
Quant à nous qui sortons de l'école, et n'avons jamais eu emploi, ni vrai salaire
de stages gratuits en petits boulots, pour presque rien, nous travaillons sans cesse.

Nous sommes les prolétaires de l'ère post-industrielle;
on nous dit que l'ordinateur libère
mais nous passons nos journées enchaînés à nos ordinateurs.
Ce n'est plus seulement notre main, mais notre cerveau et nos nerfs
qui deviennent les appendices de la machine.

Ouvriers, employés, chômeurs ou précaires,
nous sommes les nouveaux prolétaires.
Dans cet univers où seule compte la propriété, de notre emploi,
nous ne sommes pas même les propriétaires.

Nous sommes les nouveaux prolétaires.
Ne possédant rien, nous ne comptons pour rien.
Mais nous sommes les plus nombreux,
sans nous rien ne se fait.
Et ceux qui possèdent tout,
avec nous devront compter.

George Sand responds to the failed Commune
1872

The Marxists branded me a traitor
for not supporting violent protests

for not taking the *Communards'* side.
They think I seek comfort and ease

think I have lived by my silver spoon.
I have to accept once more that words

are the only power I wield, and words
must be my ammunition if I hope

to exert the slightest influence in this most
depressing of times. I return to political

analysis. The only way to make enduring
change is to include the peasantry

in political discourse. I can shout *le paysan*
c'est le nombre from Montmartre rooftops

till I am hoarse but the Parisian *communistes*
discount them, do not educate them.

We must look outside of Paris – *la region*
is where political potential lies. The peasants

are the *majorité rurale*. We must address
their fears that socialism will deprive them

of their smallholdings, show these hard
workers on whom we rely for every bite

we eat that they will gain from socialism
not lose. I hatch a novel, as I did in 1849

when I wrote *Fadette* responding to the failed
'48 revolution. This time the story of *Nanon*

shepherdess. Perhaps the first female
peasant narrator in French literary history.

Le paysan c'est le nombre – the peasant is the number
Le payson, 'The Peasants', was the term used in that era

Anne M Carson's poetry has been published internationally and widely in Australia. It has been multiply awarded, including being commended in the *Ada's* (2024). *The Detective's Chair: prose poems about fictional detectives* was published by Liquid Amber Press (2023). Her PhD received an Outstanding Dissertation Prize (AERA, 2024).

The Tree of Justice*

Here, plant an *arali* tree: in memory
of the grandmother who died mad.
Here, plant a *mathalam* tree : in memory
of the father who died of thirst.
Here, plant an *ashoka* tree: in memory
of the sister suicide abducted.
But where shall we plant the tree of justice
watered so long by martyrs' blood?

The Christmas tree in the churchyard
has no flowers to offer.
Nor has the wooden cross in front of the law-court
a single green leaf.

My brother, betrayed once again,
the law that murdered you
puts on the holy cassock
to pardon the sinners.
Judges wash their hands: they have
no evidence of your death.

But we have evidence of your life:
Arun, Shashi, Premchand, Uday,
Joy Mathew, Praveen, Premchand,
Ramakrishnan... everyone of them,
a witness, every moment.

We will never forget.
Your murderers will not have peace
on their thrones of power and
their guarded vans as long as we live.

Even when we will be gone,
Manu, Adityan, Sabitha, Buddy, Bimal,
my little darlings, do not forget
the nights of the gallows,

the corpses flung into ravines,
young men who sought refuge
in the full moon of madness
and the new moon night of suicide.
Take the vow: never shall we forgive,
and our generations never cease until
the day without spies and prisons dawns.

Tree of justice, wounded and withering,
drop in the wind a single leaf,
with a line at least scribbled on it
and break the silent sky of the coward
with the thunderous measure
of torrential showers.

Here, plant a *palai* tree
for the peace of the martyrs' souls,
here, plant a *kanjiram* tree
for the sweet memory of the justice
we have so far known
And here plant an *erikku* shrub
dancing ashen in the funeral ground:
for this earth of ours and this human mind
tuning into a graveyard moment by moment.

*The poem was written in the context of the sensational murder of Rajan, a radical youth, an engineering student and a singer from Kerala by the police who had taken him into illegal custody during the Emergency. They left no trace of his dead body. And the court exonerated the accused for lack of evidence. Many of the trees in the poem have roots in mythology, Like *ashoka* that gave shade to Sita Rama's wife, abducted by Ravana in Ramayana or the *erikku* (*maddar*) that grows on funeral grounds and is dear to Shiva who dances in their ash. *Arali* is *Casuarina*, *matalam*, pomegranate and *kanjiram* is *Nux Vomica*. *Palai* (*Alstonia Scholaris*) is a tree with a white flower of intense fragrance, celebrated in ancient Tamil poetry, often associated with heroes who wore the garland of *palai* flowers and was also used in rituals of exorcism.

K Satchidanandan is a bilingual poet, critic, playwright, editor, fiction writer and travel writer. He has been an editor of *Indian Literature* bimonthly and *Beyond Borders*, a SAARC literature quarterly, the executive head of the National Academy of Letters and invited National fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla, He has thirty-two collections/selections of poetry in Malayalam, ten in English, seven in Hindi, and thirty collections in other languages.

A Nation's State

the whinger, the skite, the wowser,
the left-out, the shunted-off, the tumble-dried,
two-fisted tub-thumpers, lunatic moon lovers,
swoony-voiced heapers-up of praise,
doomsters, gloomsters, all-time losers,
the numberless numb

the comrade, the sister, the brother,
the parents, the bastard offspring,
the doers and the hoers, the munted,
those living on a prayer,
those holding up the world with their shoulders,
carriers of bloodied Xmas cards

product demonstrators, supermarket couponistas,
wicket-takers, wicket-keepers, applauders,
stakeholders waiting to be stroked,
backslappers, storm-chasers, clothes horses,
spirit mediums, falsifiers, straight arrows,
characters made of newsprint, celebrities made of pixels

fake editors, junior pleasers, also-rans,
the shopped-in, the convictionless, the blind-sided,
told-you-so's, sweatshop owners, boatshoe people,
backroom boffins, knowledge wallahs, keepers of keys,
the bare-knuckled, the trans-oceanic, the touch-sensitive,
the undead forever

glorybox embezzlers, sticklers for etiquette,
ear-benders anon, talkback's hanging judges,
chin-up daylight savers, night-robber brethren,
mutton kings riding in ambulances,
movie bee wranglers with a zillion bees to house,
phone flash-mobs demobilising into single figures

David Eggleton was the New Zealand Poet Laureate 2019 - 2022. In 2016 he also received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry.

The Dingo Fence

(For Djon Mundine)

The motorcycle and its travelling shadow are aliens in this flatness.
The horizon draws back, becomes a wide flat line. Slate-grey ranges breach like
submarines. The sky—eggshell blue.
Monet's clouds.

And everything is the road.

It bisects the landscape in a straight line, hundreds of
kilometres long. When it curves, it does so in a broad flat arc.

At night, the stars detach and
become headlights. Vulpecula and
Lupus, constellations of the dog are
lights of an approaching roadtrain.

By day, there's powerlines, a wire fence
stretching into nothing. Sometimes tracks of
dirt bikes or community cars—figure eights,
partly erased by salt.

But the road is primary. All forces converge there.

Last roadhouse after Elliot—a broken concrete camel lies
on its side near a cactus and a cage of budgerigars.

A tourist approaches in a Pajero with a bullock's skull strapped to
the bonnet. He slows then speeds away. A sign on the bowsers
reads "closed indefinitely, because of dingoes".

White people have been afraid of dingoes since Captain Cook.

A dingo can pass for a dog or a wolf but
it's neither. A dingo is a shapeshifter—

sometimes a sparrowhawk, an old man
meandering in the road, a girl in a red
dress.

They disguise themselves in mirage, in Fata Morgana—a Southern wind
garrulous with finches or heavy owls. When dingoes howl the whole
landscape shakes.

Waterfalls appear in stony mountains.
Rain fills the dormant creeks.

A dingo can pass for a dog or a wolf.
It can enter your home as a pet, a rescue, cattle dog, an abandoned kelpie cross.

A dingo rotates its wrists to open doors, windows or locks.
It can enter your home with its strange golden eyes and watch you sleep.

Dingoes don't care if you typecast them as cowardly, promiscuous, vicious, or
cunning.
They have heard that all before and they're still here.

Unlike a wolf, a dingo will hold your gaze. Unlike a dog, it
holds your gaze for a maximum of three seconds. Dingoes do
not seek a window to your soul. They see your soul already.

A person is a mutated dingo.
A dingo's nose is longer than a person's and its head is rounder.

White people have been afraid of dingoes since Captain Cook.

They built a dingo fence, spanning 5614 kilometers from the
Darling Downs to the cliffs of the Nullarbor. In their
cowardice and cunning, they built the world's longest fence.

No choice, they said, it's dingoes or the livestock.

Dingoes know evil has a scent like rotting metal, like meat and
rusting tin— a colonial aroma, blood libel of the sheep eaters.

The dingo fence does not keep dingoes out. They run along its length hunting for a hole. When they find one, they pass their babies through.

Eagles are caught in the wire. Kangaroos, misjudging a jump, hang by their back legs until they die from exposure or shock.

Dingoes are hard to kill because of “hybrid vigour”.

They can swivel their heads 180 degrees to look back along their spines. When they hunt their ears turn like radar dishes. One ear points forward and the other back. A dingo could be tracking you now and you’d never know.

When they sleep, they keep one ear against the ground and the other in the air— listening to two worlds at the same time.

Dingoes are autonomous. They dig their own homes, follow their own laws, hunt their own food.

They forge strategic alliances with women and bats, diamond doves, bowerbirds and wrens. Dingoes taught women how to hunt.

Given the chance, a dingo will poison your dog with orchid venom and take its place.

When you speak to a dingo about obedience or puppy training, it hears the word ‘slavery’. When you offer a dingo toys, dog collars or soft indoor beds, it hears the word ‘slavery’.

A dingo is teeth, bones and fur. It will not perform tricks. It does not win ribbons in kennel clubs.

No dingo has appeared in a dog’s family tree for at least 10,000 years.

Dingoes are as old as the last Ice Age.

Unlike pedigree dogs, their lineage did not originate in last century eugenics.

A dingo can fake interest in universities, art galleries, politics and God, if it must to survive, but finds this distasteful.

It is not a full-blood, half-blood, hybrid, real, pure-bred, dingo-dog or authentic. It is not a footnote to an essay on miscegenation.

Dingoes have wolf and dog ancestry.

If you ask a dingo how it identifies, it will say it's complicated. It does not see itself as a living embodiment of extinction.

A dingo is not looking for your validation.

If you suggest a dingo should get a DNA test, it will kill and eat you in your suburban dogpark.

Dingoes have an unbreakable connection to land.

Their connection is not a lifestyle choice.

The status of dingoes as outcasts is not lost on them.

They choose Country over kin. They sleep with their bellies to Country's skin. When they wake, they offer her their crawling dance.

A dingo doesn't give a shit what you think about that connection.

Sheep eaters have failed to exterminate the dingoes.

Their poison baits lie uneaten in the scrub.

Dingoes understand traps and strychnine in a way that wolves and dogs do not.

They will not be contained by a fence.

Dingoes didn't kill the thylacines, but they saw who did. They snarled at the newspaper's obviously fake photographs of thylacines holding chickens in their mouths—

the same newspapers that now run pictures of photoshopped dingoes tearing at murdered lambs.

Dingoes are marsupial predators. They are not interested in your sheep.

In South Australia the Dog Fence Board administers and maintains the fence. In Queensland the Wild Dog Barrier Fence Panel administers and maintains the fence.

In New South Wales the Wild Dog Destruction Board administers and maintains the fence. In Northern Territory Aboriginal Protected Land dingoes roam free.

Haves and Have-nots

Remember *Slumdog Millionaire*? That's just a movie. There is something infuriating about a group of nobles attempting peace for those who don't have food, water, clothes, a roof, or a covered toilet. Aristocrats scoff at those reeking. Pinching their noses, tossing fetid shoes into a bonfire of the indulgent. They keep rambling, advancing. Have-nots look hungrily at leftovers, wipe nose grunges off, stand static for hours, and leave their one set of clothing out every night hoping it might rain. The whims of the Haves. The needs of the Have-nots. No just thoughts merging at the confluence of *Alaknanda* and *Bhagirathi*, or *Ohio* and *Mississippi*. Different strokes for different folks. The snake is flushed. One quarter of the moon is a bride. The veil is polka dotted. My chair is regal. I sewed my own gown. I see *Harriet* and others singing coded spirituals. Felled trees float upstream. Mercury is a fire burning on frozen Jupiter. And then the solitary dove in the harem of the Haves is cuddled, petted, passed from one perfumed bosom to another before "they" decide to let it fly. Let it be free. Other unalike birds watch intently, as peace is a name given to one of their step-kind. Any bird can be eaten on costly chinaware with a fuddy-duddy sprinkle of seasoning.

**Slumdog Millionaire*: Film made in 2008

**Alaknanda and Bhagirathi Rivers*: in Devprayag, India

**Ohio and Mississippi Rivers*: Cairo, Illinois, USA

**Harriet*: Reference to Harriet Tubman

Previously published in *Kisses at the espresso bar* (Kelsay 2022)

Anita Nahal, Ph.D., is a two-time Pushcart Prize-nominated (22, 23) Indian American author-academic. Her third poetry collection, *What's wrong with us Kali women?* is mandatory reading at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. www.anitanahal.com

colour bar

What appears, is not. Black
is not black.

What appears easy and white
is not white.

Even the colour brown
on some skins and the ground

appears tentative. There are
no greys to speak of, or

to be seen. Colour bar is
fuzzy like the screen's static.

Sudeep Sen's [www.sudeepsen.org] is widely recognised as a major new generation voice in world literature and 'one of the finest English-language poets in the international literary scene' (*BBC Radio*), 'fascinated not just by language but the possibilities of language' (*Scotland on Sunday*). He received a Pleiades Honour (at the Struga Poetry Festival, Macedonia) for having made "a significant contribution to contemporary world poetry". His prize-winning books include: *Postmarked India: New & Selected Poems* (HarperCollins), *Rain, Aria* (A. K. Ramanujan Translation Award), *Fractals: New & Selected Poems / Translations 1980-2015* (London Magazine Editions), *EroText* (Vintage: Penguin Random House / Global Literary Festival Award for Literary Excellence & Best Book of the Year), *Kaifi Azmi: Poems / Nazms* (Bloomsbury), *Anthropocene: Climate Change, Contagion, Consolation* (Pippa Rann, 2021-22 Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize winner), and *Red* (Nirox Foundation, 2023)

Rebuild the we

We liked
Classify organize the world
We worked hard to fit into small boxes
 to fit others into small boxes

Indicate what is your
social class cultural origine sexual orientation religion
professional occupation marital status gender political choice income

We didn't realize that we
had polarized
became intransigent

We didn't realize that we had given birth to
intransigence
stigma
cleavage and despair

We didn't see the humiliated
the steps back
the loss of trust
the disintegrated social fabric

We did not realize the extend of our indifference
nor the consequences of our individual attachments on the collective

So before the words solidarity, humanity, fraternity fade away
we must use our days to unite
not to dividing

We who have hierarchized humanity
let's dismantle these dams we have raise
let's raise the bridges that connected us

Let's open our eyes and our palms
Let's delight in the simple joys of everyday life
to collect what is good, what is beautiful, what is luminous
Let's work to restore hope altruism kindness meekness

Aren't we just human
strong and fragile at the same time

don't we have the same heart that beats
such eyes for beauty
the same blood that pulses
in this precious time gave to us

Let's approach the shore of redemptions
The sky shelters births
beyond the horizon

Let's dare to imagine what we thought impossible
A new language in the crack of time
Vibrant hearts
An unprecedented impulse

We rise again
since we still have love
since we carry the sumptuousness of the tiny
and the courage to be vulnerable

And it doesn't matter
that we are thought to be naive old-fashioned
if our work seems laughable

we will have learned to stammer those words again
community belonging kindness
By our presence offered
we will have sewn up the torn abysses

We will have dared the courage to be poets
to make our days habitable

We will have rebuilt the us

Sylvie Poisson is a poet from Québec, Canada. She has published two collections of poetry at *Écrits d'à Côté* and a collection of youth poetry at *Soulières éditeur*. Her poems have also appeared in national and international magazines and anthologies. She participated in several poetry events including the Trois-Rivières International Poetry Festival.

Rebâtir le nous

Nous avons aimé
Classifier organiser le monde
Nous avons travaillé fort à entrer dans de petites cases
à faire entrer les autres dans de petites cases

Indiquez quelle est votre
classe sociale origine culturelle orientation sexuelle religion
occupation professionnelle état civil genre choix politique revenu

Nous ne nous sommes pas rendu compte
d'avoir polarisé
d'être devenus tranchants

Nous n'avons pas réalisé que nous avons enfanté
intransigeance
stigmatisation
clivage et désespoir

Nous n'avons pas vu les humiliés
les pas de recul
la perte de confiance
le tissu social désagrégé

Nous n'avons pas réalisé la portée de notre indifférence
ni les conséquences de nos attachements individuels sur le collectif

Alors avant que les mots solidarité, humanité, fraternité ne s'effacent
il nous faut employer nos jours à s'unir
non à se diviser

Nous qui avons hiérarchisé l'humanité
démantelons ces barrages que nous avons dressés
relevons les ponts qui nous reliaient

Ouvrons nos regards et nos paumes
Ravissons les bonheurs simples du quotidien
pour recueillir ce qui est bon ce qui est beau ce qui est lumineux

Employons-nous à restaurer l'espérance
l'altruisme la gentillesse la douceur

Ne sommes-nous pas simplement humains humaines
solides et fragiles à la fois

n'avons-nous pas un même cœur qui bat
de pareils yeux pour la beauté
un même sang qui pulse
dans ce précieux temps qui nous est imparti

Abordons la rive des rédemptions
Le ciel abrite des enfantements
au-delà de l'horizon

Osons imaginer ce que nous pensions impossible
Une langue neuve dans la fissure du temps
Des cœurs vibrants Un élan inédit

Nous nous relevons
puisqu'il nous reste l'amour
puisque nous portons la somptuosité de l'infime
et le courage d'être vulnérables

Et peu importe
que l'on nous pense naïfs démodés
si notre ouvrage semble risible

nous aurons réappris à balbutier les mots
communauté appartenance bienveillance
Par nos présences offertes
nous aurons recousu les abîmes déchirés

Nous aurons osé le courage d'être poètes
pour rendre nos jours habitables

Nous aurons reconstruit le nous

Thirteenth Insurrection of the Earthworms

We till the land and plough the field
We cannot wait till the cows need
to come home, no we breed
under your toes and silently chew,
masticate the earth, prepare you
to precipitate the thunder
of your own end, now near
near near near, and the rain pours
to eradicate the traces of the plunder
in Plachimada, in Chengara
we beat the chenda and shake the dance,
possessed and angry, the theyyam squirms
while you tear asunder and drink the blood
of this our land, the land of earthworms.

In the swamp, among the leeches
we plot and we turn the earth
into speech, yes we speak, not
on your tv, but to alter and claim
the land we till, the land we churn
the land we, not you, understand.
See the dispossessed earthworms
advance, advance, the avalanche
of our legless march, wingless flight
slowly gnawing without your knowing
at the surveyor's lens and the prospector's
sense of the price of this land when we
shake near near near the ground beneath
your solid mechanical counting feet

And we chew the bough bent with the honey
of solidarity while the paraya tautens his chenda
and with the crows and the hornbills and thunder-
clouds we are drunk on the rain of the insurrection
the pulluva strums on her earthen pot's ukulele

and the paraya tunes his drums and beats
the revolution
of the earthworms, here we advance,
varika varika makkale,
here comes the insurrection
of the earthworms, the ululation
of the theyyams of dispossessed
revolution –

the rain of earthworms, the words, the worms.

From *Hereafter*, Sabitha Satchi. Poetrywala, Mumbai, India: 2021

Sabitha Satchi, author of *Hereafter* (Poetrywala, 2021), has been lecturer of English in Delhi University, Commonwealth Scholar (U.K.), and Paul Mellon Fellow (U.S.A). Her poems have been published in several anthologies including *The Penguin Book of Indian Poets* (Ed. Jeet Thayil, Penguin India, 2021), *Singing in the Dark* (Penguin Randomhouse, 2020) and journals including *Poetry Wales* (U.K.), *Blackbox Manifold* (U.K.).

(un) pack a port

swarms on
the quay luggage piles up
along cafe walls it's dis/embarkation
coffee hour lens lens
i hear your call who is the
hungriest camera of us all

a stone's throw a hill or two
above bodies sleep under weathered
blankets beside rumpled suitcases
wrinkled backpacks stuffed with
discard garments: discount lullabies

a stone urn hosts a
withered plant a doodle
down a plinth no plaque
except on teeth

tale of two cities:
has the ferryman capsized

Istanbul Gothic

it was like a hundred years ago
standing in that square in Istanbul
like someone else's deja vu
someone who could've been me

rickety multi-storey timber buildings
I loved them for no reason that I understood
the insides of big square rooms
cubes really

timber rooms with dusty carpets in them
windows high above the ground outside
I felt I'd been there before
standing in the wide central hallway

I gave my students some lines
for narratives
each one took a little text at random
Mohamed got this one:

Night. On a window seat. The city lights cast
arcs of white, orange and purple.
The movement of the train, rocking slightly.
We pulled into a station and the doors opened.

And the story Mohamed wrote
from a work experience en route to Australia
from Iraq as a refugee
called The Young Shoemaker

a guy tired from work at dusk
looking out over the Marmara Sea
falling asleep on the commuter train
overshooting his station
later sleeping at home
then woken by his sister to go to his Sydney school

a dream

suddenly, the shoe district
carts full of shoes
the rickety buildings standing at the top of steep streets
and people busy everywhere with shoes, in and out of boxes

my Asia Minor ancestors would've been there
could've been there to do things
would've called it The City, Η πόλη

would today if they were still alive
Εἰς τὴν πόλιν (is stin polis)
to the city
Istanbul

Anna Couani is a Sydney writer and visual artist who runs The Shop Gallery in Glebe. She has published seven books of prose and poetry. The most recent is *local* from Flying Islands. Her out of print work is at annacouani.com.

Driftwood

Like driftwood, in shoddy, painful pieces
they float, bewildered, into these shores.

 Weary and thirsty,
 their bloodshot eyes a mirror
 of despair.

Like driftwood on the sandy beach
 they lie,
 waiting for the gentle hand to lift them
 from their misery,
 without asking why.

Like driftwood lost and found,
 unused and abused,
 a source of ageless wonder,
 of hope and love,
 of better lives
 and futures –

The refugees on fragile boats they come.

Charles Flores, poet, writer, journalist and broadcaster, was born at Kalkara, Malta, in 1948. His professional training took him to the Belgrade Institute of Journalism and Syracuse University, New York. Following a career in newspapers, Flores went into broadcasting. Author of several literary and journalistic books in Maltese and English, his poetry has appeared in Arabic, Italian and Serbo-Croat editions. In 1996 he won the Commonwealth Short Story Competition for the Europe/Canada region.

Ferġhat u Zkuk Nixfin

Ferġhat u zkuk nixfin f' wiċċ l-ilma, midrubin,
beżgħana jfittxu kenn max-xatt.

Għajjenin, bil-għatx,
għajnejhom ħomor nar
mera tad-disperazzjoni.

Ferġhat u zkuk mitluqin fuq ramla siekta
jistennew,
dik l-id ħanina biex tfarraġhom,
toħroġhom mill-miżerja
bla ma tistaqsi l-għala.

Ferġhat u zkuk mitlufa sa jinstabu,
ma jridhom hadd, jassruhom,
għajn kiefer ta' kull żmien,
lejn tama u mħabba,
lejn ħajja aħjar,
gejjieni ġdid –
ir-refuġjati waslu fuq id-dgħajjes tat-tiben u t-tajjar.

A Metaphor for Growth

I once thought I lived.
The silvery circumstance in the sky;
plenty of air for the lazy lungs.
The strange behaviour of doors ...

I was an eternal student
of electricity; I listened to a black hole
that sang a possibility. I never relied
on cars that run on promises.

My workplaces: Aftermath & Co;
Full Stop & Son. No one can sprout
in other people's soil.
I was exposed to virtue poses;

I found a speak speck,
a subliminal one.
Bad architects of a better future
unearthed darkness.

Scars are talkative, even if unseeable.
Every footstep is a story.
How to survive if you are
out of the average?

Tony Kitt is from Dublin, Ireland. His poetry titles include *The Magic Phlute* (SurVision Books, 2019); *Endurable Infinity* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022), and *Sky Sailing* (Salmon Poetry, 2025). He edited *Contemporary Tangential Surrealist Poetry* anthology (SurVision Books, 2023) and *Invasion: Ukrainian Poems about the War* anthology (SurVision Books, 2022).

Care and protection

Dear 'Bring Back The Lash',

What is it that you want us to do?
To witness for the children
(who live with the 'monsters'
that dwell in the mysteries
of mythical 'other' suburbs)
while saving the Family?

To seek remorse from the children
of beating, beaten fathers
for spraying your walls
like strutting, rutting tomcats
prowling your memory lanes?

To firmly guide the child-mother
to the double-breasted state,
in the secret hope of confiscation
of the child-father's heir
for replanting in the middle ground?

To guide the steps of the dispossessed
to the paths of committee righteousness
where the swords of primal anger
can be beaten into submissions,
the ploughshares of the damned?

To muffle Black voices
and stumble into families
two hundred years in the breaking
and steal back black youth's Dreaming
at two hundred k's an hour?

To hear your rage in silence
as you birch us for our weakness
and hang us from the headlines,

while the raiders of the lost economy
brief lawyers in tax havens?

As we stumble to the millennium
doing more tricks with less,
we scan the darkness of your charity
and our own wounded, winding road
for a light to guide us home.

Doug Jacquier writes from the Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia. His works of fiction, nonfiction and poetry have been published in the US, UK, Australia, Canada and India. He blogs at <https://sixcrookedhighways.com/> and is the editor of the humour site, [Witcraft](#).

Capitalist temples rise to the surface

Capitalist temples rise to the surface
where few enter, prostrating themselves before their gods,
and many pay for false promises,
miserably evicted from their homes.
Branded temples where everything is changeable
in exchange for the infamous usury of their clerics.
On the surface, democracy has won
with the collapse of the belief in solidarity.
Today, those lost in the streets of the paradises of yesteryear
gaze unfocused at the horizon
with the hope of glimpsing
a non-existent Buddha who will save them
from the mercantile globalization of the United States.

Luís Filipe Sarmiento was born on October 12, 1956. He studied Philosophy at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon. Writer, journalist, translator and film director. Some of his books and texts have been translated into English, Spanish, French, Italian, Greek, Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, Romanian, Serbian, Macedonian, Croatian, Turkish, Russian, Albanian and Swedish.

imagining god's open house.

“Homelessness is a lifestyle choice”: a statement from a Prime Minister

The address is marked ‘In Care of’ ...
No-one would, or could, buy this house.
Not for sale and owned by no-one we know.
But some of us live here. There are no shows

the air is cold and settling second-hand.
Doors open and close invisibly, and
with their skin wrinkled from night dew,
mornings are treads in someone else’s shoes.

The tenants walk on invisible stairs,
through doors of sunrise, but no bid is fair
no need to own a ‘little piece of ground
with spaces to die for, and views unbound’.

Mirages of life left mute on a verge
where trees and grass and paths and shadows merge.
Alone all night, unsafe in darkness’s depths
they seek to survive— sleeps are little deaths

sunk in parks where Openings are hidden.

Mark Liston poems appear in numerous publications including Canberra Times, Newcastle Poetry Prize, Australian Poetry Anthology, Rochford St Review, Burrow, and Australian Poetry Poem of the year 2014, and shortlisted for Hammond House Poetry Prize in UK 2022. Mark was also Australian Poetry Newcastle Café Poet.

Wall Street

The orange-haired corporate,
spectacles on forehead, a god
lounging decorously to our right,
spars suavely with the banker
until stentorian money-men,
matey arias duelling aflame
with billion-dollar plots,
blow away their petit-fours.
Modern opera: let it finish
with the Equity soprano scene,
the fall of the golden pagoda,
a chorus of clients, counting.

Michael Williamson won the Restricted Section of the Captain Cook Bicentenary Poetry Competition in 1970. His career has been as a psychiatrist in the public and private mental health system. He has had poems published in Southerly, Poetry Australia, Quadrant and Meuse.

Unsung

Is it so hard to write, that song about the men
who came from grey towns that smelled of turf smoke,
where crows painted invisible arcs
in low clouds around high nests,
a tragic chorus accompanied mostly by dogs?
Where women folded their cardiganed arms
and talked bittersweet in the black rectangles
of doors that opened to dark, narrow houses?

Men who left to find something better,
found it, then found they had to leave again;
who girded up their resolve and clenched
their jaws as they took the boat, cut adrift
from the smiles and wet kisses of babes,
and who knows if the words they wrote home,
like the strong hand that rubs a bruised shin,
ever took the edge off the pain?

Robbed of their children's childhood,
the good fathers who look, surprised,
at middle-aged sons and daughters,
still hoping to catch a glimpse of those little faces.

Lorna Shaughnessy is a poet, translator, editor and researcher. She has published five poetry collections, most recently *Lark Water* (Salmon Poetry, 2021), translated four volumes of Mexican and Spanish poetry and co-edited *A Different Eden. Eco-poetry from Ireland and Galicia* (Dedalus 2021). <https://lornashaughnessy.com/>

Second Nature

The streets of India overflow with life
like the Ganges in the middle of monsoon.

Motorbikes and auto-rickshaws honk their horns
jostling for position against a herd of goats.

Wild dogs and pigs lurk down alleyways
searching through rubbish for something to eat.

A sacred cow rests inside a tailor's shop
sleeping beside a pile of sari patterns.

The descendants of Hanuman hang out
above mango stalls like a macaque mafia.

A holy man stands on one foot in traffic
praying into his henna tattooed hands.

A clowder of rats prowl in the witching hour
feeding in the streets like second nature.

First published in *Catalyst* 21.

Doc Drumheller has worked in award winning groups for theatre and music and has published 10 collections of poetry. His poems are translated into more than 20 languages. He is the editor and publisher of the New Zealand literary journal *Catalyst*, and is the editor in chief of the World Congress of Poets literary journal *Fuego*. His latest collection is: *Drinking With Li Bai, 100 Haiku from China and India*, Cold Hub Press 2022.

the poor

*better to be up and doing
than down and being done*

– traditional proverb

ourselves, we often mean, and note they will always be *with*
sleeping in their cars between macdonalds shifts amazon –

the working stiffs... as rabbit is to tribe
Aristophanic cartwheel clockwork wound up with full blown
false consciousness as in the Bible – *from those who lack will be taken*

most settle, undergo a life, watch screen worlds go by

a pigeon squabble at the statue gathered and cleaning up shit
never their own believe me – they sit up and beg, roll over
vanish namelessly at last – the idle listless good-for-nothing
the herniated leaners, it's *panem et circenses* a sport obsessed
and tabloid tribe, rusted by power of purchase

in Vietnam, in Bangladesh, in Africa these days
they are carving the scraps into a child's toy
they are writing a letter for love

and if so privileged somewhere
the poor are voting for defeat
the war was always on *them*

the workers go to paradise but it's in another life
best we can manage for now

it's kiss my arse I'm outa here
nothing to lose but the chains

Published widely since the seventies, **Kit Kelen** has more than a dozen full length collections in English as well as translated books of poetry in Chinese (several), Portuguese (several), French, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Swedish, Norwegian, Filipino, Greek, Romanian and Esperanto.

Trackies

are one-style-fits-all
worn through all weathers
all seasonal cycles all calendar years,
worn round-the-clock — 24/7,
604800 seconds = 10080 minutes.

are a level railway crossing — demotic, vernacular.
are approaches around our worlds.

are sweats, jumpsuit, joggers, sweat suit, jogger,
loungewear, workout suit,
sweat-pants warm-
up suit.

are a second skin, a protection.

down-dress people,
disarray dress codes.

are comfort-
codes, lazy-signify, context-specific.

are drag.
(All clothes are drag)

calligraphy classes of people, side-by-side
hierarchies.

are symbol-sexy.

are erotica as conventionally masculine as erotic charges as.

Living in Lismore on Widjabul Wia-bal Country, **Peter Mitchell** works across all narrative forms. His writing has appeared in international & national print & online journals & anthologies. He's authored two poetry chapbooks, *The Scarlet Moment* (Picaro Press, 2009) & *Conspiracy of Skin* (Ginninderra Press, 2018). Website: <https://peter-mitchell.com.au> Instagram: @petermitchell546

**Our Island à la the French Court
Before the Revolution**

A beam's hurting my eye
but everyone tells me there's nothing there.
Long days after it is meant to have surfaced
I can feel it again in the grain of sand
which lodges under my eyelid.
This grain is our island where
every day anew we can forget.
Right there in the grain we eat rare dishes, want more.

More and more doubts come
tumbling off our lips, calling out
noisily to each other, flocks of pigeons
in Paris pecking at sodden garbage,
escalators down shafts of civilization are gluttoned.
We let the Slovenian island thirst down into the grain of sand.

In a massive breeze people on bicycles are thrown about the tarmac –
fish cast on sand cannot swim out from dry land.
Even the island shudders beneath the blasts of wind,
folding like a window of sand.
For a moment in the reflection, beyond the car,
the image of us fractures, but while driving
this has not yet become clear.
The flashest of cars
stare into people like fat carp,
with little tails on the lashes of fake eyes.
And in the clumsy to-and-fro of these tails,
while falling in an arc towards the asphalt,
I can feel the dress
of Marie Antoinette around my waist.
Time gently places some armour next to her head.
It's time to tell it straight:
I'm saying no to the view from the car's cage.

But the black metal-freaks don't allow themselves to be interrupted

in their awkward swim across the salty earth.

Translated by Ana Jelnicar & Stephen Watts

Naš Otok v Obliki Francoskega Dvora Pred Revolucijo

V očesu me boli bruno
a vsi mi govorijo, da ga ni videti.
Dolge dneve po tem, ko naj bi izplavalo,
ga spet začutim v zrnu peska,
ki se mi stakne pod veko.
V tem zrnu je naš otok,
na katerem vsak dan znova pozabimo.
Sredi zrna jemo izbrane jedi in še bi.

Vedno več dvomov v ustnicah
se zgrinja in med sabo
se gromko kličejo, jate golobov
v Parizu kljuvajo v razmočene smeti,
tekoče stopnice v jaške civilizacije so polne.
Slovenski otok žejno spuščamo v zrno peska.

Ljudi na kolesih v ogromnem pišu meče po asfaltu –
ribe po pesku ne morejo izplavati s suhega.
Tudi otok trepeti pod udarci vetra,
veter zaplahuta kot peščeno okno.
Za hip se v zračnem odsevu tega okna
razbije naša slika, a tega med vožnjo
še ni opaziti.

Avtomobili glomaznih znamk
buljijo v ljudi kot tolsti krap
z repki na trepalnicah umetnih oči.
Ko med nerodnimi zamahi teh repov
v loku padam proti asfaltu,
okoli pasu začutim
obleke Marije Antoinette.
Čas ji nežno položi oklep ob glavo.
Čas je, da naravnost povem:

pogledu iz avtomobilske kletke se odpovem.

Črnuhasti pločevinarji pa se ne dajo zmotiti
v neokretnem plavanju po slani zemlji.

Barbara Pogačnik, Slovenian poet, translator, literary critic and promotor of literature She has published four poetry books: *Poplave (Inundations, 2007)*, *V množici izgubljeni papir (Sheets of Paper Lost in the Crowd, 2008)*, *Modrina hiše / The Blue of the House (2013)* and *Alica v deželi plaščev (Alice in the Land of Coats, 2016)*. Her poetry in translation has appeared in reviews and anthologies in 34 languages, she has participated in more than 80 different literary festivals and manifestations globally.

from large coastal swells.

In the deserted hospital cemetery
forgotten headstones lean together.

Margaret Bradstock has nine 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* (2011) and *Caring for Country* (2017), Margaret's latest collection is *Alchemy of the Sun* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2024).

The sidewalk of foreclosed signs

This street is never quiet.
It cannot be.

Inner city ≠ restraint.
But mute your phone and listen.

Small family businesses
are birthed into this world

in the embrace
of so much hope,

but die quietly,
like wounded deer in the forest.

Richard James Allen's thirteenth book, *Text Messages from the Universe* (Flying Island Books, 2023), reflects a lifelong engagement with Buddhist & Yogic philosophies. A multi-award-winning poet, filmmaker, actor, dancer & choreographer, his work has been screened, broadcast, published & performed widely across six continents. He lives on unceded Gadigal lands.

Ideal Weight

The middle class is body-art on a family outing:
sprinkling their body and blanket hairs
with iron filings and lying there
depilating them with a magnet for the last time.
There are no bio-garbage bins in purgatory. Leave me
my organs to be my aromatic sponges and compresses for my head
as I wade through the river of hydrochloric acid.
On the bank the intellectuals chant: Design or die!
but in vain –
God at the side of a man who hasn't called on him since childhood
is like a knife at the side of a plate of spaghetti. He wears a bib
instead of a bathing costume.
Moscow's got her period, Philadelphia is one-ply toilet paper.
You know it yourself, in moments of historic decision
what is most fragile in one's life will crack: the kitchen chopping board.
It is then that the blade breaks from the razor,
and the Son from the Holy Mother.
When you enter the room, your cheek bleeding,
I know you've seen in the mirror
the face of the baby that now weighs 370 grams and is 21 cm long.
Like *Poly* salami, you say, and then we fall asleep on our feet.
The bear from the zoo snores hibernating in our freezer.
At night you cool your drink between its knees,
and between mine I squeeze the radio, tuned to long wave,
like a brick that's cooling down or a leaking hot-water bottle,
reality rocks in out-of-date news,
every night I become ever more water-resistant.
Our river can be seen only through a small basement window.

And nobody dies absolutely any more. The middle-class scrapes
the price tags off presents, decorates windows with laser stars,
plays shadow theatre with rubber gloves on.

It makes faces at you as you cry:

“I exorcise zombies professionally! Be free again!”

and I know if you’re too fat or too thin life and death are one
and the same burden.

Only someone of ideal weight can carry the cross upright.

Translated from Macedonian by Ljubica Arsovska and Peggy Reid

Lidija Dimkovska (b.1971, North Macedonia, lives in Slovenia) has published seven books of poetry, four novels, one short story collection and one American diary, widely awarded and translated in seventeen languages. Her last novel “Personal Identification Number” (2023) received the Macedonian award “Novel of the Year” and the regional award “Stefica Cvek”.

Идеална Тежина

Средната класа е боди-арт на семеен излет:

си ги посипува влакната од телото и од кебето

со железни струганки

и со магнетна плочка во лежечки став

си ги корне за последен пат. Во чистилиштето

нема контејнери за био-смет. Остави ми ги органите

да ми бидат миризливи сунѓерчиња и облоги за глава

додека шлапкам во реката со солна киселина.

На брегот интелектуалците скандираат: Design or die!

но залудно - Бог крај човек што не го повикувал од дете

е како нож крај чинија со шпагети. Носи лигавче наместо костим за капење.

Москва има месечен циклус, Филадельфија еднослојна тоалетна хартија.

Знаеш и сам, во мигови на историски одлуки пука најкревкото

во животот на човека: кујнската даска.

И тогаш жилетот се одвојува од бричот, а синот од Богородица.

Кога влегуваш во собата со раскрвавен образ знам дека во огледалото

си го видел ликот на детето што е сега тешко 370 гр. и долго 21 см.

Како една *Поли* салама, велиш, и потоа заспиваме на нозе.

Во нашиот замрзнувач грчи во зимски сон мечката од зоолошката.

Ноќе си ладиш пијалак меѓу нејзините колена,

а јас меѓу моите стискам радио на долга бранова должина,

како тула што се лади или термофор што пропушта

реалноста се лулка во застарени вести, секоја ноќ станувам сè

поводоотпорна. .

Нашата река се гледа само од прозорче на визба.

И никој повеќе не умира до крај. Средната класа гребе цени од подароци,

кити прозорци со ласерски ѕвезди, во гумени ракавици

си игра театар со сенки. Ти се криви додека викаш:

„Професионално изгонувам зомби! Бидете повторно слободни!“,

а знам, ако си предебел или преслаб и животот и смртта се исто бreme.

Крстот исправено може да го носи само човек со идеална тежина.

Figures of Splendour

We've transformed the supermarket into a choir-filled arena that is swamped by screens and hooked to the pulse of jazz. The choir encircles us at ground level while drummers duel from above. It's a surround-sound trolley-free spectacle that swallows promises of redemption and spits them out like Fabergé eggshells. The beautiful tiger stalks the two enduring aisles that slice the ground in the middle. Pummels capitalism with the excess it asks for, then waits for the dust to settle. A wire-haired Doberman Pinscher, indolent in the heat, sweeps biscuit crumbs and broken glass, mops puddles of truffle-infused avocado oil. We bathe under moonbeams as Chenin Blanc shafts drop and curl around our feet. Dust never settles.

Dominique Hecq is a widely anthologised and award-winning poet, fiction writer, essayist and translator. She lives and works on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung land (Naarm / Melbourne). Hecq writes in English and French. Her creative works comprise a novel, six collections of short stories and seventeen books of poetry. Together with *Volte Face* and *Otopos* her bilingual sequence, *Pistes de rêve* appeared in 2024.

Own brand

Children are dying to dig
toxic cobalt from red dirt
with their bare hands
in the Congo so
we can spend more
unwired hours doom-scrolling
screens or drive
electric miles to save
the world (in our heads
at least)—we are hurtling
towards oblivions we
can't perceive, the biggest lie,
the one we tell ourselves:
that we are free
while people in the Sunshine State rise
entombed in ice, babies in Delhi are birthed
to suckle 10 cigarettes' worth
of poison each day,
cancer-triggering forever-
chemicals from non-stick
companies have infiltrated
every ecosystem on earth—
even *in vitro*: colonisation these days
has reached the cellular level.

In the dark outside my city window,
a moth is slowly circling,
its microplastic-infused wings
beating at the fogged pane
against a skyline strung
with blood diamonds.

First published in *Live Canon International Prize Anthology 2024*.

Anne Casey is the author of five poetry collections. Her work is widely published and awarded internationally, ranking in *The Irish Times*' Most Read. She has a PhD in archival poetry and poetics of resistance from the University of Technology Sydney where she teaches creative writing. anne-casey.com @lannecasey

What I do know

What I do know
are wars and pandemics
arise in a flash
but are never over by Christmas

What I do know
is religion is comfort or curse
if fanaticism takes it over
to the power and the wealth

What I do know
is evil does exist and nature can be brutal
far more
than imagined in element or mind

What I do know
is good health not wealth brings happiness
but poverty never
buys choice

What I do know
is poetry can never be fiction
if it lives in love and truth
however fierce

Previously published in Silver City, New Mexico, in *Writing in a Woman's Voice*

Myra King lives on World's End Highway in the Outback with her rescue greyhound, Sparky. Her poems and short stories, many of which have won awards, have been published in print and online, in literary magazines, anthologies and papers including Meuse Press, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, Boston Literary Magazine, Puncher & Wattmann, October Hill NY, Islet, Rochford Street Review, EDF, Heron's Nest and San Pedro River Review.

panic room

*rich people stackin' the deck,
rich people with big fat cheques,
rich people they're havin' a ball,
rich people are fuckin' us all*

Carsie Blanton, "Rich people" (song)

1.
out of the question for most of us
though some find a safe room
of a sort holed up in Stone Age dens
without power or heating crannies
in buildings reduced to rubble
and collapsed walls

in the world-domination stakes
kleptocrats make genocide
great again spark inventive ways
to weather darkness and winter
swarms of *kamikaze* drones
hunting in packs

2.
priest-holes were all the rage
in Elizabethan manor-houses
false-backed shelves and hidden stairways
fire-places or mediaeval drains saved
or suffocated fugitive priests

now panic rooms are rich people's
bolt-holes you can retreat
into a Castle Keep when under siege.
a billionaire's man-cave: the perfect place
to stow your dubious dinner-guests
when cops come calling

you pay for privacy rooms-within-rooms
spin-offs of the gated community

bullet and explosive proof climate-controlled
micro-fortresses steel-and-concrete
bunkers enfold rare artwork computer files
billiard cues and your favourite tippie

rest easy uber-wealthy when the world's
in meltdown you'll be safe
behind those hidden doors
and mortise locks all kitted-out
and primed for Armageddon.

Louise Wakeling lives in Gundungurra country, in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. Her fourth collection of poetry, *Off Limits*, was published by Puncher & Wattmann (2021). She is currently working on a fifth collection exploring movement and stasis in human life and the natural world, as well as a novel about coercive control and intergenerational trauma in the lives of three women.

Foreign Habitat

I spent the day gulping the good air, bathed in the scent
of saltbush at full bloom. Along the boarded coastal walk

silver-leafed natives blinked in the sun, the ocean shimmered
on my left, on the right, a local's unleashed pedigree
chased plovers as if to spite the signs that read No Dogs
and flaunted its well-bred coat inside dappled rays,
at which his highly-moisturised owner shook her head
as if to say he's such a rascal; rules are inconsequential
for those who live well, who've earned the rank. The organic

coffee here, casts a spell, creates a mirage that you could own
one of the marl-toned cape cods, peaked roofs,
with private beaches and pools, or perhaps a pastel-bathing box
or a body, taught from treading sand, browned from alfresco
moments spent in houses with infinite rooms, just a short
EV jaunt to the children's schools that hide behind clumps
of transplanted palms. But I'd settle for a good set

of laser-whitened teeth and smile a lot.
We unwrapped hot chips on the pier, the gulls as relentless
as they are at Flinders Street or Frankston Station. Across
the water's perfect blue skin, I counted sandbags stacked

at the mansions' concrete feet, observed the way the sea
gnawed the beach, the slow parting of the foreshore's golden
fringe where they'd built; the ocean has no patience for imagined hierarchy.

Born in Sri Lanka, **Suzi Mezei** lives in Naarm on lands traditionally owned by the Boonwurrung People. Her work is published in Australia and overseas in journals and anthologies in print and online, it has been performed on stage and in podcast. The evolving concept of 'class' intrigues her.

Port Douglas Country

We love your far horizon, far enough for fantasy,
your long-sighted vision to keep public lawns
in the community hands of picnics and local
markets. You deserve many stars. You deserve
a celebrity serve of them.

Seizing a day-spot, last remaining park
in the shade, we start toward sunburnt water
as if hooked by talons of nature, that living
winch promising beach freedom, bay views,
a foam-topped forever.

We confess to loving your jewel sea,
dipping into your solid mirage of shops,
resisting the clothes we'll wear just once
tempted by a double rum'n'raisin to go
with the street-scene.

You play with our love like a croc in the shallows,
sizing up our pockets, coming in for the kill.
Your motive is not otherwise. We relish the danger.
We're extra mouthfuls for your night dining map.
You're the reason and recipe.

Your sweeping plain is a mirror-finish ocean,
the shore before dawn, an empty jetty.
You catch us in your web of life. Some escape,
saving their cash for next year. So few of us stay
for long in this everyman's Paradise.

Margaret (Margo) Owen Ruckert is a prize-winning poet, with a wide variety of poetry published – Australia and overseas. Two books *You Deserve Dessert* and *musefood* explore café culture. Five books of tanka explore landscape through ekphrasis. Living in Sydney, she facilitates Hurstville's Discovery Writers, presenting monthly writing workshops.

The Wonders of the World

The wonders of the world
land into the hands
of the highest bidders

A lodge, a spa
is all that remains

At the gates,
the dogs of beauty
bark at anyone who dares
to peer through the plywood sheets,
they bite
anyone bold enough
to dream of occupying
its aqua-blue waters
its sprawling valleys
or its *coralness*

The breeze of the ocean
zips through the fence,
makes the barb wire whistle
before dying in a vacant lot
where a few children play soccer
with a ball made of tape

Daniel H. Dugas is a poet, videopoet and musician. He has participated in solo and group exhibitions, festivals, and literary events in Canada and internationally. In 2021, Daniel received the Lieutenant-Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. His fourteenth book of poetry, *Formats*, is scheduled for release Fall 2024, *Éditions Prise de parole*, Sudbury, ON.

<https://dan.basicbruegel.com/>

Rich Men's Houses

I have quoted myself once already in a poem, *Uses of Live Odds*, that poor men don't belong in rich men's houses. I said it first in an essay, *Death by Persona*, about John Forbes. I say he spent too much time in the houses of those friends financially better off than he was. I will tell you how I witnessed the Luna Park Fire, because I'm thinking bleakly of those new things I know about it: Lionel Murphy being friends with the crime boss of Sydney, Abe Saffron, who is said to have ordered it so that he could take over the land, a set up to be approved by the Labour Party. Poor men are a danger in rich men's houses. But then when the fire burned the ghost train, a man and some children, I was young. I saw it when I'd had to transfer an opera ticket from my usual cheap matinees to a sleekly wealthy First Night of *The Girl of The Golden West*. It was the only time I saw Donald Smith sing, his voice less harsh than the recordings, much more tender in focus to his soprano, directed only to her, as if a small fat bald man were ideal lover. We've moved into triplets: I must be nervous. There was reason to be nervous, but the guess I had then was only about some fire as such, if intuitively looking at the exits, fearing smoke. When it was late and we had left the Opera House, there was a light reflected in the Harbour like the shuddering of autumn leaves on tar. And no one left the pier. One followed their gaze and saw the flames three times the height of the head, and clown's face leer underneath. Next day the dead were numbered. But I remember the strange tallness of the pure thick flames, no blackness and no breath of creeping smoke: all looked intentional.

Someone else there that night was Phil Hammial, who was a carnival hand. Many of these were out of work a long time, but he may have been too close to really see the nature of the beast. I was across enough water to measure the scope. Poor men do not belong in rich men's houses.

Jennifer Maiden has 38 books published: 29 poetry collections. 6 novels & 3 nonfiction works. Latest poetry collection is *The China Shelf*, Quemar Press, 2024. Awards include 3 Slessors, Christopher Brennan, 2 Age Poetry Book of Year overall Age Book of Year, 2 C.J. Dennis, overall Victorian Prize for Literature. Shortlisted International Griffin.

The Moon's Ass

a huge red moon
rose above the sea
sort of like a revolution but from
the suburb not the slum of course
it traversed the ex-mayor's cathedral
then the song festival grounds
when it reached the harbor it was
increasingly whiter passionless
it climbed down in hipsterville
bought itself an apartment advertised as
a beach villa
five average salaries or more for a square meter
patio, hammock, chair, flower boxes
the revolution was forgotten but the moon was in our midst
we said: "oh fair moon, exquisite moon
look upon us and our frustration and budget and shitty ministers
and all they've fucked over and cheated us out of
and stagnation and the impending debt crisis!"
the moon didn't respond but occasionally it could be seen
a big white indifferent mug
so indifferent it was even a little obscene
we puzzled over that and then somebody said
the moon had just been mooning us the entire time
and now everything would go dark
the moon's ass was the only thing to look at
until the world ends

Translated by Adam Cullen

Maarja Kangro (born in Tallinn, 1973) has published 17 books of poetry and fiction, authoring also 8 opera librettos and a non-fiction book titled "My Awards", partly a memoir, partly a study of cultural awards. She is also a translator, translating mainly from Italian and German (Agamben, Leopardi, Enzensberger). Her dream job would be an ambulance driver.

Kuu Perse

suur punane kuu
tõusis mere kohale
nagu revolutsioon aga muidugi
viimsist mitte lasnakalt
savisaare katedraali
lauluväljaku
sadama kohale jõudes
oli ta üha valgem kiretum
ronis alla kalarannas
ostis endale korteri mida reklaamis nimetati
rannavillaks viis kuupalka ruutmeetri eest või rohkem
terrass korvtool lillekastid
revolutsioon oli ununenud aga kuu oli meie seas
ütlesime: “oo armas kuu hörk kuu
vaata meie ja me frustratsiooni ja eelarve
ja sittade rahvaesindajate
ja kõigi nende sitta keeranud ilmajäetute
ja stagnatsiooni ja saabuva võlakriisi peale!”
kuu ei vastanud aga aeg-ajalt oli teda näha
suur ja valge ükskõikne larhv
nii ükskõikne et isegi nagu ropp
me mõistatasime ja siis ütles keegi
et kuu oli meile kogu aeg ainult perset näidanud
nüüd pidigi jääma pimedaks
kuu perse oli ainus mida vaadata
kuni maailm lõpeb

Last jaunt millionaire leaving, turn off the lights

Did you drink in afterburn
that chalice searing out the onlookers
loaded now in the hope of temperature
blast off unreached by normal lives
as you leave this burdened atmosphere
for even more high-flying strata
away from this azure hope
below your indulgences
strung like gluten over working lives
slowly moving in the clay domestic
each mass now not distinct
or visible through corporeal guesswork
reach for their pockets again
the stretched hands of ambition
clutch at everything for height
this third stage evolution falls
back from the dark void implosion
to where a child lights a saved candle
catching at an imagined star
it's always been there
not for your taking, plummet now

James Walton is a poet, flash fiction, and short story author published in many anthologies, journals, and newspapers. Five collections of his poetry have been published. He lives in Wonthaggi in regional Victoria. He was nominated for The Best of the Net, the Pushcart Prize in 2021, and in 2024.



ONE

A Man Named Cole 1861

A man named Cole
 stole a tin of /// herrings (from outside
 a grocery shop) in Gertrude St, and ran off.
 An affront is an open manifestation of disrespect.
 All nerve cells report, to the brain.
 The man named Cole, took the can of
 sardines, and took off down the street (towards
 Brunswick St) with the owner of
 the grocery store close behind, the man named Cole,
 who "Had the effrontery"... Satire can include
 caricature, and it can include distortion, and /or exaggeration.
 Post, stick, pole, picket, rod, the man named Cole
 pulled out a gun, and fire a shot (in
 the direction of the grocery shop) which had
 no effect; on the owner of the grocery shop.
 To my knowledge, means as far as i know.
 An insult, adds salt to injury, and implies that the target
 the grocer was weak enough to be bullied.
 Invoke a word — "a man named Cole", and it will
 bring the thing denoted, back to life.
 When the Cops went round to arrest the man
 named Cole, he was asleep in his bed at the time,
 wondering what the hell all these people
 were doing in his bed-room, and like
 a blind man (who's lost his stick) his face
 wanted to get to the top of the bedpost.
 But when confusion is replaced by
 understanding, The end game of the selfish
 gene is not more & more of more
 & more, but cooperation.

π.ο. is according to his publisher [giramondo] a legendary figure in the Australian poetry scene.
 (Can't argue with that!). Born in Greece and brought up in Fitzroy, he is a chronicler of Melbourne
 and its culture and migrations, and is an anarchist who has worked as a draughtsman for forty years
 to support his art.

Larkman

All the fledgling lark knows is the dark
wooden box nailed shut but for two flaps.
Open they let in the light.

All the larkman knows is a metal cage
lowering into the pit. Coal dust trapped
in his throat and the shaft smothering
warm. Sundays at dawn, he carries the box
up Skircoat Moor and slides back the flaps.

The lark opens its throat and the unboxed
song soars on and on...

In chapel that night, the larkman snug
in his wooden pew sings, 'Safe evermore
under God's wings.' The lark's song
boxed, folded, tight. The absence of light.

Note 1: Common in the Halifax area of Yorkshire before WW1 larks would be captured and trained to sing by enthusiasts known as larkmen who were usually coal miners.

Note 2: William Orcutt Cushing 1823-1901: 'Under his wings I am safely abiding'
Previously appeared in *Black Tulips* Recent Work Press 2017

Moya Pacey's third collection, *Doggerland* (Recent Work Press 2020) was highly commended in 2021 ACT Book of the Year Awards. She is a founding editor of the women's on-line journal *Not Very Quiet* and in 2019, received a Canberra Critics Circle Award, with Sandra Renew, for her influential work on women's poetry.

The True History

Mum hung our Ned Kelly towel
on the wall to dry: a picture of a saint
used only on special occasions –
the towel that wrapped my sisters up
delivered from the hospital,

or was used by Step-Dad for that special wash
needed before court or the local.
Step-Dad once bit a policeman's
ear lobe off in self-defense,
'...he was gonna arrest me!'

& cracked Mum's nose at a party
that summer in the early eighties.
Bleeding all over the steering wheel,
Mum proclaimed drunken love
for us derailed kids

then barricaded the door with the fridge.
Mum held us hostage in that 2nd floor flat,
belting the lawn with dented pots and pans
of painful, stupid love, till morning
came riding up like a policeman.

'The True History' was originally published in my first book *The Cut Worm* – published by Precious Press, 2006.

Jennifer Allen is a satirical poet who lives in Brunswick, Victoria. Jennifer's second collection of poems titled 'Everything Feeds It' was published by Recent Work Press in March 2024.

Books

I Report

She'd kept the books you wrote in their jiffy bags.
 I'm not saying she was like Harrison's *mam*,
 but here they are, with old school reports. – You're seven,
 doing well in Tables, Arithmetic, RE
 (Bible stories, magic lantern Boschian devils,
 sinners tortured, the Forty Martyrs). Eleven,
 keen on Science, at one of those schools with priests,
 a Latin motto – *Semper Fidelis* or *Fides Invicta* –
 gold braid on the blazer your Dad joked you'd burn in.
 Incensed, then brought to book. Sixteen and you're damned.
 Reports – “*Intellectual iconoclast?*” she'd asked.
 “*Intellectual's* good,” you'd said and checked the Greek.
 Time then to break. Seriously to *smash* the past.
 You'd do the books, set down your own account at last.

II Ledger

Gran said you'd read yourself out of your religion.
Hers meant thumbing beads and totting up the years
 of indulgences in her double-entry ledger.
 Time off for good behaviour – she couldn't come to terms
 with *The Grammar*, Carnegie's stacks of God-knows-what germs.
 Crossed with faith and money, “books” meant rations, mags,
 charity shop romances, missionary begging-rags
 (Faith's Cash–Converters: Help save these poor black souls!),
 or these old paying-in books, their shillings and sixpences
 to be redeemed against the fateful day;
 policies shored up against the embarrassing tolls
 of disease, disaster; the fear that even there – no obol
 under the tongue, no coins to lid the eyes –
 there's never enough of the ready to pay your way.

Cliff Forshaw's most recent collections are *RE:VERB* (Broken Sleep, 2022), and *French Leave: versions and perversions*, (Broken Sleep, 2023). He has been a Royal Literary Fund Fellow, twice a Hawthornden Writing Fellow, and held residences at Djerrassi, California, and in France, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, and Tasmania. He lives in Hull, UK.

The Naming of Clouds

For my mother

She remembered, *The first day of school was the naming of clouds.*
Ninety years later, still glimpsed like a sunbeam, the framing of clouds.

Later that day there was maypole dancing, sewing & making a dress
she never wore, but her young mind had grown, retaining the clouds.

Other words came from beyond school: spec fruit, broken biscuits, bread
& dripping, 'moonlight flits', the flight at night through a game of clouds.

We moved so many times, North Belmore to Belmore, Catholic to public.
No money for sport? It's off to the Infants for you ashamed, under a cloud.

Depression treats: a frozen orange thrown at a wall becomes an ice block;
meat pies savoured layer by layer, eases the teasing, a playground of clouds.

Top of her class! A line of nuns troop down to the flat with magpie intent.
But girls feed factories at fourteen, rows of robots tamed under grey clouds.

Life creates our lexicons. Hers include war, soldier, American, marriage, child,
widowhood, shop floor, office worker. Yet beams of sun pierced rain-filled
clouds.

For there was jazz & dancing, jiving at the *Troc* to the vands. In dresses sewn
from Butterick & Vogue, a girl still spins before her mirror in a fantasy cloud.

I am heir to what she collected from a life, the music & books, a century of hope
gleaned from love, pain & resilience. This poem came from her naming of clouds.

Born in Sydney, **Ross Donlon** is winner of two international poetry prizes and is represented in numerous anthologies both in Australia and the U.K. He has had published five books of poetry. He is convenor of the reading Poetry from Agitation Hill. Books due in 2025 feature his interest in ghazals and tanka.

The Unseen

I could sense them before they arrived,
my mother's breakdowns like a pattern of hard rain.

Punishment came in shouts. Sent to my fathers,
supervised by a pinball machine and a handful of change.

I only knew him through the *Hall of Fame*,
relying on cabinets to dust off the Jazz.

How the brass-plated reminders kept more
than his achievements cold.

But he lives on inside my esteem, that place
where vanity exceeds the compliments.

To know oneself is a discipline—
so much deliberation gets in the way.

I sat at a window once, that think-tank of possibility
the wing of a thing here and the wonder of
another—*there*.

Today the sky in its silver coat
hovers like an inflatable raft.

On the water a rig-less mast
is moved by nothing. I walk around

its steadfast rigidity, a warlock's hat
or something you blow bubbles through.

A rainbow slips in behind to make
a sail of thin rain and striated light.

The ground turns to sludge.

Memory: A face-mask of sediment
hanging on from behind.

Living is to be looking with background music
playing louder than it should——

how the past crashed in, a little too late,
forgetting I was there.

Ellen Shelley uses language to align the uncertainties of daily life and her lyrical words find strength from wherever she calls home at the time. Recently placed 2nd in the Tom Collins awards and published in numerous places including a footpath in Adelaide but only when it is raining. Her debut book *Out of the Blocks* in October 2023 (Puncher & Wattmann).

Game Theory: the Suit

Sometimes your choices weren't choices:
for the sake of the game – of game-theory –
let's say that they were.
Let's call it a choice – a mistake –
to be born in a family
that wasn't concerned
if you made it to school.
A choice not to learn how to read.
A choice – a mistake – to succumb
to the way power dealt tricks
in your playground and streets.
A mistake not to plan for the future.
A mistake to be ugly.
To think that a life on the dole
was as good as it gets.
A mistake to get married.
And then for your wife to walk out
after twenty-three months.
A mistake to have done what you did.
So many mistakes till the one mistake left
was to wear this improbable suit –
with your hair plastered down on your bald patch,
and your air of respect, and defeat –
to have thought for one moment the judge
might examine the jacket –
and riffle, once more, through his notes.

Who have no other choice
than to sit there, and blush, and look down,
in your special exhibit: to pluck at its sleeve
with the mildest of all legal arguments –
its scuffed, shapeless flare of resistance
to what happens next.

Martin Langford has published eight books of poetry, the most recent of which is *The Boy from the War Veteran's Home* (Puncher and Wattmann, 2022).

Rough

Fate falls between space and earth,
a guide to pillows of stone,
dishevelled speech,
hungry flies.
Sirens bite the gut,
Move on a silly command
when there is nowhere to go.
A blue wind masks the unwashed smell
of a past lord mayor,
shop lifter,
the frog waiting to be prince.
Chance fights the frost,
that lottery ticket
never bought
cannot fix hard luck.
Which residence will be occupied tonight?
The one with a public toilet
or the hessian mansion with river views.
Night greyness leads to a fusty low.
Existence is empty
like a hunting dog
robbed of its prey.

Barbara De Franceschi refers to herself as an “arid zone” poet living as she does surrounded by desert in the outback city of Broken Hill. Besides four collections of poetry her work has appeared in over 200 anthologies, newspapers, journals, radio and on-line Australia wide and in five other countries.

The Blind Guitarist

No-one knows his name.
His face is not important,
hidden, banally, under his hat, in the mall.

We are meant to study instead, his audience:
the celebrity entrepreneur,
the young couple – just-married,
the janitor going home from his job,
the tough guy from the pub,
the activists from the suburbs,
the children playing on artificial grass,
the staring lady with the glove held to her mouth.

They are each seeing different things
in the song of the man
who cannot see,
who can only reach out
with his involuntary urge...
who can only play what he feels,

and ends up - if he's lucky,
at the end of each day,
with a few thrown coins in a pizza box.

Danny Gardner is a freelance journalist, novelist, poet and editor. He is co-founder and has convened the venue Live Poets at Don Bank, North Sydney, since 2003. His latest book of poetry: *Figure in the Landscape* was published by Ginninderra Press in 2022.

Pivot

Seven surly constables, arms folded, form
a tight perimeter around her: the homeless
woman, sitting, cradling her beloved Staffie.
Her one and only companion in the lonely,
unfriendly business of panhandling.
Bystanders gather on the corner outside
the Woolies Metro where she's a familiar

fixture. With her concave cheeks sunken in
where her teeth had once been, she wails
as she waits for the van that's on its way
to take her pet to where they give the final
injection. People have their theories. Maybe
the dog lunged at somebody's child,
perhaps bit them... drew blood, even!

A few weeks later, the same woman reappears
outside the turnstiles at Town Hall Station. Turning
over a brand-new leaf with a fluffy new friend.
The safest, smartest choice of street pet ever:
an impossibly-cute little white rabbit nibbling
away on a lettuce leaf. "Pivot" they all said
during COVID. And *that* she wisely did.

Jonathan Cant is a poet and musician. He won the 2023 Banjo Paterson Writing Awards, was Longlisted for the 2023 Fish Poetry Prize, and the 2022 Flying Islands Poetry Manuscript Prize, and Commended in the W. B. Yeats Poetry Prize. Jonathan's work has appeared in *Cordite*, *Verandah*, and *Live Encounters*.

Norma's Journey

We tried hard but couldn't find Norma an apartment
after our shelter closed for lack of funds.
She talked non-stop in our office three days straight.
Her lovable raspy voice reached my nervous system's core
I got home from work each day

more stressed than I'd been consciously aware.

She talked non-stop about problems:

real ones, real sad ones:

edema legs, intestines falling out in need of surgery,
alcoholic boyfriend beating her,
raped when younger walking suburban street,
cousin physically and psychologically abusive.

She remembered every detail about every agency
unable to help.

"Call Mr. Baxter," she told me, and recited the phone
number from memory,

"and ask why he only gave me two days to find
an apartment when I got my HUD grant."

"Ask Ellen at Legal Aid why she left my case
right before the hearing."

"Ask Mr. Johnson at County Welfare why he hung up
last Thursday when I needed a taxicab."

There were about 2,000 important questions she wanted me to ask
but none were going to answer the most urgent question:

where was she going to live?

Norma refused every available solution.

She would not get her intestine operation
and recuperate in a nursing home;

she would die in a nursing home

without a boyfriend, no dog,

and no understanding her skin and sinus allergies.

She wouldn't enter the Catholic Charities shelter

she would die with so many people so close.

HUD offered to speed her case if she found a mental

health agency sponsor
but she wasn't buying that critique.

She was running out of time and options.
She wanted only a decent room with bathtub
walking distance to mid-New Brunswick
so she could rest, soak, keep feet up,
entertain friends when she wanted.

Norma needed self-esteem
to begin healthy relationships,
but in the meantime, I had to admit
in the universal scheme of things
a decent room was a pretty reasonable demand.

Well, the U.S. is not the universe
despite some corporate claims to the contrary
and in the U.S. scheme of things
Norma had the right to continue talking continuously
in our homeless outreach office,
but the humane living space she asked for
wasn't mentioned anywhere
in the national rolls.

Called “another classic New Jersey bard” by Allen Ginsberg, **Eliot Katz** www.eliotkatzpoetry.com
is the author of seven books of poetry, including *Love, War, Fire, Wind* and *Unlocking the Exits*.
Katz, whose late mother was a Holocaust survivor, has worked for years as an activist for peace and
social-justice causes.

Eviction

you weren't anticipating a collision
been here before surely it's someone
else's turn to burn

such involuntary removal can't be prevented
this is a 90 days notice of termination a
dislocation inimical to serenity you're only a
resident manqué any period of reprieve just a
postponement before the next displacement
**the owner wishes to take possession of the unit
to complete major repairs**

too fragile to live on the street so action
is imperative evicted through **no fault** of your
own forget for now the cultured life inhabiting
someone else's text or the pleasure of writing
your own chapters impossible to change the
colour of chaos can't be painted over made
invisible or is it just that everything must move
forward because it has no choice

the compression of existence a whole life
crammed into boxes 'It's only stuff You don't
want be considered a hoarder' (from the voice of
The Commentator on All Disruptions) who
continues; 'See this as a rehearsal for your real
death' when their harassment ceases you
creep out to the recycling bin retrieve some
books you'll never reread

*

fast forward to a place not of your choosing
where the floorboards creak like a benign
poltergeist

Carolyn Gerrish is a Sydney poet. She has published six volumes of poetry. The most recent of which is *Collision with the Shadow* (Ginninderra Press, 2022.)

calder road

It wasn't a stylish address even for Chippendale;
the rent was cheap, the bedrooms damp
and wiring potentially lethal.

I bought a jacket for a good friend's wedding,
the first I'd owned in years – looked smart
until the ceiling fell on me.

The council planted trees, investors added paint,
fixed windows, made the building safe.
Gentlefolk moved in

and people like me
disappeared

Norm Neill has been a timber-feller, fence-post splitter, shop assistant, money counter, tractor driver, factory worker, taxi driver, psychiatric nurse, door-to-door salesperson, part-time student, full-time student, teacher, historian and museum guide. His poetry has appeared in journals, anthologies and the *Sun-Herald* newspaper. He has convened a poetry workshop since 2002.

We Fight the Beast

My mate, he likes riding the crew deck at night
with the lights flashing
but *my* favourite thing's the brigade itself. We're family.
We look after each other.
The training? Sure. It's non-stop:
get the gear on fast, zip up, helmet on.
Each call-out's different:
what'll it be this time?
EV? Hazchem?
Billowing black smoke? That'll be a stockpile of tyres gone up
the OIC will call in the choppers to waterbomb it.
Whatever the turmoil, the chaos, we deal with it.
We fight the beast
while the paramedics wait down the street
and the police radio us, On our way.
We cop it all – burns, rashes, smoke in our lungs, nightmares.
We know sorrow. We know sacrifice.
The motto is *Everyone goes home safe* but –
I'll say no more at present.
(Things stay with you, despite the debriefs.)
Home after a shift, my wife's arms reach out. *My gorgeous hunk!*
That greeting's my favourite thing outside work.
That, and the kids' kisses.
This too: in the black wasteland of an old battleground
green shoots.

The Scapegoat

Working at the Wixom Ford Factory. Putting right front door handles on Lincoln Continentals six days a week, ten hours a day. It's Saturday afternoon, almost quitting time. Suddenly, in the distance, a huge uproar, a bellowing and screeching that sounds like animals in a zoo gone berserk. What's going on? The sound comes closer and closer. Now we know. There's a four-door, gold-lacquered convertible coming down the line, obviously a special for a very rich person. It's already been hammered & gouged & kicked & scratched almost beyond recognition. It's a scapegoat made of steel, rubber and plastic. Eddy picks up a ball-peen hammer. Shorty inserts a large bit into his air drill. I pull a Phillips screw driver from my back pocket.

Philip Hammial has had 38 poetry collections published. He has worked as a labourer in the U.S., Greece, Denmark, England and Australia.

Cutting

Sitting in a wheelchair
outside the shopping centre
about forty years old
selling the charity magazine
a companion with him.

Marks of self-harm
are visible.
Straight slashes across one forearm
look like old scars.
One slash looks only days old

starting to heal.
What he said did not seem real.
His companion smiled.
He sold the magazine.

Paul Williamson lives in Canberra. He has published poems on a range of topics in Australia, NZ, the US, UK, Canada and Japan. He has seven collections including *A Hint of Eden*, *Along the Forest Corridor*, and *Edge of Southern Bright* (all Ginninderra Press). His background is in Earth Sciences.

First Works

I have never considered myself a hero of the working class, however I have worked since the age of 5. At that age early in the morning and armed with a stick entered the narrow caves of a shallow lagoon and scared away the fish. Outside, my boss was waiting and with a net he caught the school of carp and catfish. He was very fat, for that reason he couldn't enter the caves. He paid me 20 cents and two fish per day.

Then, in the afternoons my mother would send me to the cinema with a huge bucket full of tamales. The people when they noticed my age felt sorry for me and bought. I returned home with the bucket completely empty and my mother paid me with a special size tamale.

Later on, when the circuses arrived my brother Ramón and I cleaned the cages of tigers, lions and monkeys while they were at work. We got 50 cents and free tickets for the farewell show, which was the best by far.

Until then I knew nothing about the working class. One day my father didn't come back home to sleep and my mother told us that he was on a hunger strike, he and his comrades from the shoe factory "La Industrial". A week later he came back and told us that everyone had lost their jobs. "...this is how the disgraceful bourgeoisie pay their workers, giving us a kick in the ass, relying on scabs, that miserable class of people ... now we are poorer than yesterday, my sons..." he told us as he went to sleep.

Many years later (in my early twenties) I worked for Santos a retail drug dealer. We locked ourselves into a third-class hotel room and in newspaper clippings we packed 50 grams cartridges. While we were wrapped in a thick cloud of cannabis smoke, he told me:

“...with this shit we can become very fucking rich if we pass it to the other side...”.

I was already a member of The Half-Dead Poets’ Class when I learned that Santos was working for “Los Chapitos”, the sons of “El Chapo Guzmán” and had already become a millionaire, a Real Hero of the Narco Class...while I was getting older and poorer.

Primeros Trabajos

Nunca me he considerado un héroe de la calase obrera, sin embargo he trabajado desde la edad de 5 años. A esa edad temprano en las mañanas y armado con una vara entraba en las estrechas cuevas de una laguna bajita y espantaba a los peces. Afuera, mi patrón esperaba y con una red atrapaba el cardumen de carpas y bagres. Él era muy gordo, por esa razón no podía entrar en las cuevas. Me pagaba 20 cvs y dos pescados por jornada.

Luego, en las tardes mi madre me mandaba al cine con un enorme bote lleno de tamales. La gente al notar mi edad se compadecía y compraba. Yo regresaba a casa con el bote vacío y mi madre me pagaba con un tamal de tamaño especial.

Más adelante, cuando llegaban los circos, Ranón mi hermano y yo limpiábamos las jaulas de los tigres, leones y changos cuando ellos estaban trabajando y nos pagaban 5ocvs. y boletos gratis para la función de despedida, la cual resultaba la más divertida y caótica.

Hasta ese entonces yo no sabía nada de la clase obrera, pero un día mi padre no regresó a dormir y mi madre nos dijo que estaba en huelga de hambre, él y sus compañeros

de la fábrica de calzado “La Industrial”. Una semana después mi padre regresó y nos dijo que todos habían perdido su empleo. “Así les pagan los desgraciados burgueses a sus trabajadores, dándonos una patada en el culo apoyándose en los esquiroles, esa clase de infelices... ahora somos más pobres que ayer, hijos...”, nos dijo mientras se iba a dormir.

Muchos años después (en mis tempranos veintes) trabajé para Santos un narco menudista. Nos encerrábamos en un cuarto de hotel de tercera clase y en recortes de periódicos empaquetábamos cartuchos de 50 grms. Mientras fumábamos, envueltos en una espesa nube de humo de cannabis, él me decía:

“... con esta yerba nos podemos hacer muy ricos si la pasamos al otro lado...”

Yo ya era miembro de La Clase de los Poetas Medio-Muertos cuando supe que Santos—
trabajaba para “Los Chapitos”, los hijos del “Chapo Guzmán” y ya se había vuelto millonario, todo un Héroe de la Clase de los Narcos...mientras yo me volvía más viejo y más pobre.

Mario Licón Cabrera is a Mexican poet and translator based in Sydney. He has published four poetry collections, translated leading Australian poets, and his work appears in international magazines. His recent publication with Vagabond Press is a translation of three Mexican poets, and in 2021 and 2023, he was a judge for the NSW Premiers Literary Awards in the translation category.

The Scent of Green Papaya

Eagerly absorbing nutrients
From murky air, filthy soil
Sugar and fragrance brewing
Her child: the green papaya growing within

As each little head peeks out
The season turns to summer
Rotten, murky air flows with the sweetness of melon

Plump and inviting, drawing vines to climb
Unrestrained like a pair of violent hands
Bees and butterflies come, hunting for fragrance and pursuing beauty
...Until the round fruit is snapped, bitten
Seeds are spat out one by one

The storm continues to ravage and wash away
Seeds sink deep into the garbage heap

Green shoots arrive in spring

Season after season, year after year, in endless cycles
...She has forgotten in which world her life began
Or in which world it ended

Christine Peiying Chen, China/New Zealand, was awarded "The Best Foreign Author 2023" at the 30th Ossi Di Seppia, Italian Literature Award. She is a coordinator for the World Poetry Movement Oceania and serves as a committee member of the New Zealand Chinese Writers Association. Her latest poems were published in *China Language* (Taiwan, 2023/2024), and her works were included in the anthology *World Poetry - Chinese Poets in the 21st Century* published by Punctoacapo Editrice in Italy in May 2024.

青木瓜的滋味

尽情吸吮养份
从浑浊的空气、污秽的泥土
糖与香氛酝酿
她的孩子：青木瓜在体内生长

待一个个小脑袋探头时
季节入夏
腐烂浑浊之气流淌着浆果甜美

饱满诱来葛藤攀爬
肆无忌惮如一双暴力之手
蜂蝶来了，猎香逐艳
.....直至圆润被掰折、噬咬
种子，被一粒一粒吐出

暴雨继续蹂躏冲刷
种子没入垃圾堆至深处

青葱莅临，于春日

季季年年，循环往复
.....她已忘记命始何世
了何世

注：

【青木瓜的滋味】是一部获1993年康城电影大奖的越南影片。该片讲述一名出身低贱女仆逆袭改命的故事。现实中能跨越贫富贵贱阶层的女子究竟有多少呢？

He Who Picks Fallen Leaves on the Jade River

When water of the Eastern District is enriched into Jade
And becomes too fat to convey a thin leaf

The skiff is the biggest leaf
He who picks fallen leaves is standing on it
His legs are a pair of sculls
With plastic bags made by himself
He is fishing the yellow fishes without breath
Like paper money of pennies and dimes

He is tensely fixing eyes on the river
Like a boat header catching big fishes in the sea
With the help of weak morning glows
Every fish entering the net is like a smile
Appearing on his face full of furrows

How many times should he repeat such an action every day
So that there will be a small zone for the duck feet to oar lightly

When the autumn wind sweeps
Leaves will be shot at the thin body of Jade River like 10000 arrows
No spray---even the tiniest ripple
Can avoid being tightly covered once again

Bei Ta, born in Suzhou City, now lives in Beijing. He has been invited to attend poetry festivals and academic conferences by more than 30 countries (including Struga International Poetry Festival). His poems have been translated into more than 15 languages. His poetry manuscripts have been stacked by Municipal Library of Shanghai. He has the reputation of "the stone poet".

北塔 写 并译

当东城的水富贵成了玉
胖得连一枚瘦小的落叶都载不走

扁舟是落叶中最大的一片
捞树叶的人站在上面
他的双腿，是一双短桨
他用自制的塑料网兜捕捞着
这一尾尾没有了呼吸的黄鱼
像一张张分分角角的纸币

他的眼睛紧张地紧盯着水面
多么像一个借着微弱的晨曦
在大海中捕大鱼的船老大
每一条鱼入网，都像一丝微笑
浮现在他满是皱纹的脸上

他这样的动作每天要重复多少次
才能有一片让鸭掌轻松划动的小区域

而秋风一扫
叶子便像万箭齐发，射向玉河瘦小的身躯
没有一朵浪花——哪怕是最细小的涟漪
能够不被一再地严严实实地盖住

Righteo Reg

Here was a bloke who could turn his hand to anything.
Give 'im a piece of string, a tin can and he'd prob'ly
knock up a tractor ...
Oath he would... his mates said.

All them fellas, he said, we helped each other build our 'omes
nothin' fancy like – couple of rooms – kitchen, bedrooms
for the wife and kids an' a shed for me to knock around in
fix things like.

He was always doing favours for his mates, anyone really
who needed something fixed. He gave us rhubarb plants,
fruit trees for the farm – so yuz won't go hungry, he'd laugh.
He'd grow anything, gave it away;
and people gave him stuff.

No schoolin' in my day, workin' on the family farm – there
wuz a war, done me bit, learned to weld on me job, made stuff.
I wuz good, he said, no book learnin' no nuthin'
jus' worked it out.

All them others now, goin' to bloomin' university, know nuthin'
never done it – you can't do it with no book,
makes sense dunnit?

Someone gave him a cocky once, screechy, cranky and savage.
He tamed it down, kindness, quiet talk. What is it? mates asked,
Dunno, he said. Dunno became its name.
It really hated women.

I love to watch them hawks, he'd say, hooverin in the sky,
they way they float, ah gees, they're sumptin'! wiping an eye.
Dunno soon learned to talk and imitate the mates' farewells.

Hooroo Mate, lemme know how it goes. Righteo Reg – ta for that.
Righto Reg! squawk!! Righto Reg! squawk!! Righto Reg

Mourners flowed out from the Chapel onto surrounding streets
as old mates bore his coffin to the grave,
Dunno's cage aboard

Hooray Mate. Ta for that. Lemme know how it goes? Righto Reg
Righto Reg Righto and Dunno tore the feathers from his breast.

Eve Gray – writes poetry and prose, for performance, print and radio. A deep interest in the origins, structure and sounds of words, with their power to recreate and evoke image and emotion is something she strives to convey in portraits of creatures, (native, feral or human) and the Hunter Valley.

How Dare You Deceive People Too Much

When I was a child, my cousin had a catchphrase
How dare you deceive people too much
So many years have passed
The farmers' houses have all been demolished
They proudly became migrant workers
The workers' factories have all closed down
They were laid off for the sake of the country
I always think of my cousin's catchphrase
Whenever someone pushes my cousin
Push him once and he won't move
Push him twice and he won't move
Push him three times and he'll say
How dare you deceive people too much
So many years have passed
I always remember his catchphrase

Cao Shui (born in Jun 5, 1982), is a Chinese poet, novelist, screenwriter and translator. He is a representative figure of Chinese Contemporary Literature. He leads the Great Poetry Movement. His most notable works includes *Epic of Eurasia*, the already mentioned trilogy and *King Peacock* (TV series). So far 42 books of Cao Shui have been published.

你竟敢欺人太甚

曹谁

小时候堂弟有句口头禅

你竟敢欺人太甚

这么多年过去了

农民的房子都拆迁了

他们光荣变成农民工

工人的工厂都倒闭了

他们为了国家而下岗

我总想起堂弟这句口头禅

每当有人推搡堂弟

推一下他不动

推两下他不动

推三下他就会说

你竟敢欺人太甚

这么多年过去了

我总记得他这句口头禅

The Loneliness of the Builder

The bench is a seat
for many people. For so long
I sit alone and gaze
at the sea, no one comes near.

I sit and look at the sea,
the vast expanse, its multiple
faces, the illustrations. I sit
and drain the water from my eyes.

I sit and I don't know if I'm seeing
the void or the sea, or if the sea
is the ultimate version of the void.

Now that even the drowned
are tired of crying out like the workers
have stopped protesting their poverty.

Sotirios Pastakas He has published 18 poetry collections. His work has been translated into 20 languages and has taken part in international poetry festivals (San Francisco, Sarajevo, Izmir, Rome, Naples, Siena, Cairo, Istanbul, Medellin, Caracas etc.).

η μοναξια του οικοδομου

Το παγκάκι είναι ένα κάθισμα
για πολλούς ανθρώπους. Τόση ώρα
κάθομαι μόνος κι ατενίζω
τη θάλασσα, δεν με ζυγώνει κανένας.

Κάθομαι και κοιτάζω τη θάλασσα
την απέραντη έκταση, το πολλαπλό της
πρόσωπο, τις εικονογραφήσεις. Κάθομαι
κι αδειάζω το νερό απ' τα μάτια μου.

Κάθομαι και δεν ξέρω αν βλέπω
το κενό ή τη θάλασσα, ή αν η θάλασσα
είναι η απόλυτη εκδοχή του κενού.

Τώρα που ακόμα κι οι πνιγμένοι
βαρέθηκαν να φωνάζουν όπως οι εργάτες
έπαψαν να διαδηλώνουν τη φτώχεια τους.

The Winekeeper

Unless I see the snow melted on the mountain top
I never graft the vines.
And, unless I dry on a rooftop
the cheese from that Shar mountain
I do not squeeze the wine-grapes...
said the two thousand year old man.
How old is this land
and how many battles they fought for that gold
beneath our paths less trodden.
The emerald fields turned yellow
and the red peonies like stars
spread throughout. I see Cranes
nesting on the chimney top.
The boy with the kite run downhill
the wasp buzzing in the ginger curly hair of the girl.
This was a kind of jaunty life I now recall
suffice to long for far too long
in the Plasma Soup of Life.

Fahredin Shehu was born in Rahovec, south east Kosova, in 1972. A graduate in Oriental Studies at Prishtina University, in the last thirty years he has worked as an independent scientific researcher in the fields of World Spiritual Heritage and Sacral Aesthetics. His writings have been translated into over 30 languages. He has authored 20 books, including poetry, essays and novels, has published widely as a reviewer, and has edited many books and anthologies, He is Director of the Balkan Literature section of the Kosovo PEN Centre and a founder-member of the South European Literature Association (Sofia, Bulgaria).

Journal

I'm not tired of walking so long
 Nor let you slip through my fingers you longed for
 My burnt ashes hugged you all along
 Keep me in your brain,
 else my Femininity would go into vain
 Void are the attempts to grip you to my nerves
 Every time my heart bleeds
 Smiling, you keep the blood-soaked Tissue paper in your chest pocket
 Count your profits in the journal, you call it love
 Heart is a digital thermometer,
 Measures your heart's fever
 Being a moon-stripe I adrift around you,
 You never bother.

Translated by Latiful Khabir Kallol

কলি বড়াল ১৯৯৪ সালে বাংলাদেশের বরগুনা জেলার পাথরঘাটায় জন্ম গ্রহণ করেন। বর্তমানে তিনি শিক্ষকতা পেশায় আছেন। তাঁর কাব্যগ্রন্থ জলনীলী এবং ঊপন্যাস চিতা প্রকাশিত হয়েছিলো। শিগ্রই নতুন কাব্যগ্রন্থ রাইকমলের বাঁশি দুটি ভাষায় প্রকাশিত হতে যাচ্ছে। তিনি নিয়মিত বিভিন্ন পত্রিকায় লেখালেখি করেন।

জার্নাল

কলি বড়াল

দীর্ঘ পথ হেঁটেছি তবু ক্লান্ত নই,

আঙুল ফাঁকে গলে যেতে চাইলেও দেইনি।

পোড়ার উপর পুড়ে জড়িয়ে ছিলাম।

মস্তিষ্কে বয়ে বেড়াবে না নারী জনম মিছে হবে যে।

খামচে ধরে স্নায়ুর সাথে বাঁধার চেষ্ঠা বিফল

প্রতিবার আমার বুকের রক্তক্ষরণ মুছে

হাসি মুখে বুক পকেটে রাখো রক্তে ভেজা টিস্যু পেপার।

ভালোবাসা নাম করে জার্নালে দেখো কতটা উসুল,

হৃদপিণ্ড ডিজিটাল থার্মোমিটার হৃদয়ের জ্বরের মাপে।

একফালি চাঁদ হয়ে সামনে বেড়াই অভিমান ছোঁয় না তোমারে।

Koli Baral was born in 1994, Patharghata of Barguna district in Bangladesh. Currently she is in teaching profession. Her poetry book *Jalneeli* and novel *Chita* were published. Meanwhile her new book of poetry *Raikamal's Bansi* will be published in two languages. She regularly writes in various magazines.

Now We've Finally Suffered Defeat

xu lihzi walked along the tracks
 until he reached the city
 until he reached the conveyor belt
 until he reached the place
 where he exchanged his vitality and health
 for a fine-particle-smog-cough
 and a life that left him cold
 he put both in a pisspoor poem on the internet
followed the tracks

the village elders said xu lihzi resembled
 his grandfather bamboo cane
 a man who loved solving puzzles
 diabolic Japanese burned him alive
 shreds of 1943 ba-ha-nners
 xu lihzi all-skin-and-bones
 the village elders said he walked along the tracks
 til he reached his city where even machines slumbered
 the moo-hoon is metallic
 a cubic space
 doth eat doth sleep doth shit doth ponder
 xu wrote without sun
 and did not die *payslip*
 when he opens a window
 a coffin lid slides
payslip
 in his last pisspoor poem *xu lihziwent*
 'e said 'e'd fancy seein' the sea ag'n
 climbin' a mount'n
 that he'd like to call back his lost soul
 but it doesn't work
intercom
 we don't have to mourn
 it was fine to come *intercom* fine to go
 da xu lihzi took steps
 when the library refused to take him on

okayslip intercom tracks

now there's a xu and the world has lost a poet
who used his window as a door
and made of the street his gr've

and still I'm not bothered by 6.0

Translation: Michele Hutchison

Tsead Bruinja, who was the Poet Laureate of the Netherlands in 2019 and 2020, is a poet, a performer and a teacher and, when a Frisian Bob Dylan tribute album was released, even sometimes a singer.

You speak alone

– who understands your language in this part of the west?
Sometimes you speak with eyes lit by the fine gold dust
that you beat and bang- and your hips swing
as in the dances long forgotten by your feet –
quickly now at windows or balconies
encircled by pretty little curtains – but who
understands your language from this part of the west?

Your hands are drawn to objects scattered around
the house you don't have, and the tea around the kitchen
warms the guests and the hostess with mouth so red – red that opens
an empty half circle in the emptiness that returns
like the boomerang of our hospitality.

What you have seen, done and said among the waves
or when packed in train compartments
you wrap it all now around a blanket
while you conjugate the word of the day before asleep.

There was the confusion of the torment – after.
There was the escape from the horror – also.
It was the tragedy of love – thus.

You – always a woman – you alone remained
with your mother's coloured shawl to cover the bodies
again just barely along the plain's level ground
as treacherous as a mountain.

You speak alone – now – who from this side of the moon
understands your language? Is your idiom sweet?
Is your song like velvet?

The other morning I saw your lips moving
at the market you were following like a dog
the woman with mouth so red – red that opens
and your tongue was the same as that of the bird

that curses its cage,
the same as the tree that curses the house,
the same as my tongue that curses
the time of men with hatred
ready in their pocket and heart.

Parli da sola

– chi intende la tua lingua in questa parte d'occidente?
Parli con gli occhi a volte accesi dal pulviscolo dorato
che sbatti e batti e dondolano i fianchi

come nei balli obliati dai tuoi piedi –
svelti ora per finestre o balconi
cerchiati da lindebelle tendine – ma chi
intende la tua lingua da questa parte d'occidente?

Attraggono le mani oggetti sparsi nella casa che non hai
e il tè attraversa la cucina, riscalda gli ospiti
e la padrona con bocca rossa – rosso che si apre
semicerchio vuoto nel vuoto che torna
come il boomerang della nostra ospitalità.

Quello fatto, visto, detto tra le onde
o dentro stipata nei vagoni
lo stringi ora tutt'attorno a una coperta mentre
il verbo del giorno declini prima del sonno.

Ci fu la confusione della tormenta – dopo.
Ci fu la fuga dall'orrore – anche.
Fu la tragedia dell'amore – quindi.

Tu – sempre donna – unica restasti
con lo scialle colorato di tua madre a ricoprire a stento
i corpi lungo la rasa della pianura faticosa

come una montagna.

Parli da sola – ora – chi intende la tua lingua
da questa parte della luna? Dolce è il tuo idioma?
Vellutato il tuo canto?

L'altra mattina ti ho visto le labbra muovere
al mercato seguivi come un cane
la donna con bocca rossa – rosso che si apre
e la tua lingua era la stessa dell'uccello
che maledice la gabbia,
la stessa dell'albero che maledice la casa
la stessa mia lingua che maledice
il tempo degli uomini con l'odio
pronto in tasca e nel cuore.

From: Anna Lombardo, *Quel Qualcosa che manca/ That something that is missing (Bologna, 2009
2nd edition)*

Anna Lombardo lives in Venice. She is a poet, cultural activist, and freelance translator. She is the artistic director of the International Poetry Festival “Palabra en el Mundo” for Venice and a co-founder and member of Poets of the Planet (POP). Bilingual poetic collections: *Even the Fish Are Drunk* (2002); *No Alibi* (2004); *That Something Missing* (2009); *Con candidos manos* (2022); *Blackout* (2024). She has edited the following anthologies: *There Are Those Who Believe in Dreams* (2014); *15x15 Photography meets Poetry* (2020); *Translation at the Time of Covid* (2021), *Quaderni della Palabra Venice, Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4* (2021-2022-2023-2024); *From Venice to Venice* (2024). www.palabraenelmundo.wordpress.com

Geoff Goodfellow

an old school mate

Was that your car dragging off my books
During the great split of 2001
In that sports car I never knew you owned

Always on the toe
Down the pub on rundle street east
Knocking back air and convo

Then sitting out in your backyard
With our mate, Glen
And you swimming with sharks

From scratch
Not a flipper in sight
Talking Webb and snorkels

Before the Big C
And a hundred sit-ups a day
Keeping the world at bay

Note: Geoff Goodfellow is a leading Australian proponent of poetry for the working classes:
www.geoffgoodfellow.com/aboutme

Richard Hillman is a poet, editor, publisher, and scholar. He began working at the age of 13 in his step-father's butcher shop as a yobby, then at 14 as a storeman and packer. He has published over 1000 poems in Australia and overseas, and has 8 published works, the most recent is *Raw Nerve* (Puncher and Wattmann).

The Chief Executives' Fishing Workshop

Three executive CEOs
in a leadership-through-sport workshop
accidentally caught the same fish.
Its body lies on the Tiberias promenade,
attached to three hooks.
Three helpless executives
near the big fish, its gills broken.
They won't learn a thing!
Won't learn a thing!

A young guy passes by a couple of centimeters
from them,
his clothes shimmering scales.
They're afraid he may ask questions,
but he runs off, makes out with
the girlfriend, his dick stiff in the Benetton.

The fishing rods of the three CEOs
tangle up in a coil.
The three, still with the rods,
besiege the poor fish.
They won't learn a thing!
Won't learn a thing!

A group of Breslov ultra-Orthodox Jews, roaring something,
echoing in the distance—
one of them in shoes made in Israel.
The insurance company CEO
approaches the fish and forcefully pulls the strings
to pull out the hooks, but they are stuck.
He sparks a flame, and the light,
thin strings ignite and detach easily.
For a second, the torn fish is gilded with fire.
That CEO takes the dead fish
and throws it beyond the stone wall,

into the darkness of the Sea of Galilee.
"It is dead anyway, why throw it in the water?"
says one of them,
when that CEO washes his hands with the remains of a freebie magazine
sweeping across the promenade.

Translated by Orit Gat

Roy Chicky Arad, born in Be'er Sheva, Israel, currently lives in Israel and on the beaches of Greece. Arad has published eight books and edited *Maayan* magazine of poetry for 15 years. In 2007, he co-edited and co-published the Hebrew-Arabic anthology *Aduma* ("Red One") about class.

סדנת הדיג של בכירי המשק

שלושה מנכ"לים בכירים במסע-דיג בטבריה
לכדו את אותו הדג.

גופתו שוכבת עכשיו על
הרחוב ההולנדי בטיילת,
מחוברת לשלוש חכות:
כשלון סדנת
המנהיגות-באמצעות-ספורט.
שלושת המנכ"לים חסרי אונים,
ליד הדג המת הגדול והקר, שזימיו שבורים.

צעיר עובר, כמעט נוגע בהם,
בגדיו - קשקשים מחזירי אור
הם חוששים שהוא יישאל שאלות,
אבל הוא רץ להתחרמן עם
החברה, הזין עומד לו בבנטון.
סיבי הדיג של שלושת המנכ"לים
הסתבכו אלה באלה לפקעת.

השלושה עדיין עם החכות
מקיפים את הדג המסכן.
הם כבר לא ילמדו דבר!
לא ילמדו שום דבר!

חבורת ברסלבים, שואגים משהו, מהדהדים במרחק,
אחד מהם עם נעליים תוצרת הארץ.
המנכ"ל מהביטוח
החליט לעשות משהו.
הוא ניגש לדג ומשך בחוטים בכח
כדי לשלוף את הקרסים, אבל הם תקועים חזק.
הוא הלהיט מצית והחוטים הדקים והעדינים ניצתים וניתקים בקלות.
לשניה נזהבה להבה על הדג הקרוע.
המנכ"ל הזה לוקח את הדג המת
וזורק אותו מעבר לחומת האבן, אל אפלת הכנרת
"ממילא הוא מת, למה לזרוק אותו למים?"
אומר אחד מהם,
כשהמנכ"ל הזה מנקה את ידו בגוויית חינמון שהתגלגל בטיילת.

Songs of innocence and experience

I carry the legacy in my looks
And fashion in my genes
Can read the latest mags and books
Appear at all the scenes

Attended many private schools
Can get what money buys
Am taught to win and never lose
Success the only prize

I'd like to thank my Dad and Mum
For everything I've got
This lovely house this life of *bon ton*
This diary for *bon mots*

I carry th' legacy in me looks
An' fashion in me jeans
Can't read too good ain't got no books
Get hassled if I'm seen

At twelve they chucked me outta school
For stealing what money buys
On th' streets ya learn to never lose
Survival th' only prize

I'd like to thank me Dad and Mum
For everything I've got
This filthy squat this bag of bon-bons
This daily bowl o' broth

Ray Liversidge's latest book is *...of a sudden* published by Ginninderra Press in 2023. His other books are: *Oradour-sur-Glane; no suspicious circumstances: portraits of poets (dead); The Barrier Range; Triptych Poets: Issue One; The Divorce Papers; Obeying the Call*. His *New & Selected* manuscript is currently with a publisher. www.poetry.wordpress.com

Open to selection

Each morning at breakfast
Francis Longmore spreads
the world across his lap
continents scrambled
by whispering wires
 a smear of dripping
 congealing on gilt-trimmed plate

The Minister of Lands
surveys inked columns
telling Shakespearian sonnets
tragically turned
to ash charred folios
swept skyward
in a Birmingham breeze

Impromptu flight stemmed
by the gawdy scent
of an English rose
brazenly filching purses
from leisurely ladies
hovering above
Parisian rooftops

The city flattened like a crayoned map
woven wicker captives
in a grand balloon
her one-legged accomplice
grounded below
six hundred pounds
stuffed in seersucker pockets

What a lark!
Bismark is busy
suppressing socialism;
Kellys cavort

up & down the country
making fools of troopers
& black trackers so much hot air

Rising from waisted chair
folds the paper (precisely creased)
spine straightened
ready to inspect the district
swathes of red gums toppling
thousands of acres
open to selection

Note

Francis Longmore (1826-1898) was a radical politician who supported the cause of selectors in opposition to the squattocracy in Victoria, opening up thousands of acres, previously designated red gum reserve, to selectors. He was also chairman of the royal commission inquiring into the performance of the police (1881-83) during the Kelly outbreaks. The description of newspapers in stanza one is borrowed from a speech given by Henry Ward Beecher in Minneapolis. He wrote: 'Every morning at breakfast the man spreads the map of the world before him, and the wires have brought whispering across the ocean'. The speech was reported in the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* on Saturday, 18 January 1879, p.3. On the same page, a scam involving pickpockets in Paris was featured as well as a brief account of a great fire, which destroyed the Midland Institute in Birmingham containing the largest Shakespearian library in the world, and Prince Bismark's introduction of a bill to suppress socialism in the German Federal Council.

Rozanna Lilley is a widely published essayist and poet. Her hybrid prose-poetry memoir *Do Oysters Get Bored? A Curious Life* (UWA Publishing, 2018) was shortlisted for the National Biography Award in 2019. *The Lady in the Bottle* (London: Eyewear), a chapbook, was released in 2023. For more details see: <https://rozannalilley.com.au>

Outside, it's fighting weather

It's another day of getting old. Outside, it's fighting weather. She's driven by projects that must be done — work is what we do, fill up the time or it's wasted — and she feels a lifetime of work in her body, her worn out body. If you don't believe this proofread her scars. She's had no time, made no time, for anything not work, like time fillers. Relaxing always transposed into pleasure. Pleasure into lazy. These slippages make her uneasy, are suspect.

In all that work she's been told — stay unnoticed, do well, but not the best — pride is a problem, standing out is a problem, fame is suspect.

The knock down is the tall poppy —you think you're better than us, don't think you're still one of us, go back to the outside without us. The problem is, they tell her, you went somewhere else, left us here. Didn't look back. Don't complain. Sooks and softies and townies complain.

There's no way to turn back. When she's taken the world to her body, she becomes molecules from the outside. She looks out, out to the promise. Out from the worn-out, worked-out body, travelled and world-known from the space left when she left... when she went to the somewhere else.

Sandra Renew's latest collection is *She goes to Town*, Life before Man/Gazebo Books, Australia 2024. Her poetry has been awarded two Canberra Critics Circle Awards and her collection, *It's the sugar, Sugar*, Recent Work Press 2021, won the ACT Writers Notable Awards for Poetry 2021.

Traitor

(I must make amends)

First time I rode in a Mercedes Benz
I felt dirty. Ours was a Holden family, crammed
in a light blue FJ, with the faint smell of sick
on those long drives through the Mallee. Day trips
to Rosebud — bathers, towels, tomato sandwiches.
(Sand witches!) And out beyond the waves —
the FJ, EK, HK and (big mistake) the P76.
While you breathed leather I curled bug-like
in the well of second-hand vinyl and rubber.
With the snap of the radio (where no wrinklies fly).
Hands filled with Spotto (double lines, churches).
Salt white in a bakelite shaker.
And my father whistling the paddocks
up hill and down.

First published in *The Canberra Times*.

Beth Spencer writes a mix of poetry, memoir, fiction and essay. Her books include *The Age of Fibs*, *Vagabondage* and *How to Conceive of a Girl*, and her work has been published widely in newspapers, journals and performed for ABC Radio National. She lives and writes on unceded Darkinjung land on the NSW Central Coast. Also at www.bethspen.substack.com and @bethspen.

Down Hill

It was a “betrayal” they said
Marrying “out of your class”
Friends dropped off
Stopped coming.

Relatives only came
when he was at work
stayed a short time
too nervous.

Then you are alone
to find new people
learn the satisfaction
of swear words

Like riding a bike
Take your feet off the pedals
It’s better downhill.

Jennifer Dickerson began writing poetry in school, hopeful of winning the annual magazine prize. That was eighty years ago and she has continued to write. Worked as a journalist on Melbourne Sun-Herald, and Womans Day, The ABC, Channel 10 and World Records Clun magazines, Founder member Kitchen Table Poets and now member of the Wollis group in Sydney. Publishes *Chiaroscuro* and *Quirky Verse* (Turpentine Press)

Friday Drinks

And a scrum of men
in shirtsleeves, kicking back.

The brunt of them
have homes to go to.

They peel off.
The swing doors swing.

Once alone, two men alone,
lean in across their beers.

'Oh man, it's just got so dark.
It's all turned to shit.'

And it's dark in the beer garden.
They are standing silhouettes.

One man is looking down
and the other tilts his head.

'Everything turns to shit.
in the end.'

They touch foreheads
almost, a breath
between them,

drain glasses,
set them down
with a dull thunk.

As if some one else
will deal with them,
which they will.

They leave together
with slow and stolid grace,
casting their faces about

to catch the light,
holding the door back
for each other.

Jennifer Compton lives in Melbourne and is a poet and playwright who also writes prose. Recent Work Press published her 11th book of poetry, *the moment, taken*, in June 2021.

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