

1970: POETRY AUSTRALIA NUMBER 32:

PREFACE TO THE SEVENTIES: THE POEMS

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Bear in mind that due to the intractable problems of converting poetry from the page to a blog computer screen, line indents will inevitably be compromised.

p 05: Walter Billeter: *The Symbol*

The birds,  
stiling on summer rust grass,  
before they took off  
for their flight toward evening.  
Was it a symbol?  
On the horizon  
a bleeding sun died —  
no cloud bandage could help.

p 06: J.S. Harry: 'One, in the the motel...'

One, in the motel,  
bleeds, and cannot be stopped.  
Endlessly, the flow  
saps, reduces the span.  
Across the highway  
hessian-coloured sheep  
drift, halt, drift and eat.  
Neon-green paddocks' long-grassed spring

p 06: Brian Ridley: *The Quarrel*

In my skull a spectral ship twists and flounders.  
Your still, opaque eyes project your grey figure  
In pigtails, limbs thrown and silhouetted in outrage  
From your torso. Soundlessly you scream. Your tiny lips  
Tear wider into my cheek. On the nerve-ends of my teeth  
My concrete tongue plays to distraction. The dry wrinkles,  
The first courses beneath your eyes have nothing  
To give back to us. They wait, and more sand will wash

p 07: Brian Ridley: *Marcus Flavius Recounts His  
Friends' Love (For Geoffrey Lehmann)*

I have been told that when their meeting was young  
They caught themselves out many times. It was said  
They shone with each other's form, and in their pool,  
Bucking and leaping, they dived like dolphins, churning  
Their bath of love long after their guests had arrived.  
Some later admitted, as they quaffed the heavier wine  
Of their hosts, that conversation had become slack  
And they were taut in trying not to recognise a tic

p 08: Nicholas Hasluck: *Mining Strip*

Stones rattle in the pits  
on the red ridge.  
Children wait for dinner.

The old chev  
stands on blocks  
with belted hub-caps;  
harnessed to gaunt derrick  
and red ridge.

p 08: Vicki Viidikas: *Spring Moon*

Shadows fall off in the night  
and two hands form a band  
of grey, muted black, furred edges.

A cat is squatting in a corner,  
eyes tilted to the moon.  
Out there people are talking

And joke, corkscrewing their voices  
into the blanket —

p 09: Michael Dransfield: *Webs*

the cobweb room  
beneath the eaves  
a rafterplace where shadows stay

in it live  
a spider, a lover,  
a murderer  
the game is not chess not life / call it

p 10: Michael Dransfield: *Chopin Ballade*

Upon the yellow lattice of parchment  
lines of lettering are inscribed. If  
you have attained the erudition, you  
translate these dactyls into jeremiads.  
In place of the elaborate  
black script, you will see  
extraordinary hallucinations. Where stood a 'T',  
a gaslight on its iron standard;

p 11: Dennis Davidson: *Your Hand*

Tonight the snoring city sweats with drugs,  
Sea-spittle is blown against the windscreen  
And my snug car shivers in salty night.  
My hand recalls another hand. The beach  
Is sour, the distant lights of Melbourne shrink.  
I come to swig my heady loneliness,  
Get sick on memories. I twist the key  
Hard, like a nun killing desire, and stop

p 12: Alan Wearne: *Jill*

Yes, yes, I'm a new track, a trick...  
kept sprite, a wisp,  
    (all this with trust, but:  
    O you pussy! watch.) I'll watch,  
till prayer and reveries, (gone into twilight,)  
    are once, slip —  
    ays, days,

p 12: Terry Gillmore: *Waiting*

we all wait  
within change  
to take off the edge of being  
  
waiting  
    to step to the road  
to the sound of passing cars  
constantly invading the skin  
  
the body to ache dry

p 13: David Rankin: *Beatitude*

the long scarf  
twists twice at the neck

her eyes  
are moist with excitement

a wide raw leather  
belt loops from her hand

she has some knowledge  
of his repairs to her mouth

p 13: David Rankin: *Very Old Poem*

the drift of clouds  
and rain  
follows me  
behind the willows

the portrait of  
the peacock  
I carried  
for so long

p 14: Leon Slade: *All-Bran-Le-Ta*

When our son brought it in with the milk,  
the morning news had icing on it.  
It's holiday (happy birthday, Queen Elizabeth),  
but frosted mornings bring pressures to  
bear, so I got up, leaving you to lie in the arms  
of your electric blanket, while your breath left  
you slowly in a gentle huff.

Crazy Melbourne tries like mad

p 14: Patrick Alexander: *Iguana*  
*For Tennessee Williams*

Tied by fraying selves to isolated stakes  
we are fatted for the kill —  
gods of vindictive hunger wait; yet almost, I can smile.  
For it seems I struggle in a year of dearth —  
for any god to be a thin and bony course

Not proffered by my trapper much fattening,  
all wild morsels gone from my small circle,  
it is ironic that some kinder god, in tenderness

p 15: Philip Roberts: *Typewriter*

A new kind of traitor, this machine:  
smug and gap-tooth-faced invention,  
and accommodating to a fault.  
You have no umlaut for your words?  
no tilde? no accent aigu?  
Your love can't be freed from its English?  
Fear not, friend, by the stratagems  
of Mr. Alpha's Typewriter Shop

p 16: Ian Lightfoot: *sam*

i know what i would do  
if i was tall like people:

i'd go to kindergarten and punch  
Billy and Sally and Enrico  
and run into Miss Taylor just  
when she was carrying the softdrinks

then i'd run out onto the middle of the road  
because cars don't hit people very hard



p 17: R. J. Deeble: *Biafran Soft Clocks*

*See endnote [1]*

With so many children with so little skin  
between them isn't now the time to adjust  
our calendars to include the minds that

move their mantles beyond death. To  
find that lay-by systems on fluffy toys  
are no longer enough to tell us what our

heads are doing at the third stroke  
How do we feel about Christmas when

p 18: J. Frow: "we watched them..."

we watched them from the iron bridge:  
shoals of breeding carp,  
orange, like rinsed gold,

or soft and dark brown.  
drained of spawn  
they basked in the brackish, sunlit creek

or moved beneath  
the plaited profusion of weeds —

p 18: J. Frow: "more than anger.."

more than anger  
joined us.

all night the cats  
squirmed through the yellow wind, the floor  
listened to the rain beat, we became,

drawn through strange passages of burning,  
wood darkened by one disruptive, bitter flame.

crusted with red ash, slowly our persons  
caved inward.

p 19: J. Frow: *the Vigil*

it is softly raining on the city.  
delicate, crude, your limbs shift,  
bones slide under skin,  
the grey diffuse with darker movements.  
the beam of a clothesline  
juts from a flat roof,  
angled in the obscure light.  
below, in the square,

p 20: John E. Tranter: *The Moment of Waking*

She remarks how the style of a whole age  
disappears into your gaze, at the moment  
of waking. How sad you are  
with your red shirt, your features  
reminiscent of marble, your fabulous  
boy-girl face like a sheet of mist  
floating above a lake.

Someone hands me a ticket

p 20: Carl Harrison-Ford: *The Flag*

(after Pentti Saarikeski)

the blood runs from the head back to the veins  
“stiff as a window the flag stood out in the wind”  
the trains were all on time  
in the cities the workers watched clocks  
in the distance there was the horizon  
the summer pools of water on the roads  
are optical illusions

p 21: Carl Harrison-Ford: *Closer and Closer*

The journey to love  
the desert music  
the descent

attract  
not as the pull  
of images but as

the journey  
at that time

p 22: Mark Radvan: *The horse in the junk-yard*

sea-bright smiling  
i am the utter anvil of my rock-hard breath  
i am the death of every creature  
i am the dying in the factory yard  
who will come to me when i am singing?  
who will tend my wants  
and the annoyance of my fingers tapping?

every life green dark sea

p 23: Nick Battye: *The Asylum*

The arid radiance of an angel  
hesitates on the wall.  
The Marquis beds down Napoleon  
kindly: keeps  
the birthday present of the purring  
drum sticks to himself.

p 24: John Blay: *Man of Letters*

He sits before his incomplete portrait,  
forgotten by the artist; a half-face  
and shadow, the pencilled "This man of Letters".  
From the stairhead his wife and would-be  
mistress bellows the arrival of dinner guests.  
Cries of introduction, voices down the hallway,  
footsteps thump toward his dream  
perhaps tonight will see his Boswell in.

p 24: Rhyll McMaster: *On a Glass Slide*

It grows a little,  
pulls, or is stretched.  
The tiny granules surge  
and the blunted pseudopod moves forward;  
The amoeba, breaking its back to make a foot  
finds what it did not know;  
A new form becomes clear  
under the microscope's unstartled eye;

p 25: Roger McDonald: *Heartbeat*

a bird risen to 10,000 feet, who  
meets the mad balloonist in a twist  
of blue fingers, then semi-conscious  
rolls and tumbles downwards, butterflying  
on stunned bone, loose in whistling shafts of air,  
hospitable to the idea that clouds  
or wishes get things back where they all started.

p 25: Roger McDonald: *The Enemy*

The enemy conspires to end  
Heart-beat, grass-growth, clouds  
And the life of the wind.  
He wishes to extinguish  
— among all things —  
The life of the sun.

In the present campaign  
His weapons are notions of spring —

p 26: Nick Battye: *'pressed hard'*

pressed hard        to the arctic sledge of reindeer  
herding light

where sedge grows from its own strength  
and houses stand because of the cold

we in the long dark  
making handcrafts under tallow candles

touch        and occasionally        speak

p 26: Michael Parr: *Poem Against Solitude*

the wood of our words...

as deciduous as winter: The turtle of solitude with  
its instincts awry

here are the roofs empty of sparrows...

Mecca has been captivated by  
thunder:

of leaping dogs

of wooden asylums...

p 27: P. A. Pilgrim: *'on the timeless sea'*

on the timeless sea  
we sail  
in a rusted clipper  
ship  
going no place  
in particular  
just out to pass  
the time  
of day

p 28: P. A. Pilgrim: *'easter poem anytime'*

upstairs from the penthouse  
ten flights higher than the sun  
someone on the windowledge  
begs to be excused...  
as he hurls down the ashes  
    and sack cloth  
as reminders of  
    how much he's suffered



p 30: Wilhelm Hiener: *Upton-Smith at Forty*

The siren sings: "Come on Upton,"  
Slurring my name. "Take me first."  
And I, confined by ties, school,  
Family, strain till I burst  
My eardrums and cannot hear  
Her husky cry. (A partiality  
For slim-built birds with gravel  
Voices had patterned all my days.)

p 30: Paul Burns: *The Old Man*

Old man,  
remnant of my past,  
of the days of the child who ate yellow mushrooms,  
you squat in your cushioned corner,  
your pale eyes reaching out  
in the quiet, wanting to talk,  
remembering my month on silver crutches.

p 31: Paul Burns: *A Girl From Another World*

On her desk lay folders of history and hate;  
a fountain pen copies other men's knowledge.

Love poems unwritten linger in his mind,  
his cramped fist hastening up spectres of the future.

She walks down a road of crunching blue metal,  
not looking at the dead moonlight marsh.

He stares in dark coffee lounges at masks of death,  
furtively fixes a needle with a dream.

p 32: Suzanne Hunt: *Evening Ferry*

The city looked tonight as if a bushfire  
had passed through. The black dark limbs  
of the bridge, and a thousand coals glowing

among the buildings. The butt of a tower  
at Greenwich burnt white against the horizon.  
Pinchgut sailed in silhouette along the lights

of the expressway, and ebony rolls of smoke  
dispersed into a sky still glowing pink, where

p 32: Robert Gray: *Landscape 3*

Wandering down,  
with my back to the afternoon,  
around the heavy cattle on the road,  
in the slanted sun.  
The fields are blowing like fire —  
the air become for me  
at such hour  
full of singing, cries, and pennants

p 33: Robert Gray: *Travelling*

Travelling all day, at evening  
the road is hauled away  
slowly from the river. — that pale, cold tea  
we've watched for hours.  
It plunges now and  
surges over  
the long and shuddering  
roots of a mountain range.

p 34: Franco Paisio: *Game*

Out of the black wreath of my body  
you grow the flame  
I know your lips and I know your hand  
on this will-o'-the-wisp  
and I know your name

I name my madness  
when the flame  
touches your blood

p 34: Peter Carthew: *Cancer '69*

It was an absurd grave we dug  
burying nightingale and dove

winter came willowless  
with Cain's napalm

artificial orchids  
rebeautify the tomb

beneath the warm gun  
that rests on the moon

p 35: Michael Dugan: *Childmemory*

Down past Macartney's farm  
beyond a wilderness of waist high thistles,  
willow trees caressed the creek.  
We would come to the willows  
along a secret path of our own making,  
to leap into their feathered greenness  
and, clutching handfuls of whiplike branches,  
would swing, eyes closed, above the stream,

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p 35: Also available from South Head Press:

*Open at Random, by Bruce Beaver*  
*I Learn by Going, by Craig Powell*  
*Poems for a Female Universe, by Norman Talbot*  
*Eyewitness, by Rodney Hall*  
*Two Houses, by Grace Perry*  
*Letters to Live Poets, by Bruce Beaver*

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p 36: Frederick C. Parmee: *Walk in the Night*

Moving out from isolation  
with clocks ticking time  
to the countdown of a people's history  
we walk to strange meetings

stiff in the joints  
and using awkward muscles  
with care  
we learn again to walk upright

p 37: Frederick C. Parmee: *Release*

From the scarlet letter  
to the ultimate freedom  
beyond the reach  
of rule or retrenchment  
this revolution  
releases the flood

these shining shells  
of our bodies sweep

p 38: Jennifer Maiden: *The Scent*

I'm afraid to say I don't want you  
    The sky looks like white cologne  
I grow with a sleep  
That is driven down like smoke from the hills  
The night dries in my throat with an old dense scent.  
    Death explained to me once:  
    "I do not take the people  
Who have somewhere else to go..."

p 38: Jennifer Maiden: *The Wedding*

With my ear on her rib to hear  
the slow heartdark beat of her dream  
I meet the periphery of night  
    Behind my shoulder  
    Crux  
And the Pointers glare encased  
In the window like hot quartz in water.  
    An austere unhooded moon —

p 38: Jennifer Maiden: *The Factory*

Metal from metal, metal shapes metal  
Metal eats metal, metal wastes metal  
Is rebuked by metal, designed by metal  
Metal rules metal. Metal pays me  
One thousand three times a day I kick  
Metal and metal issues forth, the same.  
They say repetition enforces Truth  
And ritual is Divine, and here am I

p 39: Jennifer Maiden: *Climbing*

This shadow at my shoulder doesn't shed  
    The substantial night.  
The rope twists all breath  
    From the mountain  
    As simple as a bed  
Far above life in heavy wind you might  
Fall beyond the common cliff of death.  
With all my side and ear adhered to stone

p 39: Kerry Leves: *Slug*

I am brown and gradual: softness,  
Pushing through slabs of cold air.  
I am aware of the gut of the earth,  
Digesting ice of last night's rain;  
My wet body-heat melts frost  
Into trickles. My work is this track.  
It is silver, silver...

I'm a pulp-mouth, sucking. I am death

p 40: Robert Adamson: *Your Magazine Husband*

1

So finally after strolling along  
through whistling constellations above your peaceful roof  
three years,

I saw you coming over the ether from the edge  
of your world, & remained silent.

Through with striking  
the dome of my brain & hoping for music,  
I watched you approaching, like one of those floating-women



p 42: Robyn Ravlich: 1910: *Homage to Marinetti*

At night  
    the intense vibrance of the arsenals  
        factories  
lit by the glare of electric lights  
  
voracious railroad stations  
    devour smoking monsters  
  
bridges, giant gymnasts,  
    span the rivers

p 43: Peter Skrzynecki: *Theorem*

The last evening of winter passes down its light  
Against the fallowed earth and sandstone  
That burns red among ferns and gravelled ditches.

Light moves across the stones, through ghosts  
Of trees and leaves that burn white in the morning  
Of a black frost, as rivers of mist swirl and gather

Where shadows pass beyond the stalks of dry corn  
And charred grasses: encircle black stagnant pools,

[On the following pages are articles by

Link: [»»] Rodney Hall: *Attitudes to Tradition in Contemporary Australian Poetry*

Link: [»»] Thomas Shapcott: *Hold Onto Your Crystal Balls*

Link: [»»] James Tulip: *The Australian-American Connection*

Link: [»»] Ronald Dunlop: *Recent Australian Poetry*

[Not included here:] Donald Gallup: T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound:  
Collaborators in Letters

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*Endnote:*

[1] Biafra, officially the Republic of Biafra, was a secessionist state in south-eastern Nigeria that existed from 30 May 1967 to 15 January 1970, taking its name from the Bight of Biafra (the Atlantic bay to its south). The inhabitants were mostly the Igbo people who led the secession due to economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the various peoples of Nigeria. The creation of the new country was among the causes of the Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Nigerian-Biafran War... After two-and-a-half years of war, during which a million civilians had died in fighting and from famine, Biafran forces agreed to a ceasefire with the Nigerian Federal Military Government (FMG), and Biafra was reintegrated into Nigeria. [Wikipedia] Though largely forgotten now, the Biafran famine was a very newsworthy topic in 1970. JT

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