

# **MY WORD in YOUR EAR**

**Selected Poems 2001 - 2015**



*think for yourself with others in mind*

**Richard Scutter**

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## **Dedication**

To Maureen  
Sophie, Ava, Olivia, Emmeline

# Foreword

## Song of the Universe

every voice  
endless rapture  
your

voice  
oration instilled  
creating eternity

I started a greater involvement in poetry after my retirement in 2001 at the time of the internet expansion. Communication is so fast and furious nowadays and there is such a flood of words on offer that I just had to add my words to the fray. I currently have a poetry blog named 'My Word in Your Ear' and so I thought it equally appropriate to use this title.

The poems cover the period from 2001 to 2015. In the main I have selected poems where there has been unsolicited appreciation. In one case I was taken aback when a dear lady mentioned that she had put one of my poems on her fridge door and made a point of reading it before breakfast.

I agree with Robert Frost that a poem should be valued 'pure without any wrappings'. However I have included some of my own images against a number of poems especially those in the Landscape Section. Poems of this nature, where another art form is used in conjunction with the poem text, are known as 'ekphrastic' and currently this appears quite a popular form of presentation. All the images are my own or from my wife Maureen unless otherwise stated.

I hope readers find the poems entertaining and thought-provoking even if they don't quite reach the vaulted heights of fridge-door status.

Richard Scutter, February 2016

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I also give recognition to the ACT Veterans Athletics Club and the Holy Covenant Anglican Church at Cook, Canberra for their supportive role in publishing my poetry whenever submitted.

I am indebted to Alan Watts and John Hunt for review of this work and for advice on publication.

And it goes without saying I would like to thank family and friends, especially Maureen my ever supportive wife, partner, and critic.

Landscape

## **Landscape**

## Landscape

### **Garden Eyes**

walking through her garden eyes  
clouds depart to clear the way  
flowers in sunlight cause surprise

into a world that mystifies  
pretty shades come out to play  
walking through her garden eyes

dandy smiles and dainty sighs  
dance the breeze in disarray  
flowers in sunlight cause surprise

depth of colour intensifies  
gleaming joyous with the day  
walking through her garden eyes

teasing the mind to tantalize  
different faces have their say  
flowers in sunlight cause surprise

carefree letting the path decide  
wandering in thought I dream away  
walking through her garden eyes  
flowers in sunlight cause surprise

## Landscape



*October 2009*



*November 2009  
Mount Painter, Canberra*

### **Green to Brown**

this is no gentle autumn smile  
to colour the slip of an ageing year

and after the cool generosity  
of early spring rain  
there was a certain prospect  
that the greening of the land  
was more than just a transient flush

but dashed in days  
this frown of burning brown  
colours more than the changing hills  
as the thought of summer heat  
sweats at an already exhausted body

### **Footnotes**

*In 2009 Canberra experienced record heat in November which is the last month of spring.  
The average day temperature throughout the month was above 30 degrees.*

*Published in the Canberra Times*

## Landscape

### Summer Dance

the gracious movement of her being  
brightens morning with light and laughter  
heaven moves through her cloudless sky  
a soft translucent wind stirs

her emerald eyes spin thoughts of love  
a gentle warmth permeates my body  
she is pure joy sifting across cool waters  
a champagne sweep across the countryside

momentarily she holds her figure  
then, with a glance, she trails before me  
an evening gown burnt by a golden sun  
as slowly her body brushes the earthen floor

### Summer Ends

heat dissipates like an ice-cream melt  
colours disappear as swimmers desert the sand  
the last couple converse at the beach-end  
while only seagulls are left to peck at car-park chips

**Autumn Air on Mt Painter**

the apple crispness  
presents with cutting clarity  
the early morning light  
yielding its muted colours  
in rediscovery of shape and form

nature is transmuted  
in a spider-spun fragility  
the Brindabella amphitheatre redefining  
while in the valley sweep  
horses steam in slow movement

a kingdom of thistle heads  
their crowns pillaged  
and washed thin of colour  
stand testimony to the heady days  
of the hot summer-party

while far below  
cars collect at traffic lights  
give a distant murmur  
token to another world  
unknowing of this ephemeral magic

a certain peace prevails  
caught in the calm  
after-taste of summer  
a breath of quiet surrender  
lingers a gentle submission

**Footnote**

*Mount Painter is in central Belconnen, Canberra.*



*Lake George during the drought of 2003*

### **Drought at Lake George**

Lake George is dead  
more a case of a passing  
slowly at first  
then swiftly, gone

years ago  
it was another story  
bird-life endeared the eye  
water and sky sang in soft harmony

now the relentless sun continues to suck  
drill burns the core  
cracks, breaks  
opens the wound

old fence-posts stretch the expanse  
stand dying in the distance  
in the afternoon still only cicadas  
shrill in the vibrant heat

## Landscape



*Wind Farms seen at Lake George, New South Wales Oct 2015*

### **Wind Farm Country**

as if an alien God threw gigantic spears  
in random fashion fathomed deep into the ground  
the shafts cluster to shock the skyline hills  
in a steel structure out of all proportion

I view in Lilliputian awe  
with eyes that never quite come to terms  
then watch as the starch-stiff scissored hands  
turn in a slow monster movement

the car window now disappears the site  
mesmerised by this intrusion of the mind  
these foreigners still frame my passing thoughts  
of where, and from what country?

### **Footnote**

*'Wind Farm Country' was published in the Canberra Times with a photograph.*

**Autumn is Always Afternoon**

Autumn is always afternoon  
that time after lunch in the garden  
the plates scattered to one side  
but still some wine in the glass

the children at play in the background  
the old swing objecting strongly  
while discussion leads to friends they've known

far-off the low moan from the motorway  
the sun still gives some comfort  
as shadows stretch into the lawn  
soon it will be time to call the children to task  
but now they talk and laugh oblivious

a gust of wind detracts and for a moment  
she looks down to the end of the garden  
where the children are at play  
her fingers feel her woollen jacket on the chair

and if you could hold time in a photograph  
it would be caught in this moment forever  
in a picture of complete happiness



### **Animal Accident<sup>1</sup>**

Empty night road  
stars with the moon off centre.  
Talking of people met, then  
bigger than a Qantas<sup>2</sup> tail plane  
highlighted by car light  
it was before the windscreen.

Inevitable as judgement day  
Tony shouting '*kangaroo*'  
the brake screech  
rubber hot into the road  
and thud!  
Shocked stillness.

Dark paddocks alongside  
the parked car steaming  
and we on centre stage  
enter the evening chill.

## Landscape

Inspect the damaged bonnet,  
radiator intact and car driveable.

The roo lying in right hand lane  
motionless except for a watery eye  
alive to our movement.

Dragging the broken body  
clearing the road for traffic  
streaking her wet internals.

Our car disappears.  
The countryside reclaims the night.  
The grass verge cradles a dying animal.

There will be no flowers.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>*This poem was based on a personal encounter with a kangaroo and thanks to Tony for help in dealing with the situation.*

<sup>2</sup>*Qantas - Australian airline. Accidents involving kangaroos are common in rural areas of Australia. An organisation called WIRES (Wildlife Injury Rescue Emergency Service) exists to help injured animals.*

## Landscape



*Caseys Beach Batehaven, New South Wales*

### Winter Sea

applique on applique of dulling light  
washes the bland sky-sea merge  
into an ever increasing dark

spates of seaweed disgorge a thick edge  
the lonely remnants of empty days  
the late afternoon drifts to an early close

finally the beach is lost from sight  
but an intermittent sigh continues  
like a sallow woman refusing death

### **Stopping One Day**

I remember one day in June.  
The height of summer and the sun  
still rising on one of those days  
that calls all nature into song.

Biking the back lanes of the Hampshire countryside.  
Stopping on a bridge over a stream  
the clear sparkling chatter below, while beyond  
the fields praising their contentment.

### **Footnote**

*It was one of those startling English summer days in June. The sun stretching and all nature responded as I cycled down the lane thinking of my future. I stopped on a narrow bridge over a little stream totally intoxicated with the joy of life. It is an image I have retained in my mind.*



*Daintree Rain Forest, Northern Queensland*

### **Daintree Drowning**

as on the moon untouched  
we step into sifting winter rain  
sixty million years of rainforest wilderness  
the endless down-drip green dispersion  
as dank moist exudes from the gorged undergrowth

in summer a metre can fall in half an hour  
our thoughts are awash by such enormity  
it is not man that disturbs the upright integrity  
water and wind weep down in continual amendment  
while trees fight back skywards in tropical adjustment

and each night we drown in the ceaseless sea-sound  
the wave-sigh flowing over our inert bodies  
while the canopy combines wet-shaking its intimacy  
with intermittent morse-splatter on metal,  
the window riddles and rattles in back-chat

on the last day, and well before dawn  
we arise in total darkness with wild expectation  
walking passed the estuarine crocodile sign  
we explore the open beach, our appointment  
with a cassowary is not reciprocated

### **Footnote**

*The Daintree in northern Queensland is known for rain and when we stayed there in basic bungalow accommodation we were not disappointed.*



*Rani*

### **On Wet Days**

on wet days morning scratches  
like a dog at your door

the close-in tight encounter of cloud  
the mesmerising knock of rain on tin  
mitigating any movement  
the bed hard to break  
the snug warmth of your own body  
gives a lulled contentment from just being

reluctantly you know you have to answer  
to open the door on your day

## Landscape



### Cape Foulwind<sup>1</sup> Walk

on a summer day winter crowds-in to submerge  
the sky and sea sweep together enclosing thoughts  
no imagination is needed for this foul named place  
this country continually perforated by wind driven rain

the weather deepens impregnating every footstep  
the old Gortex<sup>2</sup> coat starts to slowly dampen from the inside  
but the path is set along the cliffs to the promised sight of seals  
as wekas<sup>3</sup> scout around before darting to their rabbit hole existence

then that point is reached when saturated by the wet  
resigned acceptance takes authority absorbed to the conditions  
but when wailing guttural sounds waft up in the squall  
thoughts turn inside out to the rocks far below

oblivious of any impending storm, with thick skin immunity,  
at home, on vacant rock spaces, in waterhole pools,  
and indolent in the continual spray of the Tasman chunder,  
the seals slub around regardless, in elemental play

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Cape Foulwind is on the New Zealand west coast 20km from the town of Westport.

<sup>2</sup>Gortex – breathable waterproof material.

<sup>3</sup>Weka is a flightless New Zealand bird about the size of a chicken.



### **Only Two Lips**

who do you think you are  
standing so pert and penal  
asserting yourself in rich colour  
arrogant, obvious  
demanding my attention

well I'm not falling for it!  
such a brazen showing  
with your closed-mouth talk  
I will give you what you deserve -  
lip service, and just you wait

your day will come  
believe me, you will bend  
becoming quite dishevelled  
falling to kiss the ground  
in total disarray

### **Footnote**

*Written for a Canberra University of the Third Age Art Exhibition on the theme of spring flowers.*



*the goat in question*

### **The Latest Forecast**

*in response to the terrorist attack in Martin Place, Sydney in December 2014*

today will be fine with  
temperatures in the low twenties  
at 9:00am cloud will build up but  
the sun will break through by 10:00am  
to a full rich blue sky

just after mid-day clouds from the south  
will enter with the chance of just a little rain  
expect about 3-4mm in the form of light drizzle  
if you live in suburbs to the west of Main Street  
expect only a touch of moisture

the skies will be totally clear again by 3:00pm  
the mild temperatures will continue ...

early this morning Mr R G  
who always takes his dog for a walk first-thing  
was seen walking back home along Ocean Road  
accompanied by a well-endowed billy goat  
currently there is no explanation ...

### **Footnote**

*Published on the NarratorInternational website.*

## Landscape



*early morning at Caseys Beach  
Batehaven, New South Wales*

### **Awake My Love**

Take my hand a bird is singing  
golden touch of light is ringing  
morning breathes above the sea  
promise kept for you and me.

Gentle wind is slowly lifting  
misty cloud a veil uplifting  
voices rise into the day  
give response to what they say.

Strive to serve to love the living  
gift on gift enhance the giving  
whisper softly in my ear  
precious words I need to hear -

Now evening rain is softly falling  
sealing both our love and loving.



## **Death and Life**



### **The Breaking of the Drought**

*remembering Max*

there is a certain feeling to the day  
that something will happen

the air massing, with no colour to the sky  
sifting itself inside out in turmoil  
but the cloud disperses  
dissipating expectation

the sun is quick to return  
stretches headstrong to the horizon  
hard pressing its flat horror  
the stunted scrub squeeze-dried

bent over double in submission  
the ghost wrap of the winter crop  
rattles its dead prayers to the wind  
his harvester idle for the season

the long wait begins again  
that endless wait for change  
day after day of disciplined ritual  
waiting for a break in the heavens

in the tomorrow that never came  
at dawn in the patched shadow  
with the sky groping to contain itself  
he walked to the back shed

a sudden, sharp crack-echo  
the air shocked still  
and it is over,  
too soon the family will find  
and the endless cry

**Kind Death: Keeper of Your Word**

*only in death is truth known*

At daybreak we arrive together.

An upside-down slap engenders the mandatory cry.  
The mother-sweet sigh before the coming of maiden aunts.  
Joy beams across the sun-drenched room.

You rejoice at my birth or is it your own?  
Attached for life a mutual respect will develop.  
A kind of friendship forms while others fall away, forget.  
Who am I? You know who I am!

Close your eyes,  
I am with you always.

.....

(i) On 1 May 1947 Evelyn McHale jumped off the top of the Empire State Building. The first sentence of her suicide note -

*'I don't want anyone in or out of my family to see any part of me.'*  
demanded disappearance from the face of the earth.

Her body rested on a crumbled car roof as though lying on a lounge.  
It is her face that stuns; a sense of the sublime. Four minutes later a student photographer captured her composed serenity. Her image spread across the world to be immortalised by Andy Warhol<sup>2</sup>.

(ii) His rural village is far from Saigon. Every day he walks past his future with the reverence of ritual. He is too old for labour.  
His son now works the family rice field  
but he can still tend the plot reserved for him.

The covered shrine protects his parents.  
Simple flowers neatly placed are a daughter's daily duty.  
Incense is burnt, palms of hands unite and a dignified bow.  
Soon it will be his turn to shake hands with his ancestors.

(iii) Antiochus Epiphanes<sup>3</sup> has despatched his brothers.  
The youngest Maccabee<sup>4</sup> awaits his fate.  
His mother stands behind him unmoved from her persuasion.  
Trusting himself and the certainty of his faith his decision is easy.

It is his special time of grace.  
He moves forward into the fire.  
And with a joyful heart, smiling  
his eyes aflame, burning, into the sun.

.....

and the words said in advance  
'thank you' ... 'thank you' ... 'thank you'

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Evelyn McHale. A photography student, Robert Wiles, was at the scene of the suicide and took a photograph of McHale's body as it lay on the car. It was widely circulated, her suicide labelled the most beautiful.

<sup>2</sup>Andy Warhol used a repetitive grid of 16 images from Wiles' photograph in his painting *Suicide (Fallen Body)*, 1962.

<sup>3</sup>Antiochus Epiphanes, A Greek king (175 BC - 164 BC) known for persecuting the Jews.

<sup>4</sup> Maccabees – a Jewish group – reference to the martyrdom of seven Jewish brothers, their mother and teacher.

**America Beautiful**

the torn sky repairs  
jet scream silence  
searing desert diminishes  
smoldering buildings disappear  
their life left ruptured  
stinking in the sun

her mother protected the shrapnel  
her brother dead in the dust  
but she is still breathing  
unknowing so much  
at six months  
alive

will hate dictate?  
will the gun be her gospel?  
and what will she know  
of beautiful America  
foreign from first breath  
on a day of independence

4 July 2007

## Death and Life

### Release Me

*tired with all these to restful death I cry  
with apologies to Shakespeare, sonnet 66*

the military plane is unseen  
high above the sea  
her seatbelt is unlocked  
she is taken to the cargo door  
without ceremony, a rush of cold air

falling ... falling ... falling she falls  
like an angel

stop world! I want out

I had no choice  
I was sent on this journey with a kiss  
wrapped in warmth, some might even say love  
seemingly there was some portent  
a sense of being carried in the flow  
moving in creation's active pulse

falling ... falling ... falling she falls  
like an angel

where there was beauty -  
    where there was faith -  
        where work held a distraction -  
            where honour was head high -  
                where respect gave value -  
                    where duty gave a pride -  
                        where nature's eye was clear -  
                            where virtue was untainted -  
                                where art showed merit -  
                                    where strength was steel -

falling ... falling ... falling she falls

but that thin line of blood connecting all humanity  
finest cover woven of eternal love  
invisible safety net  
the only release

## **At The End of the Day**

*remembering Ron*

the last time he went to church  
he couldn't sneak out for a fag  
slip into a secret sleep in the sermon  
do crosswords as a choir boy  
or wonder at the fruit on Mrs Brimacombe's hat  
no, this time it was decidedly different

he had to lie back in silence  
but at least he had his own space  
and for once in his life  
he had himself to himself  
with no one to make demands  
and today there was no offering to organise

he didn't hear all the talk and testimonies  
the subject matter a little too familiar  
he would have been embarrassed  
appropriate that this was hidden from him  
though he would have appreciated  
the playing of the piano by his grandson

more than eighty summers were moulded in his being  
cucumber sandwiches, church fetes  
the odd game of tennis with other parishioners  
family camps at the beach, fishing trips  
and card games to the early hours  
yarns and cards very much his game

eighty winters of fireside fellowship  
in the communion of church circles  
but he hadn't been one for academia  
*'they could keep all them books!'*  
God was within, to be experienced  
always part of his daily dialogue

but the service was now ending  
the church reclaiming an austere chilliness  
the congregation quietly departing  
into bright light and morning sun  
his grandson last, turning  
shutting the heavy church door



View from Suicide Seat, Weston Park, Canberra

*Although the world is full of suffering*

*It is full also of the overcoming of it*

Helen Keller (inscription)

### **No Emergency Now**

on this early forsaken morning  
the sun is yet to make impression  
with no warmth to this part of day

there are no children floundering out of parental eye  
nor bathers out of depth in deep distress  
the life-line stands redundant in the chill air

winter removes  
nature takes a deep breath

across the far side of the lake  
the wind stirs life to water  
people collect at a picnic shelter

from the dead-still of a reflective moment  
I move away into the living morning  
and shake off these lines that entangle

## The Fragrance at Flanders

This was not scented Alps  
where nothing but the daylight changes,  
nor descending by the Starnberger See<sup>1</sup>  
after early exercise, strolling into  
the Hofgarten to drink coffee with friends  
as unbridled talk merges  
with the expanse of morning.

Nor was this a plunge  
into a Bloomsbury morning  
of Clarissa<sup>2</sup> opening French windows  
to the breath of a summer day. Nor a  
blackbird singing in the daze of early light,  
or the buying of flowers while thoughts distract  
to the arrangement of a party.

In Flanders, in a half-born morning  
body after body fell  
indiscriminately into mud.  
Each man glad to take their final leave,  
exuding a common stench  
until it accumulated in a message  
that couldn't be ignored.

For a brief moment  
there was a lull in the fighting  
as the men were buried.  
And for once there was sensitivity  
as if Christ walked out of dead flesh  
to shake hands with both sides -  
or perhaps just nature self-correcting.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Reference to T. S. Eliot and *The Waste Land* Starnberger See – a large lake near Munich.

<sup>2</sup>Reference to Virginia Woolf and *Mrs Dalloway* (Clarissa).

*At Anzac cove on the 19 May, (1915) Turks made a massive attack to drive the Anzacs off the peninsula. The attacking troops suffered heavily, losing over 3000 dead before daylight. An armistice was arranged on 24 May to bury the Turkish dead rotting in no man's land.*

*The Defence of Anzac – Australian War Memorial*

**A Breath of Air**

*for Janice*

*you saw me before I was born,  
the days allotted to me  
had all been recorded in your book,  
before any of them ever began.*

*Psalm 139 v16*

a breath of air  
one breath  
one breath of life, and gone

untainted by this world  
your fragile existence  
held the form of a perfect body  
gave a testimony to life

a value magnified  
in the painful enormity  
of the shattered lives of family  
in the struggle  
of your precious gift

a glimpse of being  
more important than the stars

a breath of air  
one breath  
one breath of life, and gone –

forever remembered

### **Our Last Visit to Mum**

I remember well the warmth of the morning  
the sun brilliant in a clear sky  
an early spring blessing  
all Sydney a dancing

we parked the car, pressed the button  
to announce our arrival, gain access  
to another world, Mum's world  
the closed world of the aged

so to her room and she asleep  
in the final cell of her being  
we sat until she stirred  
her eyes opened registering  
weeping involuntarily, we gave a tissue

she studied our presence while  
trying to fold the tissue carefully like linen  
then slowly formed her words ...  
*'you have a pretty face'*  
invoking her daughter's response ...  
*'you created it Mum'*

we walked her to a seat on the veranda  
with others in various vacuous states  
then leaving with a kiss implanted  
we looked back from the road

I remember the sun highlighting her face  
she waved to us - like her old self again  
being surprised by such vigour  
it stayed in my mind, she still had  
that touch of defiance

she wanted to say her goodbye  
as we departed for the crowded city  
but for her, a new journey  
and Dad was waiting



*a spontaneous memorial at the traffic lights  
Batehaven, New South Wales*

### **Sacred Ground**

*for Vlado*

defined by blood this place  
spring air taken away  
the lights set red

they came late Saturday  
to an empty intersection  
the outpouring of grief

messages and tied flowers  
personal tributes, names  
a photograph - their memorial

but more than a name was left  
ingrained in the ground  
the lights set red

### **Closure**

*in memory of a twelve year old who reluctantly self-detonated  
early to save lives*

don't slam the door kid, when you leave your room  
don't slam the door tight when you enter the night  
go quietly; go gently, as you enter the night  
go gently as you vanish from sight

at that age when there is no age  
and when the rolling of the years  
matters only to another  
and the inscription on the wall  
is left for others to recall  
and when they resurrect your name  
will they relinquish certain blame?  
let them shed their tears kid!

how can that have any meaning  
is there meaning in a flower?  
you knew exactly who you were kid!

don't slam the door kid when you leave your room  
don't slam the door tight when you enter the night  
go quietly; go gently, as you enter the night  
go gently as you vanish from sight

**The Two of Us**

like death  
the two of us  
you and me  
in the empty room

beyond the empty room  
the removal of dead flowers  
the quietening footsteps  
and the distancing of our tomorrows

beyond understanding  
within the very web of life  
the rising of the veil  
and the overlap of our eternities

beyond imagination  
in the comet-lit electric shock  
of the star spangled universe  
we restructure our heavens

and like death  
there's always  
the two of us -  
you and me

Watch  
this  
space

### **After Life and Death**

Life is an interruption  
an uncalled-for shock

as unexpected as green sky  
out of nowhere, an aberration

an explosion in a sea of darkness  
diminishing like a firework

Death is forever patient  
always content to play that waiting game

you could say the ultimate backdrop  
increasing prominence with age

and when the glass is emptied of the last grain  
returns the equilibrium of eternity.

Afterwards, thank God,  
we can all breathe a sigh of relief –  
and return to base camp!

## **With Other Poets**



**Bianca and Kate**

*considering the two ladies from 'The Taming of the Shrew'  
with apologies to Shakespeare*

Bianca, a summer's day do I compare  
thou art pure softness and so tender fair  
as billowing clouds drift slow across the sky  
while summer's heat falls tepid to the eye  
sometimes too soft your shallow nature seems  
your life you swallow as in empty dreams  
everything to everything sweet to sweet effect  
there's nothing such sponge being can deflect  
as mist evaporates with each rising day  
so everything in you fades its fading way  
it is perhaps you act this way by choice  
your choice to end in whisper of a voice  
so long as man can breathe or eyes can see  
your being is a total loss in me

Kate, completely winter's day the same  
thou art deepest black in all disdain  
the violent rage of battering storm  
the path you take as daily norm  
and thy eternal winter does not fade  
no passion lost or cheap parade  
you shout and scream a constant yell  
in all you meet you give pure hell  
but beneath the scowling winter rain  
there is a hidden quiet, a soft refrain  
though never would thou give as choice  
that whisper of your other voice  
so long as man can breathe or eyes can see  
your blackness shines reality in me

**Footnote**

*The 'Taming of the Shrew' is a delightful play on the duality of the female character. This poem was written as a performance piece for a University of the Third Age Shakespeare appreciation course.*

**In Gratitude**

*on Sylvia Plath's birthdate 27 October 2001*

time to stir the blue water  
a fixed star radiates  
the coffin lies wide open  
time to forget the idle prattle  
a soft peace wind comes  
from afar there is a sound  
the indefatigable hoof-taps flame  
all else is lost  
an angel descends



### **In Remembrance**

*on Sylvia Plath's birthdate 27 October 2007*

poppies, ambulance poppies  
caught in unseasonable warmth  
stragglers of the stubble

an untimely October showing  
buttoned black unseeing  
breathe out their reminder

a present of such enormity  
where bones or a button would suffice  
becomes a birthday gift<sup>1</sup>

this eyeless blood flap of memory  
soaks through the stopped pages  
in the back-drip of the years

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Reference to 'Poppies in October' (27 October 1962), *Sylvia Plath Collected Poems*.

*Both these Sylvia Plath poems were published on the Sylvia Plath Forum Website.*

**The Healthy Worm**

*with apologies to William Blake*

O worm, thou art 'earthy!  
the visible flower  
that shines in the light  
of the bright day

has raised from thy bed  
of rotten decay  
and opened her face  
from thy composted waste



### **Paging Geoff**

*for Geoff Page on reaching 70*

while you paginate all your textual time  
we try to read between the written line  
as the allotted chapter closes in your book  
we now take time out for a closer look

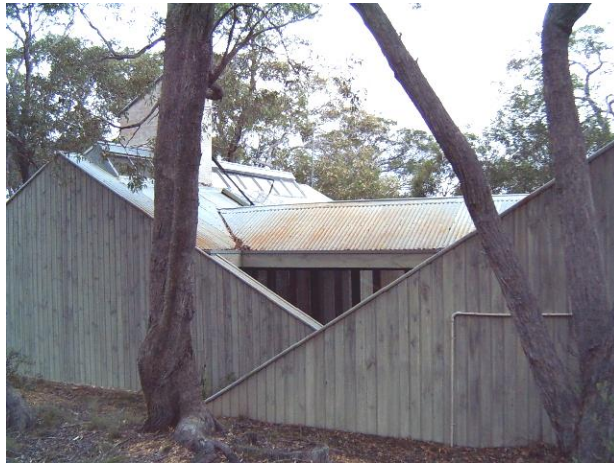
we know that the page is far from complete!  
but the lines you have inked you can't delete  
so what is the story so far offered?  
so what exactly has been proffered?

abundant poetry of great distinction  
in bounded works that defy mere fiction  
for the text manipulated by the page  
are words of wonderment that will not age

and may your own book close far from now  
with no appendicitis at that final show

### **Footnote**

*This sonnet was written for Canberra poet Geoff Page and published in the Canberra Times at the time of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. The photo above is more recent taken in November 2015 courtesy of Maureen Scutter.*



*Edge – the former home of Judith Wright  
near Braidwood, New South Wales*

### **Edge Walk**

*Meredith McKinney led a walk through her Mother's property  
at the 'Two Fires Festival' – Braidwood, 21 March 2005*

between Budawangs and Little River  
scratchy soil on dry eastern rocky ridge  
where hip-high she-oaks<sup>1</sup> hide the way  
and rare boronias<sup>2</sup> bloom  
we come to walk with Meredith

who came here thirty years ago  
the moving image conveyed by her words  
confronts our current view  
no major fires have ravaged  
early wet years then continual dry

the scars left are from man and mining  
mercury poison dissipates  
growth claims back vacant diggings  
old shafts provide shelter for ferns  
and Edge<sup>3</sup> itself designed to fit this framework

we walk down from the ridge  
ancient rock speaks from the slope  
unknown meaning except perhaps old Nellie<sup>4</sup>  
last of her tribe to walk this land  
who feasted on mussels from the river

we stop where the family once camped  
to join the bush, swim in the rock pools  
and sensitive to the tent print left behind -  
today the water is out of sight  
but cupping hand to ear there is a chatter

Meredith reads the poem River Bend<sup>5</sup>  
wattle caught in autumn sun  
white eucalypt stands by Black Sally<sup>6</sup>  
then we pause, turn, walk back up the ridge  
while the azure kingfisher darts upstream

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> *casuarina nana*

<sup>2</sup> *boronia rhomboidea*

<sup>3</sup> *'Edge' was designed to mirror mining structure*

<sup>4</sup> *Nellie last of the 'Braidwood Tribes' part of the Yuin people*

<sup>5</sup> *River Bend – Judith Wright poem*

<sup>6</sup> *eucalyptus stellulata - distinctive brown trunk*



*Peter Porter 2004  
by Tony Clark (b. 1954)<sup>1</sup>  
synthetic polymer paint and permanent marker on canvas  
Collection: National Portrait Gallery, Canberra  
Purchased with funds from the Basil Bressler Bequest 2004*

**A Meta Metamorphosis** - a tribute to Peter Porter

Beyond unhappiness  
and the closing of the door  
a little stone slips from a pocket  
tumbles down each stair-step  
leading from the darkened room  
and comes to an uncertain rest,  
returning the equilibrium of eternity.

The potential energy is held fast,  
a gold vein in the inviolate rock  
and the voluble voice of a virtuoso

## With Other Poets

lives on in his volumes.  
Never one for self-proclamation,  
though other notables now aptly state,  
without any washing of words, -  
*'A king of the stay-aways'.*

And on the other side  
after the taxation of text,  
and beyond all insinuation  
perhaps there is a certain satisfaction  
and wry smile.

### Footnotes

*<sup>1</sup> Permission was obtained from both the artist and the National Portrait Gallery to include this image against this poem. The above image is not to be copied without the caption and not without the permission of the artist.*

*I have used words in association with some of Peter Porter's poems - in particular from his poem 'What I have written I Have Written' with obvious reference to the source of those words. He was known to be a rather depressive person. He regarded poetry as potential energy. In that regard any energy release will be dependent on future readers of his work – as the same goes for all art.*

**Fathers and Sons**

*in response to 'Mothers and Daughters' by David Campbell*

the brash boys we dated  
are in their forties,  
their handsome sons  
have stolen their strength;

and with arrogant stride  
in cool contempt,  
they flaunt their fathers' wisdom  
with their fathers' features.

**Go Gentle and Enjoy Your Last Day**

*reversing the Dylan Thomas poem 'Do not go gentle into that good night'*

go gentle and enjoy your last day  
focus not on the loss of your sight  
give a smile as you pass quietly away

a wise man knows how to play  
knows exactly what is indeed right  
go gentle and enjoy your last day

a good man accepts the pathway  
as he enters the door of the night  
give a smile as you pass quietly away

a brave man shows strong display  
knows it useless in giving a fight  
go gentle and enjoy your last day

a grave man will rise up to say  
*'the end is turning quite bright'*  
give a smile as you pass quietly away

so to all I earnestly pray  
savour the disappearing light  
go gentle and enjoy your last day  
give a smile as you pass quietly away



## **Miscellany**



**Red Hat**

soft satin and velveteen  
shiny glitter in between  
ostrich feathers to catch the eye  
*'look - look at me'* you cry

brimming bright with face aglow  
you are here to steal the show  
you bubble by bright and sure  
doyenne of the dancing floor

focal point for fun and play  
for excitement head this way  
and at the end of your twirling day  
carefully you're boxed away

### **Anointing Ann Anonymous**

when she was a child  
and she was quite sure  
that no one was looking  
she picked up a stick  
to scratch in concrete  
*'I was here'*

each day  
as she walked to school  
she would see her work  
and laugh to herself  
no one would know it was her

in her teenager years  
she had that teenage crush  
and melting against his name  
cleared the dust on his car  
with words that only she could write  
*'I love you'*

She thought he really knew  
but she would never tell,  
in later years  
when thinking about him  
she would laugh inside  
with a little embarrassment

she had a long and ordinary life  
a husband, children  
and memories to drown  
and if she could paint the sky  
these would be her words  
*'life is beautiful'*

## Miscellany

before she died  
and with a knowing smile  
she left these words  
especially for you ...

*'I was here  
I love you  
life is beautiful'*

© Ann Anonymous

### **Footnote**

*This poem was published with other poems by the 'Yass Valley Writers' in a local anthology.*

### **Men Shedding**

he dies  
a little every day  
by the things he used to do

from digging  
up the veggie garden  
to tying up a shoe

while his children  
tell him constantly  
to behave and not to stew

he remembers  
in his childhood days  
of reaching for the sky

that burst  
of first excitement  
with each new thing that he would try

but now he's brought  
back down to earth  
as the old tasks pass him by

and soon everything  
that he once could do  
he just can't do again

and he'll wake up  
one sad morning  
the final task upon his brain

then, sad to say,  
he forgets that too,  
it'll be his last refrain

### **Gran Always Called Her Joy**

Gran always called her Joy, not Joyce  
a cousin had contacted her  
that was a few years after Gran died  
he said he had done this family research  
he told her she had another aunt  
an unknown lady who had died recently  
apparently Gran had had a daughter  
that was before Gran married Granddad  
and before another seven children  
her cousin thought she would be interested  
he thought it right to let all the family know  
'a dead branch coming alive so to speak'  
then she knew the reason for Gran's choice  
why Gran always called her Joy, not Joyce



*Flag waving ceremony – Australia Day Moruya 2007*

## **Australia Day 2007**

following the discovery of Botany Bay by Cook  
New South Wales was first established  
under the equanimity of Arthur Phillip  
with authority from Pitt, Lord Sydney and George III  
due to over-crowded English jails  
establishment of an experimental penal settlement

all were put in the same boat  
from that first fleet of eleven  
the convicts given a second chance  
and soldiers, free settlers, sailors, allocated  
equal rations, and a law that would be first  
to protect a convict before a thieving soldier

and so over the years much has been achieved  
from the federation of the States  
to bloodied Diggers at Anzac Cove  
continual Aboriginal recognition  
and respect for the culture of extensive migrant intake  
while prospering below the southern skies

## Miscellany

so Australia and Australians  
unite as one people, the  
diverse voices of many make one note  
ring out loud, to rejoice again  
at the founding of this fair nation  
and the rights of all its citizens

but today it is not a hulk in the Thames  
but a hiccup in an alien land that  
allows a man to lie naked  
before a foreign power, exposed to  
five years of violated rights –

the egalitarian spirit of Arthur Phillip  
gives rent to a cry of shame!

### Footnotes

*When this was written David Hicks, an Australian citizen, had been imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay for over five years without charges being made. Responsibility had been abdicated relegating legal treatment to a USA military tribunal. Other countries in similar circumstances protected the basic rights of their own citizens.*

*This poem was published on a David Hicks Website dedicated to give support in obtaining Australian justice.*

### **Ant Attack**

I wondered where he was  
then I saw him out in the garden  
by the garden path, watching a stream of ants  
as they crossed from one side to the other.

Suddenly, and quite unexpectedly  
he stamped his foot down hard.  
A little severe I thought,  
they didn't know what happened.

Then he saw me standing at the window,  
he read my eyes immediately -  
*'They can take it Dad'*  
as he leaved the ants to repair their path.

**A Token Life**

*currently Australia has more poker machines than any  
other country on a per capita basis*

they do not sigh, pass-judgement,  
back-talk, or give that evil eye  
but flash bright forever their acceptance  
passive, with patience unlimited,  
they wait disciplined in gaudy rows  
a friendly arm outstretched for contact

but if they could speak they would  
say that the kids are unattended,  
that the glass has been filled by  
the money planned for food, and that  
the sun is shining outside, and that time  
is devalued by a token life

### **Guidance from above**

Strapped to my wrist, button pressed  
jogging, walking or at rest  
every step is measured with precision  
on how I've run without derision.  
The heavens track from out in space  
where, how fast, my time and pace.  
My watch reports without a flaw,  
but perhaps, dear God, you can do more!  
I don't mean to be a little rude  
but I would like so much to improve.  
Could you give instructions to the letter  
on what steps to take so I do better?  
Now I'm not asking for heaven from you  
just a few seconds from my PB will do.

### **Footnote**

*Written for the ACT Veterans Athletics Club at the time GPS watches started to be used by members of the Club. I was amazed at how this benefited my jogging. All joggers look for improvement. A bit hopeful to expect the kind of improvement identified in this poem.*

**Mermaids Singing**

*I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each  
T. S. Eliot (Prufrock)*

morning like faith rises  
a blind man seeing the unseen  
while mermaids muster  
from their submarine love-land  
sky and sea differentiates  
into a sun splintered horizon  
light upon light building  
reinforcing form and colour  
breathing life from the depths  
the mermaids are on the move  
glistening fresh in open air  
sparkling at the sea's edge  
drowning the morning in song



**Passing Love**

blue and silver  
fish and sea  
you and me

blue and blue  
gone away  
sad today



### **Finding Happiness<sup>1</sup>**

Happiness cannot be found  
by searching for it on the ground.

Happiness is up to you -  
say to life – I do love you!  
Then by the little things you do  
happiness may come to you.

For happiness is in each day.  
It's up to you to show the way.  
Your inward smile can spread its face  
to bring joy to the human race.

And happiness cannot be found  
by walking with your head set down.  
So look up into that bright blue sky  
And love life with your head held high

#### **Footnote**

<sup>1</sup>*Written for a University of the Third Age course on 'Happiness'.*

Frivolous

Frivolous

**Frivolous**

Frivolous

**Metal Jazz at Moruya**

*Moruya Jazz festival - late night session held at the Golf Club*

razzle-dazzle swang box  
the squeeze fat accordion  
sends out swish notes  
in black and white deference  
to the club's swinging swingers

strange shapes fire dance  
the flash patchy floor  
in a jam jamming frenzy

the spotlight switches  
to the swash ring ding zither  
of the silver washboard  
shingling it's slithers  
in a swashbuckling zing

hovering notes hook waiting  
as the brass breaks in low  
with a fart blasting blow

dull clink of beer glasses  
from the shadowy cave  
are black background sound  
at the back of the room

the circumscribed circle  
of hidden eyes follow  
all silly movement  
with muted mirth –

while in a matter of hours  
balls will skid skywards

**Footnote**

*This was a spontaneous response trying to use a 'jazz improvisation' technique in the creation of a poem. And in particular variation on words that resonated to the jazz.*



*Corrigans Beach, Batehaven, New South Wales*

### **Early Morning Run at Batehaven**

open the door quietly as you do up a shoe  
no light is needed; you know what to do  
close the door quickly before there's a stew  
reach down and tie the other one too  
skip down the steps to the grass and the dew  
open the gate - it opens to you

you're king of the morning of the dim empty street  
homes with front gardens are edge to your feet  
start moving slowly the cool air is sweet  
far now forgotten the warmth of the sheet  
you acknowledge another's 'good morning' greet  
hi John and hi Jane and I think that's old Pete

cross the road carefully to a track between trees  
providing a path through littered gum leaves  
while high overhead there's a hint of a breeze  
it moves with your body and bends with your knees  
then all of a sudden you announce a sharp sneeze  
the hanky's not handy but your shirt has two sleeves

out from the bush back to busier homes  
suburbia stirs as you stir up some stones  
children in school clothes and disinterested gnomes  
an elderly lady in bright purple tones  
while downward strides make mask to the moans  
of those tiring muscles and aging old bones

cross the park to breathe the beach and the sea  
the soft sand and sun sap away energy  
inquisitive dogs decide to roam free  
you join them and share in their found liberty  
the beach is the place, the best place to be  
but it's right at the road to end the journey

up the home hill, you're glad there's no more  
come the last corner, you slow but you're sure  
another run's done, one more to the score  
another run's done and you're done to the core!  
you swing open the gate; a note's pinned to the door  
'gone shopping today, be back about four'

**Footnote**

*I like to jog early in the morning and this course is great because of the variety of terrains.  
The run culminates with a stretch along Corrigans Beach, Batehaven and then a sharp up  
climb to home base.*

**He was not superstitious**

*'I am not superstitious' -*

He used to tell us all the time  
and he never cared about numbers  
you know birthdays and all that  
or writing meaning into anything that happened.

It was just a touch unfortunate  
that when we walked around the ladder  
he missed the paint but not the car.  
And in the ambulance with the siren blaring  
saying to the nurse - *'we all have to die one day'*.

But later all his family thought he was so unlucky  
for his death to happen on Friday the thirteenth.

### **March of the Killer Crabs**

*for Bill Mandle, the Pink Rock Poets at Moruya and the fight that took place  
against a charcoal plant in the local area*

above, all is blue sky and summer light  
unknowing any undercurrent in the day  
ships sail against the far horizon  
the breeze, a soft and gentle kiss  
the world dozes like an after dinner nap

below and unseen, slinking from Sydney  
taking their time to gorge the opposition  
killer crabs pick at their prey without remorse  
then wallow in the Bondi outfall wash  
before their relentless journey south

then steeling themselves off Wollongong waters  
they harden their shells for some gastronomic gobbling  
tanks full and ready to trundle  
they move over the rocks and the seaweed under  
creeping the depths with their daggers a dangling

Longbeach clacks to their sharpened claws  
snapping and cracking the timbers fall  
blocking up bush they build up battlements  
then charcoal their minds to make mischief at Mogo  
slide sideways seaward on their insidious sweep

but off Broulee beach there's a great blast  
a bird with a bill as big as Batemans Bay  
and magnificent mantle of precious pink rock  
cries – enough – back to base -  
you conniving clack tacking crustaceans

### **Seeking Revenge**

*for all nursery rhyme animals*

this morning I woke up dreaming  
when a browned-off cow  
put its head through my bedroom window  
uttered that she was tired of being milked dry  
and ready to jump both sun and moon  
in order to have a little fun

and on the fridge door  
there was a message from the cat  
said she had gone to London to see the Queen  
and that she might take a little boat-trip too  
and that I'd better check both the larder  
and my wallet

and before I could gather my thoughts  
twenty-four blackbirds started chirping  
in a long line on the telegraph wire  
saying they had escaped from the palace  
and were eying off my blackberries and apples  
and told me in no uncertain terms  
that I had better watch out !

**A silly burst of syllables**

*for children to understand syllables*

ten syllables equals four syllables

ten syllables equals four syllables  
equals ten syllables

which by itself equals six syllables  
which is ten syllables

which is six syllables  
which is six syllables  
which is six syllables

...

which is repetitive  
(which is six syllables)

1 April 2011

**Haiku<sup>1</sup> Pieces**

haiku is defined  
as seventeen syllables  
five seven and five

she wrote a poem  
in seventeen syllables  
attempting high coup

this dismal attempt  
after much laboured thought  
was put in the bin

.....

a grandchild playing  
a shoe-box full of dolls talk  
totally absorbed

.....

olive oil humour  
laughter lubricating life  
smoothing the journey

.....

pure gold in blue sky  
beauty of this risen day  
touches creation

.....

casting your shadow  
with each birth a use-by stamp  
mandatory attached

.....

tomorrow dark clouds  
surgeon and toes colliding  
temporary sun block

dependent upon  
the fine skills of the surgeon  
faith in his fingers

.....

### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> *A haiku in English is a very short poem following to a greater or lesser extent the form and style of the Japanese haiku. The first and last lines have five syllables and the middle line has seven syllables.*

*A typical haiku is a three-line observation about a fleeting moment involving nature. I have taken a more liberal approach.*

*A number of haiku can be linked to form a set. Haiku are usually read twice when read to an audience.*

## Four Fun Limericks

### Against the Apologetic

I once knew a man from Macquarie  
wherever he went he said 'sorry'!  
I'm sorry to say  
he ended his day  
with one very enormous apology

### An Old Friend

I met an old friend I once knew  
who had skin a vivid dark blue  
I said '*are you cold*'  
he said '*no but old*  
*for my blood don't do what's its told*'

### Nose Spray

I once met a man from Hong Kong  
who had a nose exceedingly long  
that when he did sneeze  
there came a strong breeze  
that shook all the trees into song

### Brenda at Bridge

a Bridge player I know called Brenda  
unfortunately swallowed her agenda  
on every play  
she lost her way  
it was a clear case of a hidden agenda

### **Arthroscopic Attention**

Asclepius<sup>1</sup> please, I'm talking to thee  
I have a slight problem with a crook knee.  
My meniscus may need sort of mending  
because I'm getting pain when I'm bending.

Asclepius came with a fibre-optic tube  
and from my knee his rod did protrude  
while the snake-eye inside peered at the view  
sending images back to the surgical crew.

The video monitor blew-up the sad sight  
clearly portraying what wasn't quite right  
then on the other side with a snip and a snap  
a surgical instrument removed all the crap.

So if your meniscus is kind of sus  
repair is possible with minimum fuss!

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> *Asclepius - a god of medicine in ancient Greek religion and mythology*

*This sonnet was written as a thank you to my surgeon and to encourage others who might be contemplating such action.*



Spiritual

## **Spiritual**



## Yesterday and Today

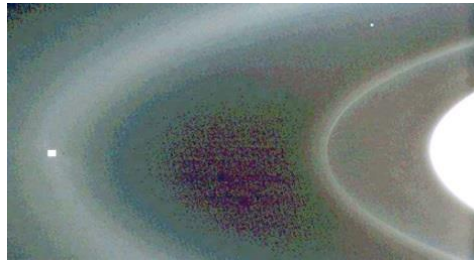
Yesterday God decided to take a holiday  
and I really can't blame Him at all, I mean  
He must have been a little disappointed  
with one of His projects going a little off track,  
and working twenty-four by seven over the  
centuries is, I imagine, quite demanding.  
I am sure God knows where to go for a break  
and I am sure He won't want us to turn up!

Today is a little different, I'm happy to report that  
the sun is breaking through threatening clouds and  
the waste-paper bin is empty, sprawled out on  
the desk are His original drawings, a little crumpled,  
maybe He believes things can be straightened out -  
perhaps He has far more faith than you or I.

### Footnote

*This poem was written after becoming totally depressed with the world. The news that night was negative, negative and negative. I thought to myself if there is a God and the World is his personal project then somehow things are not really going that well. Then of course the next day I became a little more positive!*

*Published on the NarratorInternational Website.*



*Earth from Saturn  
using an image courtesy of NASA<sup>1</sup>*

### **An Unearthly Perspective**

The photograph shows  
the beauty of Saturn's rings  
taken at that point in Cassini's orbit  
with the sun blocked behind.

Earth is a speck of light left of centre  
when the image was first released  
some one thought it a blemish  
and tried to remove it ...  
someone else did likewise,  
that was a long time ago before  
deciding it was not a good idea  
but the rings are quite stunning.

She turns and grins ... *'not quite'* ...  
the mirror grins back without thought  
a hair out of place is snipped  
*'I'm off ... see you tonight'* she calls  
a reply from the open door  
*'... your hair looks nice today'*.

Seven billion bodies  
exploding within a pinhead  
pricking the consciousness of matter  
painfully incubating a microscopic eternity  
while everything that is you and me  
is absorbed in the space that is hidden within.

Many light years distant on another planet  
a strand of hair holding her DNA is unravelled  
recreating the beauty of her heavenly body  
image and image maker merge  
something spectacular –  
beyond the stars.

**Footnote**

<sup>1</sup> *The 'Earth-speck' has been enlarged in this image.*

**A Quiet Day at St Mark's<sup>1</sup>**

*a Canberra quiet-day retreat*

Nikolai presses the pause button  
while the world moves on  
the drone of a plane high above

the wind wrestles the trees  
everyone taking time  
the crunch of gravel underfoot

solitary figures seek communion  
for a settling of the soul  
while a lost name-tag dances the grass

the chill air disturbs  
any attempted after lunch sleep  
but warmth in the cut short sun

someone's dropped programme  
flaps across open ground  
words whisked away by wind

the Carillion chimes the closing hour  
a fat black crow waddles and laughs  
unruffled by the occasion

now to press the restart  
to place back Christ  
in the context of the world

**Footnote**

*<sup>1</sup>St Mark's is known as the religious precinct at Barton in Canberra. This poem was written after attending a 'quiet day retreat' on a winter day. It is quite surprising what you notice if there is no conversation between people. It is a way to promote awareness of both people and the immediate surroundings.*



*sunrise – Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra*

### **OMG<sup>1</sup> Just Imagine**

OMG just imagine life without Easter.

We need Easter, holidays might disappear!  
Not to mention those rabbit-eared children  
running sweet-toothed through our classrooms.  
It may be egg-centred commercialisation  
but there's no harm in a bit of gaiety!

Even if Easter is a little chocolate coated  
Christ always seems to have a presence,  
whether in the background or foreground  
depending of course on your point of view!

But without Easter life is a momentary firing  
a captivating firework display none the less  
but perhaps a series of confused sparks  
dying in a sea of perpetual darkness.

Easter Day

### **Footnote**

<sup>1</sup> *OMG – oh my god ... written for a Facebook audience*

**I let your beauty**

I let your beauty  
touch my mind  
and stand stunned,  
in awe.

Eternity comes  
and goes,  
and still I gaze  
in wonder.

My cup fills over  
and tears of joy  
distil as rain  
as a silver mist.

You are here today,  
tomorrow, forever  
bringing new life,  
creating all that is good.

**My Nothing God**

my God is, well, like nothing  
nothing's of value  
there's nothing quite like nothing

when friends, fortune fade  
and a pocket empty made  
there's still something  
the golden coin nothing

nothing's of value  
and nothing's more important  
capitalise on nothing –  
to gain everything



*Wenzel Peter's Painting: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden  
courtesy of the Vatican Museum*

## **Paradise Ignored**

*on viewing Wenzel Peter's Painting 'Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden'*

*greater love has no man than that he lay down his life for a friend  
John 15 v13*

Images of more than two hundred animals  
perfected in paint in unreal detail  
carefully positioned in a still of verdant harmony  
show an intricate love of the animal world  
and for the very marvel of creation  
in all its great variety and abundance.

For one brief moment  
we are invited into this paradise  
but as we enter this unreal world

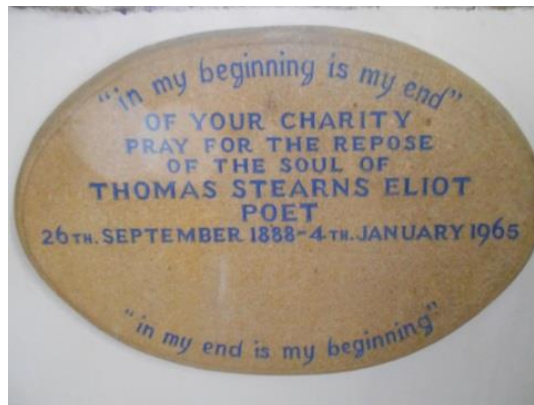
there is a certain foreboding  
an animal premonition prevails ...

a flock of birds stir into the air  
scurry above the tree of knowledge  
give the danger warning  
the wise owl sits atop another tree  
knowing of the unknown perhaps  
that knowledge is truly a dangerous thing  
the cockerel at the foot of Eve  
exhibits a full throttle crow –  
an ominous omen  
and the monkey appears to taunt  
all ready in mischievous mood  
proffering the reason for the disquiet.

At Adam's right hand  
dogs sit true to the letters of their name.  
Below the left foot of Eve  
lambs are bleating their concern, for ...

Eve has left the paradise party  
locked herself out to a deadly world  
her skin is turning a shade pale  
now separated from eternal life  
alone, cold, knowing she must die  
makes her desperate plea for company.

But Eve is Adam's very own flesh and blood  
his one and only friend and in a state of total need  
can he not ignore! - he has no choice -  
surely love and surely God  
would equally agree.



*'in my beginning is my end ... in my end is my beginning'*  
T. S. Eliot's Memorial Plaque – East Coker Church, Somerset

## Revolution

James Ussher<sup>1</sup> calculated the starting point. About 4004 years before the birth of Christ, apparently at 9:00am on a Monday morning in late October.

Thomas Guy<sup>2</sup> then annotated his holy bibles enforcing this fact within the Church and for years the populace believed his added words. Then Darwin learnt that truth lies in geometry and that a circle has no start or finish.

But if you believe in the 'Big Bang' theory then everything is gradually losing energy. Being in my latter years this is understandable, my circulation not being what it once was.

However, we do have plenty of time up our sleeves for our best scientists have predicted it will take several billion years before the sun expands and drags the Earth within its heated arms.

So there may come a day when everything stops.  
Perhaps at 11:15pm on a Saturday in September –  
after the late night news.

### Footnotes

*1 James Ussher (4 January 1581 – 21 March 1656) was the Irish Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland between 1625 and 1656. He was a prolific scholar and church leader, famous for his chronology that sought to establish the time and date of the creation.*

*2 Thomas Guy (1644–1724) was a British bookseller, speculator and official publisher of bibles and from his wealth became the de facto founder of Guys Hospital in London.*

*Published on the NarratorInternational Website.*

**Be Inspired by Christ**

be inspired by Christ!  
live by his ever-living example  
that in your own life  
you too may become Christ-like!

and maybe somewhere someone in need  
will be inspired by the Christ in you  
that you will come alive  
in the Christ of another

### **A Mother In-law Problem**

it is not a well-known fact  
that Eve won the Miss Universe Contest  
three years running

it was planned out from the beginning  
the whole thing ribbed from above  
stage-managed to perfection

nobody said '*she was one in a million*'  
so she always took top honours  
the decision a one-off personal affair

how could Adam vote for another  
for he had magnetic affinity for dark hair  
and he couldn't vote for a blonde unseen

but the fourth year Adam simply had to abstain  
it was all Eve's doing in the cookery department  
an unwise decision to make apple pie

for how could she emulate her Mother-in-law  
when the recipe wasn't God-given,  
perhaps she just thought she could do better!

a bit unfair on poor old Adam though –  
for he never ever looked at another woman  
and always treated her as his very own body

so now we're all eating Eve's humble pie  
and whether we realize we're married or not  
we can blame the Mother-in-law for dictating our lot

**Home**

The inviolate temple  
core of her being.  
A sacred sanctuary  
built over a lifetime.  
Impenetrable gold.

The tent-door flaps  
restless in the morning breeze.  
The fine membrane,  
a silken shadow in the sun,  
memory to her being –

she has gone home.

### **Song of the Universe**

every voice  
endless rapture  
your

voice  
oration instilled  
creating eternity

#### **Context**

*I wanted to create a poem of ten words, ten most meaningful words against my personal philosophy. I broke the words into two connected five word stanzas. To easily remember these words I used the first letters of the ten words to make the first two words - 'every' and 'voice'. I wanted to stress the importance of being inclusive. We all have a voice in the universe – at the same time paying homage to that wonderful unseen voice of the spiritual creator of life.*



## Poetry

*poetry, like all words*

*define who we are*

*life*

*the nature of existence*

*the human condition*



### **Growing the Poetry**

*oranges and lemons*

*say the bells of St Clement's<sup>1</sup>*

Poetry is a rather difficult fruit to grow.  
First things first, you must be very mindful  
of the nutrients needed for germination.  
Then, of course, you have to wait.

It's no good rushing into things. When  
the ground breaks be prepared to spend  
time nurturing. Pruning is often needed.  
Letting light into the branches is essential  
to ensure the whole tree benefits.

Eventually fruit will start to form.  
It is up to you to taste first. Then you  
might feel like sharing with a friend.

At harvest time you could market  
hoping to find others who appreciate  
what you have to offer. But beware  
not everybody loves lemons!

*when will you pay me?*  
*say the bells of Old Bailey<sup>1</sup>*

### **Footnote**

<sup>1</sup> *Traditional English Nursery Song*

## Poetry

unearths  
the best words  
the supreme fiction  
must be as well written as prose

conceived and composed in the soul  
the spontaneous outflow  
a way of taking life  
the breath and finer

shall tune her sacred voice  
in the pity  
the feverish fit  
the flower of experience

a spark of inextinguishable thought  
the opening and closing  
should surprise  
should be great

the achievement  
makes nothing happen  
what is lost in translation  
at bottom a criticism of life

## Footnote

*This is a 'Cento poem'. A poetical work wholly composed of verses or passages taken from other authors, disposed in a new form or order. Each of the twenty lines uses text taken from quotes by famous poets on the nature of poetry - Keats, Wordsworth, Auden, Frost, Owen, Hunt, Pound, Coleridge, Finch, Shelley, Sandburg, Arnold, Hill and Stevens.*

*I have shown the text from the quotes as a separate context page ...*

## Poetry

### Context

Geoffrey Hill (English Poet) – Poetry **unearths** from among the speechless dead

Coleridge – Poetry equals **the best words** in the best order

Wallace Stevens – Poetry is **the supreme fiction**, madame.

Ezra Pound – Poetry **must be as well written as prose**

Mathew Arnold – Poetry is **conceived and composed in the soul**

Wordsworth – Poetry is **the spontaneous overflow** of powerful feelings

Robert Frost – Poetry is **a way of taking life** by the throat

Wordsworth – Poetry is **the breath and finer** spirit of knowledge

Samuel Johnson – Poetry **shall tune her sacred voice**, and wake  
from ignorance the Western World

Wilfred Owen – Poetry is **in the pity** of war

Anne Finch (English Poet) Poetry's **the feverish fit**, the overflowing of  
unbounded wit

Leigh Hunt – Poetry - I take to be **the flower of** any kind of **experience**

Shelley – Poetry - a single word may even be **a spark of inextinguishable thought**

Carl Sanburg (American poet) - Poetry is **the opening and closing** of a door, ...

Keats – Poetry **should surprise** by a fine excess

Keats – Poetry **should be great** and unobtrusive

Carl Sanburg (American poet) – Poetry is **the achievement** of the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits

W. H. Auden – Poetry **makes nothing happen**

Robert Frost – Poetry is **what is lost in translation**

Matthew Arnold – Poetry is **at bottom a criticism of life**

**Poets Are ...**

lovers of cats who  
create in cosy comfort as  
they contemplate their  
word collections closely

methodical classifiers  
neat and correct to  
the core of their creations,  
prompt, precise, perfidious

park their personal slippers  
in the most appropriate of places,  
cataloguers and custodians  
of the finest of the fine

dog lovers that dither  
dirty, disgusting in their daily domesticity,  
Bohemian borrowers leaving books  
beneath breakfast bowls

authors of graffiti gracing  
grey begrudging buildings,  
frolickers of the gutter who  
grope in their grubbiness

producing profound ponderings  
in between all their pandering,  
beholders and believers  
faultless to the faith

you and me - definers of reality

**Footnote**

*This early duality poem reflects my inclusive philosophy. I was involved in programming at one stage in my life so I guess binary flowed into this text.*

**Words Waiting ...**

*'the genius of poetry must work out its own salvation in man' – John Keats*

words waiting  
for re-release  
awaiting eyes  
your mind  
for resuscitation  
to bring life again  
to share with you

**The Anonymous Poem**

the writing on the door  
an invitation to enter  
no one at home  
but left behind  
the faceless letters

complain or praise  
the forwarding address  
is in your hands  
these furnishings  
the homeless remnants

### Using Words

*based on a story by Coleridge<sup>1</sup>*

they walked up great Clyde Falls<sup>2</sup> way  
then thunderous water  
soaked their day

he gazed intently, looked for clues  
but couldn't think of what to say  
for any word was bound to lose –

but if one word he had to choose  
sublime's the one,  
the one to use

she too was mesmerized by might  
such waterpower  
such a sight -

but pretty was the word she used  
pretty defined her pretty views,  
pretty matched her pretty shoes

he wished she'd used another word  
then much more beauty  
he'd have heard

perhaps it was mere female ploy  
a move by her  
his thoughts destroy

### Footnote

<sup>1</sup>Coleridge led two friends to a waterfall. Upon reaching it, the first exclaimed, 'This waterfall is sublime!' and the second stated, 'This waterfall is pretty.' Coleridge looked down on the one who called it pretty – in his mind not the appropriate word.

<sup>2</sup>Clyde Falls refer to a series of waterfalls on the Clyde River in Lanarkshire Scotland.

## **Epilogue**

## Epilogue

## Epilogue

### **I Identified**

*in response to Shelley's poem 'Ozymandias'*

I am I, I am  
I am Ozie and a man  
I am, I am, an Ozie am  
King of Kings I am I am  
I also am you man I am  
I also am you woman am  
I am the you, you see -  
the I that is the you in me

### **Footnote**

*An emphatic personal response to the 'Who am I' question posed in Shelley's poem.*

## **Empathy**

I cannot see you as  
you knock upon my window  
I try  
all I have  
my eyes  
and, try as I may  
I do not see

I know you cannot hear me as  
I picture at your door  
you try too  
all you have  
your ears  
and, try as you may  
you do not hear

but in the motion of a silent voice  
you say you can imagine  
you say that you are able to,  
see what is meant

your insight may be enough  
to reach beyond  
to close the night  
for dawn to slowly break  
crystal  
clear

**You and Me**

*consciousness only grows through the  
communion of at least two entities*

in the fleeting moment  
that imperceptible touch  
of the you that is me  
and the me that is you

words fall short  
scattered fragments  
seek an understanding  
leaving the sky to the stars

and from this brief encounter  
in the forever that lasts an eternity  
love is never lost  
in the open book of life



## About the author

Richard originates from Hampshire, England. He is a retired public servant living in Canberra. In another life, as a statistician, he helped produce metrics in an attempt to define reality and now wishes to do the same through the use of text delighting in exploring how words define people and life. He enjoys analysing poetry as much as the process of creating poems and actively supports the local poetry scene in the running of University of the Third Age (U3A) poetry appreciation courses.

He is a freelance Internet Poet and his sites have been well-supported for many years. This Internet work is 'free to air' with the hope his poems challenge readers in different ways of thought.

His poems have been published in the *Canberra Times*, in local anthologies and publications and on the *Narrator International* Website. He has an affinity with Batehaven on the New South Wales south coast where he supported local poetry for two years while building a new home in Canberra following retirement.

He continues to disseminate his writing through the Internet with great satisfaction in knowing that others around the world read his work and occasionally make comment.

### Website Details –

<http://richard-outoftheblue.blogspot.com.au/2011/03/out-of-blue-home-post.html>

This site contains analysis and poems over the two year period from 2011 to 2013.

<https://mywordinyourear.wordpress.com/>

This is his current site for sharing poetry analysis and poems.



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