

SIGNS

e University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize

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Edited by Jen Webb and Donna Maree Hanson



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Vice-Chancellor's foreword

e University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize is now ve years old, and continues to attract excellent poets, both as entrants to the Prize and as judges. It continues, too, to be a truly international initiative: in each year, entries have come from across the globe and from nations whose languages, cultu heritage and literary traditions vary remarkably. is year the poets who submitted work to the Prize are located in 46 di erent nations, from regions as far- ung as Bulgaria and Barbados, Kazakhstan and South Korea. e judges, too, are both international and multicultural. is brings to the process a heightened awareness of both language and culture, and of how poetry operates in its many di erent contexts.

For this, the 2018 Prize, some 1,200 entries were received; judges Eileer Chong, Oz Hardwick and Moira Egan took on the task of whittling this group down to a longlist; and Head Judge Wendy Cope then read the 54 longlisted

Judge's report

Over the years I've judged quite a few poetry competitions. Sometimes there are very few good poems and it's easy to choose the best. When there are a lot of stron entries, the reading is more enjoyable and the judging more di cult. e standard of entries for this competition was high. My only disappointment, as a poet who often uses traditional forms, was that were few poems of this kind, none of them entirely successful.

'e angel in charge of creating the Earth addresses his cohort' became my front-runner as soon as I read it, and maintained that position despite sti

Winner

e angel in charge of creating Earth addresses his cohort

Who cares if more important worlds have been assigned to those more skillful, who make crusts that never crack, or plates too xed to creep

Don't envy them, those better makers; let them envy you, not doomed to mastery, still stunned by your mistakes, the broken pomp of cow, the fraying homespun jelly sh, the accidents of beauty, which, once realised, can never be forgotten or undone.

Michael Lavers

Runner-up

e grip

e mud crabs shadowboxed when my father prised them from wicker – lopsided nips that could sever a nger.

In the trap, they jostled like stones. I topped the cooler brimful of ice and seawater, morgue-cold.

My father fed them into the slush with a sous-chef's precision.

I watched their sparring slow.

Haymakers blurred to lurches, then quarter-inch twitches, then nothing. ey went under.

Drifting in the polar slurry the crabs made a sinister clacking. eir sleep was deep, deep.

Sometimes I'd reach in to stroke one – a blue-black granite chassis underlaid with a dgetry of limbs.

When it came time to butcher them, my father laid each on the jetty tenderly stroked the thorax

then drove his crabbing knife clean through the brain.

He said it was humane –

but for a moment they'd come alive again, legs unspringing their hinges, pincers grappling at air.

Shortlist

e only kid who invites everyone

Beside the blackboard, gold stars curl like drying star sh.

On my folder, cartoon salamanders eat cake: friends forever.

Teddy leans in the reading nook, matted face pressed to the wall.

e teacher's fan whirrs and whines. ere is no metal net to shield its blades.

Recess, everyone gets picked for ball except Bobbie, a boy whose clothes are always

new and smell like pickles. He doesn't like ball, and brings his own trucks.

Sometimes the toy's acceleration excites us, sometimes it sounds angry, like the driver

veered o road into a boulder pit at 90 miles an hour.

Up from her desk the teacher sways – how lucky we are, Bobbie has a surprise.

When I see his smile, it feels like the rst time I found a salamander under a rock.

He lifts the drop top desk, removes a column of deep purple, blue, and yellow envelopes

and places them, like a deranged Easter bunny, on every desk.

And nothing happens. We do math. e day winds down. Closing bell rings.

en, one by one, students rise, pinching their invitations.

I pick up the eggplant coloured envelope – in silver my name looks important;

I walk past Bobbie's desk, and toss it in with the others.

ey are so clean and soft in the shiny black trash

but one yellow edge has already begun to grow dark with the juice of a rotten apple core.

e invitations oat on still waves above last week's stars, each a rocket ship of good intention aimless in a clumsy cosmos that knows no reason.

Katie Bunero

Koko mourns her manx cat All Ball

Her room has souvenirs children worship, soft toys, story books & a cubbyhouse bed. e zoo furnishes it with steel-framed chairs & cupboards that can withstand earthquakes. After all, she weighs as much as a youngish mountain ash & has fteen times her trainer's strength. Penny can't imagine the sheer force of will needed to countermand gravity's sucker punch when Koko touches her cheek; the pounds per square inch of pressure that could shatter a human's femur like kindling does for rewood. e high windows are from an airy apartment or a church & bathe her in light. Her living space is somewhere between kindy & share house, but lacks the scent of friends. All her sprawled stu ed animals; the maned lion with its plastic-eyed caricature, bunnies trailing oppy ears, don't cut it by nineteen eighty-three. Koko's dolls are less than ape she realises & asks Penny for something real to love, pointing to the diagram of a manx kitten. cat gorilla have visit. What's been taken from the rescue cat, Koko gives back with tales of power, uses her new ability to nickname this creature, after the gorilla watches the kitten fall asleep on her altar-sized chest. A silver buoy caught in the swell of Koko's breathy black ocean; a grey snow ake that vibrates to the deep notes of her throat's tremulous funnel. e great ape's chiselheaded nger strokes the cat's head as its spine snakes into its own wagon-train circle. all ball the lowland gorilla decides. put on head.

e kitten lasts six months. Fixated on the enclosure door's broken syntax, one day the half-grown cat slips between the crack & disappears into oncoming tra c. Penny chooses not to show Koko all ball's body, but grief has its universal signs. frown cryfrown sad-cry-have sorry-have sorry-koko love all ball. When asked about where we go when we die Koko squeezes out the words, comfortable holegoodbye. A weight greater than her own mass takes her then for months, her window now letting in too much of the sad human world. Koko shuns visitors, signs for the curtains to be shut as in war; hurry drapes, hurry drapes. She understands sorrow is not something to be worn visibly; not an eye hat or a nose fake some mask a human being might falsely wear.

BR Dionysius

Song

In the beer-stocked basements of clapboard bars, in the concete pipe that passes beneath the freeway, in the dregs of dirt that settle the base of it smelling of summers drifted here to die,

is where the women in my family wait: my great grandmother and all her mothers,

whispering their ghostly gossip indsor the living cannot understand.

Longlist

osmos

Stray dogs

1.

Mist, mountain, cabin -

everything standing in for something else. You know what you leave behind is clearer than what you move toward the plaque describing nought but a striped pelt, the scrape of a chair leg.

And yet
here you are. Crouched beside
a stream, trying not to think:
'a tiger is never just a tiger'.
Where the quiet is measured in yawns
and the scrub speaks in aphorisms.
Like, 'if you walk, a path
will appear' or
'even myths come down to drink'.

ed in yhoriT BT /Sp<</ActualText (þÿ

)>>C EMC BT 10

Say blood is tidal.

Say it surfaces, like a grey emotion.

Say it slows to a clot, loping through the landscape.

Say you take it in and feed it.

Say you give it a name.

Say a house is neither its walls nor its doors.

Say you change the locks, clean the bristles.

Say each word conceals a proposition.

Say: 'some decisions count more than others'.

A wilderness

non plus ultra

keeps like a question where no self is said

winter is no handyb moon was set some dormant star fell muted for a rst sun whobed isn't mine paws under, it was once a worldnow edge, passage let's not go there

*

it's never everyone sleepingbut hee are those you've never met pink of like a rising or set some lie in wait,ou could prime

alight, further than I am it works up to a silence that wor't last for long

*

some little wings come out of a picnicyou listen for the gods are in all accidents every other planet's unlike, breathless bare

there isn't a picture I can show best thing about the place is I'm not there

*

hear trickle towards in a corner (all there is nown)aws that catch
no moral to they are listening in, they ew that's where
we won't know no tune though must imagine
and often hear my footsteps afteras if I had been

*

the cenotaph les - won't nd you

turn to stone torn apair it's all you can do to sacred this far now then to light

the unknown about their own

*

some fell sleeping ill stared let willingly alone the way no graph chapould predict

all exploding fell star slept tbugh does nothing but burn

you won't know the creatures no maket for

*

in a wilderness worlt nd me creep orb secret to itself unworded where did this go that?

like a draft come in under for instance moss much rain have one of these in mind out of it at times in the body *

also likewise there's wrestle for tickle too between
a wilderness of wishes we won for our ag of selves crave name
none of this requires belief or presence, absence, de nition

Company terms

A list of nouns, designating birds in groups, appears in e Book of Saint Albans of 1486; these are called 'company terms'.

a wind-map of gulls a wounded sea of gannets a quell of king shers a regatta of swans an Escher of geese a snow globe of egrets a sky-robe of starlings a candlelit forest of owls a bluebelled eld of fairy wrens a high summer of larks a downpour of umbrella birds an optimism of robins an eisteddfod of blackbirds a ventriloguy of lyrebirds a seance of woodpeckers a wake of stone curlews a sound barrier of falcons a grand opera of hornbills a orescence of ri e birds a mermaid-train shimmer of sicklebills a sequined monogamy of manucodes a synergy of manakins a levitation of grebes a terpsichore of cranes a croquet-set of amingos a Versailles of peacocks a Déjeuner sur l'herbe of galahs a Gauguin of rainbow lorikeets a Fabergé of gold nches a masked ball of bee-eaters a piracy of ravens a dungeon of butcher birds a crime scene of condors an identity parade of penguins

an interrogation of crested cockatoos
a judiciary of jackdaws
a jury of godwits
a caveat of avocets
an innocence of albatrosses
a census of sparrows
a consensuality of love birds
a loneliness of shoebills
a grand hotel of rock pigeons
a footnote of passenger pigeons
a limbo of kakapo
a display case of dodo
a silence of nightingales

Carpus diem

(wrist mnemonics)

Scaphoid, lunate, triquetrum – while I burn to learn your body, we have time – we take our time, it's a given – so let me focus, let me be methodical as a med student late at night – cram details of you into my skin's memory – then linger like sacrament, relish, fetish. Why think

about your wrists? Once so heavy pu

Ode to 'Black Abstraction' with Sappho in translation

after Georgia O'Kee e's 'Black Abstraction' (1927) and Sappho in translation via Anne Carson (2002): 'I might go // downrushing // danger // honeyvoiced'

Black sun unsprung lidded weights revolving an unshuttered (non- gurative

curving

the sound of water

breaking the shell on the beach I

dived cross-hatched clicking inside the pearly side

breathing

diamond water holes down her honeved

back pinprick

and white leans into shadow

forward?

(foreword the word a funnelled horizon tree or train

the diamond holes

seen through breathing

blinding that deaming thing I do

unclammed & pouring tbugh

did I say high

voltage frequencies grey on black

violet lapping

rings of ame beneath

those pearls thatewe your

re watered clickingopen

Shari Kocher

Georgia O'Kee e

e hornet

is a trussed up bundle of orange yang

surveys the borders of the pool with the dedication of a drone.

it is on the spectrum xated on edges, liminals territory

while it is here, there are no transgressions no dipping bees, no wandering

gecko, not even the pilgrimed ant, the waterhole is claimed and charged with threat.

this is no shared well in thirsty truce this waterhole belongs

to the humming womb from where it comes and disappears the murmuring secret in

a neighbour's yard.

it is a tight st of menace undercarriage skimming close to waterline

erce, intent & beautiful a striped nger of precise machinery, engines on and pulsing -

Dogged

Once upon a time, they were shit-eaters, campsite cleaners, lazy descendants eswolv We paid them scant attention.

But they watched us – from an obsequious distance – the hair on their bellies clotted witht, dine stink of them almost outfixing their worth.

e relight sheening their eyes made them seem blind, but they had a **pt**ernatural understanding of our vanity, of what pleases us.

ey went belly-up; they begged.

ey o ered their warmth and bore our lice.

ey surrendered their loyalty to us, forsaking their own kind.

Sel e (with totality)

A breath of wind upon the lake's re ection. It's raining tombstones (again), in the hush of never, and time will tilt itself in one direction

and sing: une prison sous la revolution is always underway, it seems, somewhere – a breath of wind upon the lake's re ection,

in the wobble of a planetary system, or the song of seismographs – the artifacts are everywhere: that time will tilt itself in one direction,

and write the history of our attraction

irlmere Lakes: Winter and Spring

WINTER

A U • T , a slight sandy furrow through woodland; open country scarcely

inclined toward a string of freshwater lakes. Rough-barked angophoras – a spare canopy –

banksia serrata and leggy gee-bungs write a well-paced understorey, punctured by the

wide mouths of wombat burrows. e day turns suddenly overcast, and feeling the cold

through a cotton shirt, I'm startled by a nest of downy-black feathers stirring, as if a bird

had up and own its warm bed. Blood not long acquainted with fresh air, and splashed

thickly on broken stems of bracken, draws me down. No other signs of struggle succumb

to my percipience – but I'm reminded of an earlier sighting, the swagger of a panther-like

feral cat, as I swerved to drive my car at it – feathers like a pile of clothes hastily cast o,

tremble in the ba•ed atmosphere. And even though I'd rather walk to keep the warmth

in my limbs, I'm stayed, remembering swift disappearances – bodies I once held, and all

those black holes in the fabric of the land – those tender, and still constellated remains.

SPRING

T• F T is a series of switchbacks, descends from a plateau of dry sclerophyll

forest. I'm half-running—half-sliding in order to keep the weight of my body over my feet,

and don't stop till I reach a lake, a slim tearshaped aperture. Near full it de es a winter

drought, is fed by ducted waters; an aquifer below. Small fry crowd the shallows, and hover

about patches of leaf litter on the quartzite bottom. Tiny, and yet, already conscious of

white-bellied sea eagles who sh from the angophoras, that darken the rim of the lake

like eye-shadow. Trees who read the mind of water, then grow curvaceous, choose the most

unreasoned twists and turns – are elders past pleasing any person, or fashion. Small birds leap

and stop dead, are cantilevered at quivering right-angles mid-way up a sheer ank; plump

bodies a crash test for the skinniest of hightensile legs. e lake's edge is tall spears; reeds

parted here by a beach. I slit a hollow stem and atten it to a parchment strap, which gives o

a warm scent – the sea-grass matting on the oor of my teenage bedroom – brous lines and silken

touch forego a story, and work an unmediated weaving action on memory, muscle and sheath.

e swim

Expanse of tranquil water gleaming. e dive a plunge through light. I let the blessing harden in my hair a week, a crackling crown of salt and sand and sun. Spun there, too, a black torpedo arrowing from spit to shore, the sealion's reek, his ravaged pelt, pink maw.

All week the foehn blew. Seedhead grasses ran and ran in place beneath a swelling moon. I clacked and whooshed the Spanish fan to break the sparkling heat and sweep me back into that crystal blue immersion. Each footstep set loose splinters from my tendril hair

a silver trail by which to trace my passage through the house. e inlet fell from me in single grains and drifts, on pillows, sheets, in teacups, plates and pages – on Chekhov, spine-wide on the shaded sofa, shut in tight with Hughes in heavy hardback on the unmade bed.

e dark side of the moon rolled overhead.
Flame and ood beat up against the gate.
I rinsed the nal shards and stood undressed yet fully clad, the blessing gone to bone. e swim swims on. At point of sleep the darkest jewel comes speeding. I've all the richness I resolved to keep.

Sue Wootton

e mouth of the spider

i) Carapace cuticle layers powered by hemolymph hydraulics

She only noticed it after it had stopped that constant clatter of spears a shield-like brace worn down, until the prettiness had leached out of her

I was alive, I was dead, I said fteen Hail Marys.

ii) Exoskeleton a sti suppor

v) Catalepsy the muscular rigidity of playing dead

When she became a spinner of silk, the feminine swell made a ngerprint down low – a softness unmarked by human intervention, lighting up the dark night.

I watched a single silhouette drown the room.

vi) Pedipalps copulatororgans of an adult male

ere's an art to knowing when one wave ends and another begins. Gut-feel and rhythm – tiny windows for confession: the power inside the swell; a primal blackout.

I marked each battle in bruises, like fallen infantry.

vii) Autotomy self-amputation of a damaged product appendage

When the idea of ight came, she cut her hair, touched no object – left the marked parts of herself behind. Shrank down to the thickness of a shadow, let breath propel her.

I smelled instinct, bleeding outside of my skin.

viii) Molt shedding of the old cuticlskæketon

To the naked eye, it was a neat incision. e careful cutting and freeing of limbs: frocks suspended quietly on hangers, a set of keys left screaming on the hook.

I am cold and pale, inside the tomb of his mouth.

Vanessa Page

Space at night

ink of the sunset from the sun's point of vieweephen Wright

Most of this won't matter long, like who we were visiting, why we had come with enough clothes for a week, why the laughter escaped me, but basically I kept comparing the faces of strangers in photos pinned to the fridge with the tizzy of gypsy moths thrumming the screen. While they were dithering about what to drink, I excused myself, stepped out through the garage, which was no small feat, all cluttered with outgrown dirt bikes (nostalgia, you know, has its drawbacks), and into the sweet dark breeze of the re road, seasoned the way it was with the cuttings of bluegrass or laundry detergent from neighbouring houses whose dim dens ickered indigo like something worth watching was on. Still, starting is always the hardest for me, but a bark from a barnyard helps, and within a few minutes, the trustworthy pavement of Rte. 3 o ered itself like the Great Wall of China, meandering north through cowlicked expanses of ungathered fodder, and over a rise in the distance, where slowly a bit of sky blanched grey till the high beams of some truck cleared and descended, panning a meadow of rotten

ommunity

Primate

We who number chimps among our friends converse with hands, sign drink, and hug, and see. I dress you in a bonnet and pretend to mother you: you want to be like me.

And I, like you. It's Eden, I'll be Eve. I'll teach you to unteach me, strip me bare of every memory I used to cleave to like pelts and hides of those now gone. Aware

my mind's eclipsed, you come into your prime, curl up in my old chair, survey the view now streaked in rain, and spying me, you mime shelter. But I'm as far from who I was as you

are near. e window's where we touched our palms to speak, then something gave and time slid on.

Amy Bagan

Doorknockers

It was the lack of a front door and an unwillingness to be rude that started it, the rst time. A nice older lady asking my name, admiring the house, handing me the pamphlet.

To be nice I took it, smiled

as they left, unaware they'd be back so soon – the second time a pair – the same woman and a younger man each talking and nodding in turn. I mumbled thanks, decided to hide upstairs the next time, keep a lookout for two weeks.

ey were on to me of course, left a longer gap – a di erent time and day – so I was stuck up the back at the washing line when they arrived.

e woman waved but I stayed put, kept pegging out clothes, watched as she struggled up the rough yard, a minor but necessary cruelty I told myself, something to give her the hint.

Her smile held as I cut her short, muttering, 'You know – it's just not my thing' and stood waiting,

the wet socks and undies limp in my hands.

I wanted her to shrug her shoulders and say, 'Fair enough' and be o but her face hardened, she drew in her breath, said, 'ere's no doubt ...' I nodded helplessly, said 'Sorry' – saw too late what was at stake.

I should have pissed her o in the beginning, screamed abuse, kicked her in the shins, anything other than sabotage her there in the blazing light of afternoon.

Alison ompson

Generational curses

my mother's sister is a widow. and all four of her daughters are unmarried. what our grandmother speaks of tradition is this:

a woman who is not an ayeftera woman who does not exist. what could be more woman than that, if i ask, my aunt was married

to a man whose mother was wicked. the rumour is, his mother blended death into a soup she fed to her children. until the only things the family

remembered were burial and burial. my mother is the second oyere in her marriage, she does not exist. today, she will thank God

again and again that the poison by the rst wife's hands did not work. my mother prayed that she would live to tell me of this running.

tell me.

does a woman exist if all that is left are her feet. my aunt was married to a man and they only had daughters. for my unmarried cousins,

children are all they have. a boxful of babbling bronze babies. bless their beautiful goodness – they are the only amalgam the rumour left behind.

yet, i fear it will be something my cousins share with me if i touch their hands, the curse. i see the longing in their eyes when i speak of love.

i am my mother's second daughter. the last of her three children to marry. in my family, tradition is an unforgiving thing.

Cynthia Amoah

¹ hride

² bride, wife, spouse, to wrangle a thing.

³ i am not bound by your tradition.

Handrails

my grandmother's shiny legs from atop the stairs na adiy3 nu y3 papa skeptically of the handrail this morning i am visited but for me to help2ga ET morning

bend slightly
she asks
she asks me this
each morning
like every morning
she wants nothing

desperately gripping the otherme and heavens do i know this way a thousand times down the stairs a girls ribcage expands everything the handrail
her water eyes determined
i have thought about her
coming
only after her ascension
to accommodate
once alie.

Cynthia Amoah

Columbus evades America

Find a lover you have never loved.

Regret this.

Write about it for years.

Meet him when you are eighteen,

and still think of him when you are thirty-four.

row a party.

Plan ahead of time how you will look

and how he will look at you when you come to the door.

Don't plan what you will do

when he presses into you at the top of the stairs

hours into the party.

Rely on your good sense to conduct you then.

Be the kind of person

who thinks about things

but never does them. Always

think of consequence.

Phone him,

and when he asks you to come over,

to act for once in your life,

let your body be in charge of changing your clothes

and putting on your shoes. Do not

let your head be involved

or you will nd yourself on the oor,

thrson

jdTd\$(on)]T_J2sonTf gothe(e the kind Y)94 yoursr loourartewhs (e thir)-7n

Aubade, with muezzin

e dreams rise o the roofs, See them, over there, Climbing like steam into the early air –

Ayesha, one fresh summer dawn, Lying with golden ammuz In elds of corn:

Fayez, the keeper at the zoo, Proclaiming, with both halves of his brain, at Darwin is true, is true!

Hiba, in hot debate
With three friends at a café
About who and if and how to date;

Hani, the chief of police, Telling his spies, 'You are free, y away now, like geese!'

Ahmed, handsome and proud, Saying to Abdul, 'I do' In front of a cheering crowd;

And Khalid, wondering how to choose, As he dances with two girls, Both lovely, both laughing, both Jews.

See, so many good dreams,
All rising up into the cold, dawn air,
And yet something is wrong ... over there,

In that small room, four young men, Asleep, with heavy belts hung on the door, No, no, not that again! But already Mahmoud, the muezzin, Is climbing the tower, Clearing his throat, to begin.

No, Mahmoud, don't wake them!

Let them dream of love, Let them, waking, Find this world enough.

Let them miss that plane or that bus.

James Leader

Recital day

When I was young and took ballet my braid was French on recital day. A cygnet, afraid, I followed my teacher anyway.

Miss Denise ate Gerber's when she felt faint. Too dainty, rouged, she had her tricks. When I was young and took ballet

dry ice on stage disguised mistakes. Your arms, très jolie! An adieu kiss. Afraid, I followed my teacher anyway,

melted like ice-cream in her gaze. But who'd save Denise? Sweet, anorexic. When I was young and took ballet

I watched her arabesques, her made-up face, and wanted a doll, my own little Denise. Afraid, I followed my teacher anyway

for she spun su ering into fame, demonstrated how a lake must keep its peace when I was young and took ballet. Afraid, I followed my teacher anyway.

Paula Bohince

Puberty thickens

forlorn furlong

thematic wdrspace writhing in junior weather

whee puberty can thickly nourish

pride and permises private premises

betray pedestrians with streamlined peacocks

the aggregates of our attending impediments

colour that blinds

heads that ache

wrists that berak

and the incorrect hardiness

so it sadly must be said

of all conscientious emotion

no tact
tic tac
thumbtack
toe the line
across the attic
and nd in a Gladstone bag the proof that
age is most vivid when nance outruns despotism

Dave Drayton

Palmist

there's a stranger around the corner with a box ready –

there's another queue for kind words

that will return to haunt you even as they whisper –

there's a fork on the table (I mean in the road)

don't take it but do of course if you are lost that way –

your lifeline (I see) is almost missing

which suggests you will soon

look see how it turns over the page

as though there is no end to the poem –

Jennifer Harrison

Axis

'Is prayer, then, the proper attitude for the mind that longs to be freely blown, but which gets snagged on the barb called world ...'

—Li-Young Lee, 'e City in Which I Love You')

i.

My son is four. His small hands grip a sheet of paper, following instructions with the quiet

intensity that accompanies visions of a large world folding back on itself. He lines up corners

with corners, smoothing out edges against our wooden table so that every crease is crisp and sharp.

Somehow he always senses the nal forms of things, even within early steps. His eyes are brown and

quick, his head tilted toward the present. ere are mornings where I sit beside him and try to look

beyond my own half-re ection in the back window.

ough autumn skirts the edges of winter the jasmine is

ii.

still unruly. e lemon tree's leaves keep curling like newly mapped streets in Boorooma or Tatton. We pray

for rain, for the farmers who are turning the earth and sowing through the silent darkness. Some days

a Bible stays open on the table, o ering passages from Corinthians or Romans. To the saints ... But now

(can a volta switch all existence like this? can foolish things ever shame the wise?). We glimpse the shadow

of the neighbour's black cat itting through the bamboo. My son's hands keep tugging at small corners of the uni-

verse, coaxing them out into petal folds. e street's magpies are open throated and creedal. I hear their voices

iii.

as gentle expositions of things yet to come. Within our house there are other limbs in beds, there are empty

lai see that have been discarded and kicked beneath the refrigerator. ese doxologies charge hidden spaces,

making the world shimmer and glitch. I don't often notice them, but when the red kettle clicks my son looks up

as though he is suddenly ancient and able to housel more than these squares of coloured paper. Outside

the Japanese maple drops its leaves, the dogs next door chew through the icy air, growling at phantom intru-

ders. As hours and days pass, my son's creations will multiply and II the rooms: frogs skittering across

iv.

the kitchen table; scores of gliders sailing through the living area, coming to rest on ceiling fans;

a mute procession of cranes. In the evenings our dreams will be edged by small footsteps bringing

a gure to our bedside. Sometimes we will send him away, for there was no call except the cold night.

But he will return again and again with a wordless patience until the concertinaed hours draw our embrace. I am

replaying the symmetries of time squared, the seasonal breath of this suburb with its slow collapse of fences. All

these houses have beds beneath beds, ready to be drawn out at short notice when that visitor nally appears.

Lachlan Bown

or attempted sublimity in any thrush, ooding funerals, orations, solemn commemorations with a concussive no-brainer of white-out sound.

Stunned, displaced, perhaps we can use the occasion of trickster Kookaburra laughing itself shitless simply to remember self, selves, the Sel ess before we are & in our human comedy, birdlike as a skewered worm, birdlike as the sky.

Peter Lach-Newinsky

I remember eld trips we were told the dunes were rare because they barked, that if you angled your steps, the grains would click, rub, & sing.

Walking back, we dig our heels. Remind ourselves this sound has always seemed like a lungless cough – a breath coaxed

from the friction of doubt.

Mason County, MI

Connor Yck

ulture

e Neil Young Experience

I watch the wildest things tumble through the weeping grass

while I'm safe behind glass singing along with Neil Young

as the mini apocalypse arrives down by the creek – not a river –

we do things di erently here roads become grey lines of doubt

they shimmer and spread

Neil Young's on the sofa playing guitar Neil Young's leaning over my shoulder

waving to my far away children they cannot see me trying to dance like Beyonce

with my gum boots in the swimming pool that used to house the cars but now I practise band

In a sunburnt country

here where men are busily at work carving out new deserts where wild boronia once grew rivers running rapidly dry, wallum frogs croaking by their thousands as sag-skinned cattle carcasses graze on empty acres fenced against an inland sea one more migrant tide repelled, kangaroo shot through at sunset - their sorry hide blanching over bleaching bones for daring to outrun the culling gun on this new battlefront where parched and starving natives are run aground swarming from new deserts carved out by men busily at work where wild boronia once grew rivers running rapidly through and wallum frogs once croaked by their thousands

Anne Casey

Note: 'a sunburnt country' is a phrase from Dorothea Mackellar's poem 'My Country'.

e most beautiful word in the world

A love that makes you miserable. A causeless feeling of guilt.

Altahmam:

Arabic for a deep sadness.

e arrangement of owers along an axis.

Isolette

To speak your native language when everyone else is speaking Esperanto.

Chrysalis Saboteur Cedilla Concertina wire.

Ilunga: a person who tolerates abuse only twice.

Saudade: Portuguese for a type of longing.

A word whose de nition is: a time unlikely to ever occur.

Or a chronically unlucky person.

Dream dresses? My Korean student struggles, searching for the word – nightgown.

Kickpleat Slipknot Lumineria.

La Casa Azul

after Jorie Graham

In Mexico City, aged tw

At the last

Boy versus Girl

becomes Boy verses Girl, how he feeds her a line, then she serves it back in couplets, in formal echoes

of a triolet. He longs to be a stand-up guy but settles for several short stanzas, comprehends her

as little as he can alliterate, seeks her like a sonnet, like an ode to Terza Rima. She relies on poetry

instead of leaving things to fate; & at this rate, the boy's chapped lips could align a chapbook, could

decorate her ears with decameter could caress her forearms with metaphors, could seem to be

like similes, might similarly confess his aversion to confessional poetry. Boy verses Girl, but Girl verses back,

points measured feet at his e orts at elision, at the spaced-out distraction of his broken caesuras. Girl scans Boy, & the scansion's complete: Boy gets Girl but is cursed by division, is resigned to

the truth he's trochaic, & she's iambic. He's sextasyllabic, is a bit like a limerick but prone to the dirges

while sh's avowedly lowbrow, is plain speech yet simultaneously aspires to be a senry.

Jonathan Greenhause

Goya

Goya was not a man of in nite jest: no one thinks that: but a man of in nite patience: w with being the last: being the rst: between the loss: the next loss: before stepping on society's polished staircase: before scratching the bruised sides of his unspeakable min Goya was simply a scion: a student: no theoretician: never a philosopher: no one thir that:

a schooled copier of stamps: a philately miniaturist: a painter with one hand: one ne b: addresses always unknown: addressees never sought: backs never dampened: for painstaking years: long before our conception: before the stretch of his invention: before post o ce-approved nude: before the familiar nightmares: before our unveiling: before dampened your back: before I wrote this: Goya

painted us: with India as our backdrop.

Kathıyn Hummel

Nagasaki deconstructed

After Yoko Danno.

Mozart in a cherry blossom, Sagami adorns her hair with music.

Ukon writes butter y netting villanelles. Flautist of the oating world,

Lady Ise kisses chiaroscuro, long necked lovers with diluted kiss water

colours; then the bomb, quaint as a cat sh hiccoughing an earthquake –

a cancer Chanel, a fell message. is is how to fold an envelope into everyone.

Linda Ann Strang

e spoon

the spoon with which you eat o yourself

powdered diamonds in a paste piped from ankle to thigh in a Cape to Cairo line that tells us that all Rhodes lead to here

tadpole apostrophes navigate conjunctive saliva-lust from the tongue as wave machine

changing mosaics on the roof of the mouth feel the jaw move like a bulldozer about to rubble the one room in the house reserved for speech the prodigal departure of all senses to nowhere

i have remembered silence in its own words

taught the train to stop over my chest so i can get on

inside the carriage you are sat at a balsa table the length of another's life

& in the next carriage in your livestream audition as a TV chef you demonstrate how to simmer an eyeball in your hand

how to coach bre-rich words from your mouth to the plate

cut to the rst carriage where the act of saying grace is being injected into your lips as a cosmetic prayer

one object registered as missing in a metallurgist's mind alleges hypnotism in a brunette lasso

the spoon with which you eat yourself

Nathan Shepherdson

omplexities

A happening

And the death, when it came, how did it come? Just like this: outside, cars importing divinity to snow. A ock of trees rambling out of the imagination. Women going into shops, men attempting to mistake impatience for grief. A small confusion in the parking lot. Inside, the furniture expands to account for absence, it licks its varnished, perfect teeth. is is what happens after. But the death, when it came, how did it come? Just like this: He says, I am tired, but in a kind of healthy way, you know? He says: Of late I've watched many documentaries, especially those about mountains. He says: When you get up in the morning I feel loved, it's nothing but the fact that you wake up that makes me feel this. is is what happens before. And the death itself, what was its substance? e news will carry this. Tonight, the advice is given to keep your doors open, turn o the heating, arrange your e ects in immaculate shapes. e neighbours say, is is just a small town. e meaning of it falls around them like a missile toppling through unbanishable air. Gravel relaxes under cars. Snow goes over the world. And the death, when it came, was just something like this: narrower and narrower, a day small enough that the world took it in. In the front seat, a child, safe beyond reckoning, asks about the weather. e parents, not wishing to talk about death, say there are things you can't predict, only just lying.

Ashish Kumar

Et tu, Brute?

Hamlet: A man may sh with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the sh that hath fed of that wo King: What dost thou mean by this?

Hamlet: Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

-Shakespealrhamlet, Act IV Scene III

Driving up the Paekakariki Hill
Road, apropos of nothing, I mention
that although I don't believe in karma
or reincarnation, I do believe
in reincarnation of a sort. For instance,
when they transplant another's heart
into another's chest, there's evidence
of cellular memory: the donor's
traits – uency in foreign tongues,
quick temper – donated too. In the dead
of night months later the new-hearted cold-sweat
strangers' dreams, their days damned by déjà-vu,
a vegetarian suddenly craves pork.

Every bit of us is secondhand. Is it too far a stretch to believe molecules from rat shit, an extinct bat, matter from the heart of distant star. a ightless bird from our neck of the woods, my cremated greatgrandmother are me - or you, us? We take a bend a shade too fast, I reach for the handle above the door trim. ey say that when knifed in the back Caesar breathed out his last litre of air and that - two thousand years on each of our breaths contains one molecule of his. Does that go for anyone who died two thousand years ago? Or last year? At the summit the road swings right and down to the left K•piti Island and the sea. e part I can't get my head around is how primitive it all is: between chests they just pack the heart in ice in a chilly bin.

Ben Egerton

Whirring

e lover circles his own heart —Rumi

He peers through the crack and sees only a dark room but hears the whirring. He has been warned. He bites a wet lip and enters. Now he is a voyeur to the dance without a dancer. Maybe a solo or maybe a pas de deux, he cannot say. He fears the chirring in his ears until he wants to become part of this trance, this lovers' dance. He feels his heart booming a rhythm that melds with the blur and nds his feet following further into the room. Circling the skirring silk. Watching for hours, nally he sees it for what it is. A chance to escape the bewilderment of the days that remain.

I have never entered this room before. e air is damp and the walls have a crumbly breaking up beneath my ngertips. ey told me not to look in here. ere is a rushing sound and a sense of desire winging by. I hear the caretaker running down the coand he rushes to my side. Flustered he implores me 'Look at the wall beyond. Use peripheral vision.' e caretaker says it was the instant of the winter solstice when rst fell in love and as time stood still they locked together as a dance not dancers not lovers. When time ticked again they moved too fast to be seen but should a poetime slows and they can be glimpsed. 'Don't look too close. You might see their I want to stay and drink in the coolness of the breeze their dance creates. e world ou continues for a week, a month, a year. e caretaker reminds me daily that the longer I the harder it will be to exit. I am unable to leave the room yet I am not part of their dance.

Erin Shiel

After Hossein ValamaneshLover Circles his own Heart, 1993, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney. See image, p 59 and Rumi quote, p. 87, in Mary Knights and Ian North, Hossein Valaman Out of Nothingness, Wake eld Press, South Australia, 2011.

Mrs Proust's madeleine

ese autumn days, I'm fonder of this thick white wad, held rm between my legs. is old shy friend, dependable and wise; controlled and kind. She's like a nurse with every trick, who doesn't boss, but lets me feel the slick of seeped redundant blood, that undersold vermillion ooze, the lipstick kiss of folds still tugged by earth; a ow both slow and quick.

ere's no need now to speak of pain; that's past. I sni the salt of fading pleasures yet; (the ferrous tang of fresh placental caul, the mid-moon swell that reeks desire, unmasked); recall the musk of lust and milk and sweat. Give praise to Menses, midwife to us all.

Helen urloe

Girls, dogs and depleted uranium

e season is saucy.

Private arrangements are turned inside out like winter gloves so that a soft, slightly moist fur of intimacy shows upon the street. Only the stray dogs do not canoodle. ey've been spayed or castrated, provided with an electronic chip in their ears. So now they lope the boulevards uncertain of what it is they've lost

e streets are never empty.

Even at night they're no place for a white dress to drift as fragile as cigarette smoke though the tra c and the heat are less.

I lose you where the stairs branch and branch again as my eyelids rise and the ower girl dabs with a tissue at the sweat between her breasts. It's said the road I'm stalled upon leads to woods where the stray dogs run seeking a coolness to stop the bleeding from their eyes and the burning in their chests.

James Sutherland-Smith

Down

the past is a forest and there is no scythe yet able to cut such foliage

so you step – sometimes without care, sometimes with so much you barely move

and your feet drown the way water drowns in a sponge the way re drowns in air

Of a thing which could not be put back

Cormac McCarthy, e Road.

Souls escape the unlocked gate. Flocks of currawongs

like wraiths in trees – dialectically

furtive in ight.

Patches of rain

are abstract not quite night or orphaned as the anal

nascent

before me.

Zarathustra and the dead man

beside him leave a lm, an ooze

locked in lustrous mar

Broad Arrow Café

Broad Arrow Café was busy that day, the tables were arranged tightly to heel – two minutes of terrible shadow play.

A Colt AR-15 Carbine at bay, Martin Bryant went in and ate a meal. Broad Arrow Café was busy that day.

at's not funny, someone heard someone say, not realising the shots were too real, two minutes of terrible shadow play.

A reenactment, or Port Arthur play? Customers trapped, with no place to conceal, Broad Arrow Café was busy that day.

Twenty-nine rounds red in the café, ten people wounded and twelve people killed, two minutes of terrible shadow play.

Families could not comprehend the a ray, crouched in corners, they covered and kneeled. Broad Arrow Café was busy that day, two minutes of terrible shadow play.

Joe Dolce

Cinerary facts

Pacemakers and other devices must be removed.
e corpse must be contained in a co n with a nameplate.
Cremations must happen one body at a time.

e ashes must be placed in a metal container and given time to cool. ey must then be loaded into a homogeniser to reduce the size of the particles.

In their nal state
the ashes must be packed
into a plastic container
and the nameplate attached.
e container must then be stored
in a locked room.

When the applicant collects the ashes they may be buried in a cemetery, placed in a columbarium, scattered on private land or a beach or a river or a public park or at sea or in a place that holds signi cance for the deceased or loved ones.

ey may even be put on a mantelpiece.

e applicant must seek permission for taking up some of these options. Once scattered, the ashes cannot be retrieved. Be reassured that all microorganisms are destroyed in the aforementioned process.

Bear in mind that arti cial joints, like your prized memories, shame and remorse, are resistant to combustion.

Mark Mahemo

^{*}Some of these details were gleaned from the NSW Health website: http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/cremation-ashes.aspx

Immigration algorithm (Application Form D (3) b (1) a)

It's time for the orienting lecture on regret – Emotion (so goes the talk) is like a futile ocean, like a seascape – grey rollers and frozen rain, for instance. e lecturer continues to separate the listeners from their longings, like sunlight drowned on the horizon by a darkened metaphor.

'So you're a doused wick, excuse the metaphor,' says the lecturer. 'So there's nothing but regret. Deal with it.' e crowd, silent but for sunlight ablaze through squalls above a clobbered ocean, sni•es, shu•es its feet. Someone, (separate from the rest), enquires about the sudden rain.

'Oh, that,' shouts the guide in sleeting rain.
'You'll nd a way to deal with that in metaphor.'
e crowd dissolves along a path that separates
'en' from 'Now,' 'New Hope' from 'Damp Regret' –
each like a place name above a sombre ocean –
each a town in a patch of tragic sunlight

with its own doomed calendar of civic sunlight: 'Happiness Reinforcement Days', 'Festivals of Rain', and 'I'm OK w/Hades' signs along the ocean. Communities have banned the use of metaphor. On alternating Tuesdays we burn regret. en, guys in haz-mat suits collect & separate

the unburned stu at a treatment plant kept separate from the population: there, would-be sunlight gets mixed with unburnt ashen pigments of regret. We paint the sky with it. is ensures the rain will always fall without the need for metaphor (and an unemployment rate at zero by the ocean).

Hell is not a place but a method: boil the ocean, it says. Let this application sift and separate tenor from vehicle, the trailer hitch of metaphor from how (and who) it moved in glinting sunlight. Please make an argument in praise of rain, it says. In the space below, explain regret.

Include support materials: sunlit ocean, rain qua rain, your ve-year plan for metaphor, and, on a separate sheet, your rst inkling of regret.

Mark Svenvold

Love is blind

Ours is a rough love; forged in the re of adversity. You couldn't get your vision back, try as you might, so we stumbled 'round in the dark, baby, you and me.

You clung to me, drowning, in your intoxicated sea. Your world disappeared: you lost most of your sight. Ours is a rough love; forged in the re of adversity.

e day you got out of gaol you wept in the street: how you resented the pearlescence of your light! We stumbled around in the dark, baby, you and me.

You tried to hang yourself from the basement beam; I admitted you to hospital, then they sent you to psych. Ours is a rough love; forged in the re of adversity.

e depression resolved, after about a year, then you got resentful and wanted to ght: we stumbled 'round in the dark, baby, you and me.

Sadly, our future no longer looked bright, you realised your dreams would never take ight. Ours is a rough love; forged in the re of adversity. We stumbled 'round in the dark, baby, you and me.

Natasha Dennerstein

While disassembling cabinets with a crowbar

in a warehouse in a bad part of town, I was shot several times – point blank. I wasn't dead. I un-heaped myself, and left through a side door. My mouth Iled with blood ar teeth and, for the rst time, humid air and sun entered my body. Weeds coming throuthe sidewalk turned grey and warm, and I used my thumb to dial 911. When they answered, I told them: frisbee – the brain useful, even at the last.

It's true we are no more aware of our own mortality than next month's electric, but this something in us that knows death is hilarious & as comfortable as rolling onto our stomachs as we fall asleep. But the problem is when we do we feel our hearts poun against the mattress and for fear of resistance we roll to our backs. I could tell you I felt the moment of death and it's not like they say. I can't say anything other than what happened was the last thing my body could come up with.

I could tell you this dream was more real than any other. I could tell you that all we d

Biographies

Judges

Head Judge

WENDY COPEis one of the UK's most popular poets. Her poetry collections include Making Cocoa for Kingsley Antil 1986), Serious Concerns (1992) and If I Don't Know (2001), which was shortlisted for the Whitbread Poetry Award. Two Cures for Love (2008) is a selection of previous poems with notes, together with new poems. Her latest collection is Family Val (2011). She has also written poetry for children and edited a number of comic verse anthologies. She has been television critic for e Spectatend was a judge of the 2007 Man Booker Prize. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was awarded an OBE in 2010.

Longlist Judges

MOIRA EGANs seventh collection, Synæstheşiwon e New Criterion Poetry Prize and will be published by Criterion Books, New York, in autumn 2017. With her husband, Damiano Abeni, she has published volumes in translation in Italy by authors including Ashbery, Barth, Bender, Ferlinghetti, Hecht, Simic, Strand, and Charles Wright. She lives in Rome.

OZ HARDWICK is a writer, photographer, music journalist, and occasional musician based in York (UK). He has published six poetry collections, most recently e House of Ghosts and Mirrors (Valley Press, 2017). Under the pseudonym of Paul Hardwick, he is Professor of English at Leeds Trinity University.www.ozhardwick.co.uk

EILEEN CHONGis a Singapore-born Sydney poet. Her books are Burning Rice (2012), Peony(2014), and Painting Red Orch(2016) from Pitt Street Poetry. Another Language (2017) was published in the Braziller Series of Australian Poets in New York, USAwww.eileenchong.com.au

CYNTHIA AMOAH is a performer and writer originally from Ghana, West Africa. An activist in her own right, her work often highlights the forgotten stories of the world. Cynthia is currently pursuing an MFA in poetry at e New School, NYC, and has been featured on the stages of TEDxDrewUniversity and TEDxOhioStateUniversity.

STEVE ARMSTRONGlives in Newcastle. He won the Bruce Dawe Poetry Prize 2015, Local Award Newcastle Poetry Prize 2014, has shortlisted for the Ron Pretty Poetry Prize, Australian Catholic University Poetry Prizes, and longlisted for University of Canberra VC's prize 2018. His rst collection is Broken Ground (UWAP, 2018).

AMY BAGAN has worked in publishing and as a teacher at Venice's University, Ca' Foscari. Her poems appead imver QuarterlyNorthwest RevieSouthern Poetry RevieMeasur NeivAG-34 (s)-12 (i)-12s ps Tf 0 Tc 0 Tw 3.14 0 .470 Td [

KATIE BRUNEROhas an MFA in Poetry and MA in ction and taught poetry at the University of New Hampshire. She received the Young P Dawkins Prize, was shortlisted for the Letheon Prize, and longlisted for the Fish Poetry Prize. She been nominated for a Pushcart and variously published.

ANNE CASEYis an Irish-Australian writer/literary editor with work widely published internationally. She is author of

DIANE FAHEY is the author of thirteen poetry collections, most recently November Journ (A) Whitmore Press). She has won various poetry awards, and received a number of writing fellowships from the Australia Council, and the Victorian and SA governments. She holds a PhD in Creative Writing from UWS. dianefaheypoet.com.

JONATHAN GREENHAUSEwon Aesthetica Magazinzella Creative Writing Award in Poetry, won the 2017 Ledbury Poetry Competition, and received 3rd Prize in e Plough Poetry Prize 2017. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in e Believer, december VENT, Going Down Swinging Reader, e Rialto, and Vallum

KATIE HALE's debut pamphle Breaking the Surfaces published by Flipped Eye in 2017. She recently won the Jane Martin Poetry Prize and the Ware Poetry Prize, and received a grant from Arts Council England to research and write a poetry collection. She is also currently working on her debut novel.

JENNIFER HARRISONhas published eight poetry collections, most recently Air Variation (University of Canberra 2017) and Any (Maryck Pepper 2018). She manages the Dax Poetry Collection.



ALISON THOMPSON won the Dangerously Poetic Press Byron Bay Writers Festival Prize in 2011 and the 2016 Poetry d'Amour Contest and has been published in various journals and anthologies. Two chapbooks – Slow (\$2002) ngnd In A Day It Changes (2018) are published with PressPress. She lives near Berry, NSV

HELEN THURLOE is a Sydney poet and author. Her poems have received awards, including the ACU Literature Prize and the Banjo Paterson Award. Her poetry has been published in various anthologies and journals. Helen's debut novel, Promising Azrawas shortlisted for the 2017 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. www.helenthurloe.com.au

JULIE WATTS is a Western Australian poet published in leading national and international journals and anthologies. She won e Blake Poetry Prize (2017) and e Dorothy Hewett Award for an Unpublished Manuscript (2018). Her second poetry collection, Legawill be published by UWA Publishing in October, 2018.

SUE WOOTTON lives in Dunedin, New Zealand. Her most recent publications are her debut novel Striphich was longlisted for the ction prize in the 2017 Ockham NZ Book Awards and her fth poetry collection, e Yielchalist for the poetry prize of the 2018 Ockham NZ Book Awards.

IPSI:: CCCR

e International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI) is part of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research, Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. IPSI conducts research related to poetry, and publishes and promulgates the outcomes of this research internationally. e Institute also publishes poetry and interviews with poets, as well as related material, from around the world. Publication of such material takes place in IPSI's online journal Axon: Creative Explorations (http://www.axonjournal.com.au/) and through other publishing vehicles, such as Axon Elements. IPSI's goals include working – collaboratively, where possible – for the appreciation and understanding of poetry, poetic language and the cultural and social signif cance of poetry. e institute also organises symposia, seminars, readings and other poetry-related activities and events.

e Centre for Creative and Cultural Research (CCCR) is IPSI's umbrella organisation and brings together sta, adjuncts, research students and visiting fellows who work on key challenges within the cultural sector and creative feld. A central feature of its research concerns the e ects of globalisation, and its a ordances and pressures on cultural producers, whether individuals, communities or organisations.

