

Poetry and prose contents

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TEXT prose**Harley Carter*****Death by second person***

We are sitting in an airport transit lounge with time to kill between flights, and you ask me what we can do to entertain ourselves. I hold up an old dictionary. This is the second edition of the Penguin English Dictionary, dated 1976, I say. It is almost the last Penguin before their brief affair with Macquarie to produce the Penguin Macquarie dictionary, I add. Good Lord, you gasp. Where did you get it? you ask. I liberated it from a rubbish bin in a publisher's warehouse, I say.

Why don't I use it to tell you a story? You are intrigued. How can anyone tell a story using a dictionary, you laugh. Easily, I say. It will be a "given" story and as you have no doubt noticed, we are talking in the second person and so I will make the story in the second person. I will use all the words I find on a particular page.

Will this exercise help me to become a famous writer? you want to know. Yes it will. Your creativity will be stimulated by this exercise and it will help you to see things from a different perspective. I watch you process this information and draw a conclusion. Good, you say suddenly. And you bet me a current edition of the Penguin dictionary that I can't do it.

I open the old dictionary to a page at random – page 210, a "D" page. We agree that every word on this chosen page must be used, and in the exact order in which they appear. So I must start with the first word at the top of the left hand column, and continue to the last word at the bottom of the right hand column.

The first word is DIMPLE, brackets *dimp*'l, noun, small natural hollow in the flesh – what a delectable image. Also a shallow hollow in earth or water. Fancy that. A liquid dimple. Daphne du Maurier drinks dimples during dinner. What an image to begin a story. And Daphne du Maurier wrote mysteries. So let's make this story a mystery.

The next entry is DIMWIT, brackets *dimwit*, noun, slang, fool, imbecile. The way you describe your boss. You have just been briefed by him on the increasing incidence of deaths in restaurants which serve Middle Eastern food. You wince at the racist overtone but I tell you that it is necessary and not gratuitous. And as a health inspector it is your responsibility to assist in the investigation of this mystery.

You stand up and make a DIN, brackets *din*, another noun, loud confused noise, continuous clamour, in protest, saying that you are not a health inspector. I tell you that you are in this story. But it's a police job and they are handling it quite adequately on their own, you whine. Your boss doesn't agree and thinks you should help them, particularly because you have a knowledge of Middle Eastern customs, I reply.

In Iraq there is a unit of currency called the DINAR, pronounced *deenaar*, noun, Eastern gold coin. You tell your boss this and ask him sarcastically if he has any to spare, because you may need some change. He tells you they're not worth a tinker's cuss and ushers you out of his office.

Suddenly you realize you're hungry. The next entry is DINE, brackets *dIn*, verb intransitive and transitive, eat dinner; which is exactly what you want to do.

You would like to become a DINER, brackets *dIner*, noun, one who dines.

Or better still, a DINER-OUT, brackets *dIner-owt*, noun, person who frequently goes to dinner parties.

You choose one of the restaurants which are under observation. According to the police there is an anti-Arab fanatical group who are killing off the patrons of these restaurants as an act of terrorism. Arriving at the entrance, you DING, brackets *ding*, verb intransitive and transitive, make a ringing sound, repeat constantly, by pressing a button on the wall.

You wait, but no-one answers. DING-DONG, brackets *ding-dong*, noun, sound of bells continually ringing or of two bells ringing alternately. You can't quite tell which, as you press the button again. You are becoming impatient. Still no-one answers.

DINGE, brackets *dinj*, verb transitive, colloquial, knock a dent in; which is what you now do to the door.

This violent action loosens from its moorings a DINGHY, brackets *ding-gi*, noun, small ship's boat, small pleasure boat, inflatable rubber boat; which crashes to the ground beside you, showering you with fine white powder and splinters of wood. You look up to see where it came from and see a broken package from where the white powder is leaking and a sign introducing THE MARITIME AND AMPHIBIAN MUSEUM RESTAURANT. The dinghy was a prop. Something to catch the eye of passing traffic. What is the white powder? Could it be poison?

At last a waiter with a closely trimmed beard and an enigmatic smile opens the door. You see the DINGINESS, brackets *dinjiness*, noun, state of being dingy, drabness. The waiter ushers you inside. The place smells.

And it's cheap. You can tell by the walls. They have DINGING, brackets *dinging*, noun, a single coat of rough plaster; coated on them.

The waiter leads you along a wooden panelled passageway which reminds you of a DINGLE, brackets *ding'l*, noun, a deep dell, a narrow wooded valley. The sort of place ideally suited for an ambush. You become relaxed when he leads you into the cocktail bar. The waiter tells you the place is full and asks if you'd like a drink while you wait.

You look around and see a DINGLE-DANGLE, brackets *ding'l-dang'l*, adjective and adverb, hanging loosely. You wonder whether this word really is an adjective *or* an adverb. Surely it must be a noun. You look again and see a DINGLE-DANGLE of males hanging loosely at the bar. That makes more sense. They are dressed casually and each has a twinkle in his eye. And yes you will have a drink, you tell the waiter.

You are tempted to order a liquid dimple. You can't see Daphne du Maurier anywhere, so you don't. Instead, you inspect the next word and order a yellow

DINGO, brackets *Ding-gO*, noun, Australian wild dog. This is a boutique beer, the barman protests. And they don't sell it.

What a bloody DINGY, brackets *dinji*, adjective, dull-looking, shabby, disreputable; state of affairs, you tell the barman loudly. And the Dingle-Dangle shout back in agreement.

You order a glass of the house red and join them. They have eaten here before and compare the meals with those served in a DINING-CAR, brackets *dIning-kaar*, noun, railway carriage equipped to serve meals to passengers.

You say that they couldn't be worse than the meals you got at boarding school in the DINING-HALL, brackets *dIning-hawl*, noun, large room where dinner and other meals are eaten.

More unfavourable comments are made and the restaurant is compared to an army DINING-ROOM, brackets *dIning-ROOm*, noun, room in which dinner and other meals are eaten.

Then someone says he's so hungry that as long as there is a DINING-TABLE, brackets *dIning-tayb'l*, noun, table on which meals are served; he couldn't care less how terrible the meals are.

You don't tell them you are a health inspector. And because you don't, you could be accused of not being DINKUM, brackets *dinkum*, adjective, Australian slang, genuine, honest. But this does not worry you.

Typically, just as the conversation is getting interesting and the cocktail bar is starting to look DINKY, brackets *dinki*, adjective, colloquial, neat, dainty; you are told your table is ready.

DINNER, brackets *diner*, noun, chief meal of the day, formal banquet. At last, you sigh.

As warned by the Dingle-Dangle at the bar, the meal *is* atrocious. You ordered recently fossilised goats legs because you can never resist a new item on a menu. Unfortunately, they appear to be more like legs from a DINOSAUR, brackets *dInosawr*, noun, huge extinct reptile of the Mesozoic epoch.

When you try to cut them they seem more like those from a DINOTHERE or DINOTHERIUM, brackets *dInotheer* or *dInotheerium*, noun, huge extinct elephant-like mammal.

In fact it is extremely hard to make a DINT, brackets *dint*, noun, dent, impression on a hard surface; or even a scratch in them.

At a nearby table you recognize a catering personality they call "The Bishop." You have been told by the police that he is suspected of contaminating food in various restaurants. Although whether he has a connection with the killings is not clear. The reason he is called The Bishop is because he moves diagonally, in a similar way to the chess piece of the same name. A very tricky customer and one to be carefully watched. You wonder what sort of DIOCESAN, brackets *dI-osizan*, adjective, pertaining to a diocese; activities he is involved with at the moment.

You remember that this area is part of his DIOCESE, brackets *dI-oseez*, noun, area under a bishop's jurisdiction. So you eavesdrop on the conversation between him and his female companion.

A DIODE, brackets *dI-Od*, noun, thermionic valve containing two electrodes, anode and cathode; is mentioned. The woman says something about RMS value and gas-filled dual electrode envelopes. From your supreme knowledge of electrical engineering you realize, of course, that she is talking about old-style large current rectifiers. The type that is still used in some old-style electrical devices.

The bishop asks her if she used a DIODONE, brackets *dI-odOn*, noun, medicine, complex preparation containing iodine, used for contrast radiography. You conclude the woman is a radiographer and she is using an old-style x-ray machine which has a power supply problem.

The waiter asks you if you enjoyed your meal and tells you the members of the dingle-dangle are still at the bar and they're looking sick.

You ostentatiously join the bishop and the woman at their table with the intent of showing off your knowledge of x-ray machines but they quickly change the subject to biology, which makes you suspicious. The bishop has a large body wrapped in fat and small eyes like full stops. The woman is a dour brunette. The conversation turns to species which are DIOECIOUS, brackets *dI-eeshus*, adjective, botany, having male and female flowers on separate plants, zoology, unisexual, producing male and female gametes in separate animals.

You say that sounds like bollocks to you. Then you apologize for this outburst, blaming it on your mood which is DIONYSIAC or DIONYSIAN, brackets *dI-onizi-ak* or *dI-onizi-an*, adjective, pertaining to the Greek wine-god Dionysus or to his worship. The evidence for this can be smelt in the empty glass in your hand.

On the table, you notice a piece of DIOPSIDE, brackets *dI-opsId*, noun, mineralogy, calcium magnesium silicate, a type of pyroxene. It is a bright green crystalline solid.

Some of the dingle-dangle are now passing through the dining area to go to the toilet. They are coughing and seem to have difficulty breathing. A few look feverish and complain of pains in their arms and legs. You stare at them as a DIOPSIS, brackets *dI-opsis*, noun, zoology, insect whose eyes grow on stalks; might stare at them.

On closer inspection, you deduce that the green crystal on the table is actually DIOPTASE, brackets *dI-optays*, noun, an emerald green silicate of copper. It is found in the weathering zones of copper lodes and recently fossilised goats legs. Furthermore, the interstitial spaces between the hexagonal axes of its crystals are capable of absorbing microscopic particles, such as bacteria, and releasing them later under certain conditions. You knew all this from your early training in food technology. Although you didn't know you knew until I told you. And you also remember the dingle-dangle were going to have goats legs as a snack at the bar and now they are getting sick. You wonder if there is a connection.

Pretending to be drunk, you lean forward so you can study the crystals in detail. You comment on the woman's liquid dimples and ask if her name is Daphne du Maurier. The bishop glares at you and says you have the IQ of a DIOPTER, brackets *dI-opter*, noun, ancient form of theodolite.

You reply that you need new glasses. They are of a low DIOPTRE, brackets *dI-opter*, noun, optics, unit of power of a lens.

In fact the DIOPTRIC, brackets *dI-optRik*, noun, unit of power of a lens, diopetre; is so weak that you also need to go to the toilet.

On the way there you see a DIORAMA, brackets *dI-oRaama*, noun, views of scenery painted on translucent cloth, viewed through an opening, and animated by lighting effects. This stimulates you to reflect on what has happened so far.

You notice the wash basin is made out of DIORITE, brackets *dI-oRIIt*, noun, a coarse grained igneous rock. Those green crystals are found in igneous rocks and so are recently fossilised goats legs. This confirms a link between the two. The question is why would a restaurant have a wash basin made out of Diorite? Unless they have an over-supply of it. Of course! They mine the stuff to get the green crystals out of it. They'd have tonnes of it simply lying around. Brilliant! You congratulate yourself. This restaurant must be the bishop's headquarters. The next question is how do they get the bacteria inside the crystals.

You look at the next word, which is DIOXIDE, brackets *dI-oksId*, noun, chemistry, oxide formed by two equivalents of oxygen and one of metal. But Sulphur isn't a metal so how do they explain Sulphur Dioxide? And Carbon isn't either yet carbon dioxide is the most well-known dioxide there is. Although Carbon *can* behave as if it is a metal and carbon dioxide under high pressure can force things like bacteria cells anywhere, particularly into green crystals inside goats legs.

So it seems conceivable that the bishop and his friend have perfected a way of secreting bacteria into goats legs, using the green crystals as the carrier.

Now how do they release the bacteria at the right time to do the damage, which is when the goats legs are being eaten? If you can answer this question their little game will be over. But the chances of coming up with a solution would seem to be as slim as winning something valuable from a lucky DIP, brackets *dip*, present participle dipping, past tense and past participle dipped, verb transitive and intransitive, plunge rapidly into liquid and withdraw immediately, move rapidly down and up again, sink or drop suddenly, clean, dye, coat or make by plunging into liquid, slope down, geology, slope down at an angle to the horizontal. And after that long description, you feel as if you should give up.

Of course it is possible the problem is DIPARTITE, brackets *dIpaartIt*, adjective, divided into various parts. And it may have more than one solution. Actually, I don't think so, and you agree with me.

On your way back from the toilet you pass a door leading to the back of the kitchen. You push it open and peer in. You can see a microwave oven and on a plate beside it, the remains of some goats legs. You can also see what looks like a home-made power module wired up to the oven with two large old-style thermionic valves mounted on the top of it. You have a flash of inspiration.

Obviously the oven has been fitted with a generator which is DIPHASE, brackets *dIfayz*, adjective, electricity, having two alternating currents whose phases differ by 90 electric degrees. Clearly, if a high power alternating current is passed through the goats legs and 90 degrees out of phase with the power which causes the heat, then the bones will crack, the crystals will shatter, and the bacteria will be released through the resulting fissures as soon as somebody starts eating them. Bingo! It's simple.

The diode problem that the bishop's woman had was not on an x-ray machine. It was on a microwave oven. And the Diodone she used had nothing to do with radiography. Being a preparation of Iodine, it kills bacteria. They probably use

it as a safeguard in case their experiments get out of control. It all fits. To find the microwave oven was a sheer stroke of luck. It means you have indeed stumbled upon the bishop's headquarters. Again you congratulate yourself.

You return to the dining area and notice one of the dingle-dangle prostrate on the floor. You examine him. He has a stiff greyish membrane across his gullet. Together with the other symptoms, this is conclusive evidence that the bacteria being used is DIPHTHERIA, brackets *difthee*Ri-a, noun, grave infectious disease of the membranes of the throat and air passages. He is dead.

You rush to the bar where you find two more of the dingle-dangle lying on the floor. On examination you find they are also dead and both have a similar membrane attached to their gullets. But three more are still standing. Why have some died and not others? And why are you still alive yourself? On making enquiries you discover all the members of the dingle-dangle have eaten recently fossilised goats legs. The only difference between them is that the three members still alive entered the restaurant after you.

You have another flash of inspiration. You remember the broken package which spattered fine white powder everywhere when the dingy crashed down beside you before you entered the restaurant. It must be the antitoxin. And it must have rubbed off onto you as you entered and it must have also rubbed off onto those members of the dingle-dangle who arrived later. That's why all of you are still alive. After all, a bulk supply of the antitoxin would have to be kept somewhere.

You rush back to the dining room – alas too late. The bishop has vanished and the woman is lying on the floor. Examination shows that she is dead too, with similar symptoms.

The bishop must have known you were on to him. He panicked and killed his assistant to stop her from talking. The deaths of the dingle-dangle were incidental to his attempt to kill you; and now he has escaped.

You look at the last word on the page of the dictionary for a clue to the bishop's whereabouts. The word is DIPHTHONG, brackets *difthong*, noun, combination of two vowel sounds pronounced in one syllable. For instance "a" and "u" pronounced OR, as in Paul. Au is also the chemical symbol for gold. And "a" and "u" are phonetically equivalent to "Hey you" which is what everyone shouts when they want somebody. This could be it, you think. "a" and "u" pronounced OR, as in Paul. Au as the symbol for Gold. Eureka, you scream with delight. The bishop's real name must be Paul Gold and his address can therefore be found on the net under the RESIDENTIAL tab of whitepages.com.au.

"That is an absolutely pathetic ending," she snarled. She could feel her patience boiling into rage because the ending wasn't satisfying enough to make the wait worthwhile.

"Hey, why have you changed the viewpoint and lurched into third person dialogue?"

"Because your story has closure and it is not necessary. I wanted to break your concentration so you could see that." She stretched out in the airport seat and poked her tongue out at him.

"See what?"

"The last word 'Diphthong' does not have to give you a conclusion. The 'two vowels in one syllable' is a metaphor for two things being viewed as one. A mystery story and a writing lesson. So it doesn't matter whether the bishop is found or not. He is just a construct. His sole purpose is to make the lesson

work.”

“Oh how post-modernist and how self-referential.”

“Beginnings and endings do not reflect the art of a story, only the craft,” she said. And in her mind she added ‘you pompous ass’ with a hiss of venom.

“So as a lesson in creativity, your whole story has failed. You have killed it.”

“That’s your opinion. And it’s wrong.”

“It’s not. An opinion is not right or wrong. It is just an opinion. And all knowledge is relative.”

“That’s rubbish. Anyway I win the bet. And you owe me a Penguin dictionary.”

“A dictionary is just a collection of opinions.”

“And you are just an opinion of a writer expressed in a story.”

“Then what are you?”

“Me? I am the omnipotent author.”

Harley Carter lives in Bendigo with his wife together with sundry animals - both tame and wild. He has been working in the writing game for more years than should be necessary and has written for radio, stage, television, film, magazines and newspapers. He has taught writing for councils, community institutions and TAFEs and has been a Writer In The Community for the Shire of Pakenham (Vic) and a Writer In Residence in Dandenong (Vic). He holds a graduate Diploma in Professional Writing from VUT. When he isn't writing, doing compulsory chores or other jobs for survival money, he likes to read, converse, imbibe and make robots out of Meccano.

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TEXT poetry

Gregory A Gould

Sequence #2

1.
the man who asked
a question asked
a question asked
a question asked
2.
there is no word for
3.
today i didn't want
to follow the lines
so i turned the page
on its side
and built my words
like a city
4.
then he told us
that he was conceived
only because his parents
purchased a new couch
and i remember how
the class laughed
at his mathematics
5.
sometimes
heads explode
for no
reason

Sequence #5

1.
there is no darkness
like a white page
except perhaps
a mouth full of ink

2.
chewing down the last
page of this book
i wonder what seed
has been sown in my belly
3.
terminology:
an affliction of the tongue
often resulting in comically
mistimed miscommunications
and hyper-red blotching of the face
esoterically fatal
but easily treated with repeated
doses of silence or by placing
the offending tongue tightly
between clenched teeth
if symptoms persist
see your dictionary
4.
on page 294
of Dostoyevsky's *The Devils*
a message from a previous reader:
dude, give up now
this page is the best bit
it all gets shit from here
The Duel was over
5.
because existence
is measured in words
your life is as short
as this sentence
6.
nine words
are all i need
to say nothing

Gregory A Gould studied Creative Writing at the University of Canberra and is the co-founder of Blemish Books. He grew up in far north Queensland.

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TEXT poetry

Chris Mooney-Singh

The Last Balmainians, 1980

(For Frank Moorhouse & Michael Wilding)

Back then, I had come to live
on Cannery Row with Mac
and the last of the Balmain bugs.
I was so excited and smiling.
It was '79 turning '80.
I had my journo transcript
from a rustic country college
and headed straight to Sydney
to be among The Writers.
Yes, this would be my entrée
to love, fame, popularity,
grants, awards – the fantasy.
So when I got out of my car
to enter a boarding house
straight from Old Goriot,
split into *pensiones*,
and shown my French door view
with paths, cherubs, the Harbour,
I knew cheap rent with free mould
was going to be my take
on the cockroach life in a garret.

As for the state of the arts
I had heard that The Board
was boiling down arts money
to spread more of less of the toffee.
Was I too late for the party?
Balmain was a past, not present
and the writers were dole-grazing
in new slick chapters and cliques
in Annandale, Rozelle, maybe Mosman,
and some had definitely gone
North of the Harbour to hitch
further on up Nimbin way,
or were earbashing Gurus, far off
in Benares. No, I never
met poor Vicki.

A country bloke
alone in the city, I'd board
the Balmain ferry, chug past
waterfront yards and parks,
Russian and Chinese freighters
tethered like huge black sows

suckling the piglets of tugboats.
 Tasting the brine on my face,
 I'd look up, smiling, then back
 at the Bridge – a reality check:
Bonehead, you Are in the Smoke.

Leaving behind jetty gulls
 scavenging fish and chip fingers,
 I would then go on the search
 for survivors at the Exchange,
 hoping to catch up with Billy,
 or John, Tom, maybe Robyn,
 those names in the little mags
 who spoke in code to each other.
 Around here, poetry, I thought
 must be on a first name basis
 with New York poetry manners.
 I had hopes of getting along
 to an ontological party
 at someone's shabby crash pad
 beyond time and decorum
 in a Kubla Khan armchair of visions,
 while they kept on reminiscing
 Whitlam as Philosopher King,
 the Moratorium, the Readings,
 the fast/car smack subsidies
 when lit grants fell like manna.

Balmain rents were peaking.
 The layabout era had walked
 after the Waterside Workers
 marched off, demonstrating
 the demise of a seaside suburb.
 Not much of a Scene here now,
 I did once meet Sam Hunt
 and his entourage on tour
 all over from New Zealand
 one Saturday morning flea market.
 They were trying to collar the crowds
 with poems like shepherd's crooks
 and chapbooks in the bag;
 yet the shoppers were suspicious,
 not even warming to Nige,
 the popular local performer;
 and so we retired to the pub.
 The place was now all Property
 and I heard a last Balmainian
 bemoan the jacked-up real estate
 and the Maserati Literati
 screaming in like sharks for that hunk
 of harbour view and renovated
 villa with lead-light windows.
 Yes, the convict-hewn cottages
 were all getting sandblasted and
 bark gardens with nouveau ants
 were everywhere down the street
 like my next-door neighbour's.

I went to press his bell
 which was the nose of a gargoyle
 to be greeted by The Girlfriend
 and a priceless Albert Namajira
 of ghost gums, sky and red sand
 straight from the dead ringing centre
 of nostalgia, bouncing crow-caws
 in front on the wall of investment,
 while the cool kid lawyer
 was cutting the best Columbian
 upon the glass coffee-table,
 a line or two for me, even.
 Wow! The charity of the rich
 for a part-time gardener-poet!
 Was this to socially lift me,
 or help fast track my labour –
 I, a last patron of mould
 and Balmain cockroach sub-tenants
 in my flat just over the fence?
 Developers still hadn't marked it.
 Now, well-primed with nose candy
 and armed with pruning shears,
 the Butcher of Balmain
 created short-back-and-sides-
 mayhem in several front gardens.
 I dispatched weeds, flowers, shrubs
 with scissor-hands efficiency
 and stood back, admiring my work,
 pretending to be hacking away
 at the roots of upward mobility,
 my forehead still tingling with stars.
 How uncool I'd be in that crowd...

I forget, quite, how I met Mac,
 the middle-aged writerly-paunch
 hiding an everyman's heart.
 He sensed my need for a taste
 of the old bohemian mythos,
 so took me under his wing.
 Yes, now I recall time and place:
 a Friday night beer table
 with Don and some libertarians,
 the Round Tree Hotel in Birchgrove.
 They talked and I – the Mute One,
 without repartee, just listened.
 So Mac gave me employment
 in his Nelson St word-cave
 to research-assist a project:
 the summing up of the decade,
 its hopes, its loves and positions
 of bickering and bitchiness
 like dogs leaping at bacon;
 and I saw a Last Balmainian
 construct discontinuous time
 with a gorgeous visitor –
 a woman with cheeks like peaches.
 What was her name? Summer?
 Drinking red wine from coffee mugs

they discoursed like philosophers
 the finer sensations of fellatio
 when wearing a clinging condom
 as if this was quantum theory,
 or the way to cook asparagus.

It would all go onto a blackboard,
 adding fresh chalk to the epic
 of absurd libertarian dalliance
 like a Darian Fo farce –
 the scenes, dialogues, exits
 of the Excessive Generation,
 its postures and impostors
 high on whatever substance
 the Sydney Push was toking.
 This rough epistemology
 was a glance-back scrapbook of days,
 all wine and rage's good and bad
 fancy dress heads with photos
 of black and white shout-outs
 for social change on banners
 bra-burning sex-changing gay
 rights mantra chanting anti-war
 barricading of buildings.
 The anti heroes of an era,
 wearing little halos of lust,
 had gathered here en masse,
 drunk or stoned in the forehead
 of a recalcitrant Balmainian
 mixing politics with irreverence,
 singing the song-lines of culture,
 while offering requiem moments
 for the poor moth-souls who crashed
 in the flames of hard partying.
 (Those who had joined The Immortals
 with landmark anthology pieces
 still keep on muttering, muttering
 lost in the pages of Aus Lit
 like unripe ghosts in the Dreamtime:
 "If only Michael D, if only...")

It was time to close for the day.
 I turned the ignition and drove
 seeing now the sun had melted
 I critiqued the Bridge in my head,
 perfecting smart-arse discourse,
 de-constructing the Coat Hanger,
 drilled with modernist rivets
 its position between two cultures
 a literal bridge from the Occident
 its two-way traffic – a thesis
 of Europe – the ruins of our future,
 til it throbbed alive like a sex-toy,
 a nipple of red at the Bridge crest
 winking lewdly to ocean liners;
 and I steered my Torana away
 through back lanes of such history.

In streets, dark with doppelgangers,
 was that Bryan Brown out jogging,
 or some anchor from TV?
 The place was filthy with money.
 Dodging a black dog, I drove by
 Michael's big villa of wild parties
 where more waifs and strays of art
 once gathered on the balcony,
 exchanging reefers for Christmas
 and thought of this Other Balmainian,
 the one so close to home,
 my famed neighbour of Wharf Rd
 like a cut out in a diaorama,
 sitting ironic in the sunset –
 a sun-decker in a chair
 as if looking over the demise
 and raising his glass to the darkness.
 Cheers, Balmain Syberite!

It was getting dark, the future
 unclear as smoke on the water,
 and the Saturday disco ferry
 was banging on like chest-pain
 with Blondies' *Heart of Glass*,
 the anthem of the new decade:
 designer drugs, kinky dinners,
 champagne and snowfall tingling;

and lobsters and Balmain bugs
 ready to dance a quadrille
 between serviettes and lit candles.
 I knew it was time to get real
 and went back to my cockroaches,
 said goodbye to them, one by one,
 then took the last cold shower
 through the nozzled aperture
 like a galvanised watering can
 down in the back shed closet,
 and found myself packing the car,
 ready to flee to another
 astonishing place on the planet,
 still aching to find the real me
 God-knows-elsewhere tomorrow.

Chris Mooney-Singh's recent poetry collection: The Bearded Chameleon (2011) explores cultural adoption in India as a convert to Sikhism. The Laughing Buddha Cab Company (2007) looks at Asia through a series of taxi rides. His fiction has appeared in The Best of South-East Asian Erotica, The Best of Singapore Erotica, Love and Lust in Singapore and Crime Search: Singapore. Two short plays were produced for the Singapore Short and Sweet Festival in 2008 and 2009. Having returned to Australia after 20 years living in Asia, he is presently completing his PhD in literature at Monash University. chris@wordforward.org

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Editors: Nigel Krauth & Enza Gandolfo

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TEXT poetry

Les Wicks

Jewfish Bay

The river is filthy –
slurried shawl of gasoline
life-cluttered mud then
that pelican dropped a big one.
Today's dramatic dropping is floating amongst the rainbows of men
like a territory, a final bets gentlemen.

Seven-year-old Toby in his Sawyer hat,
thinks it's kinda gross.
But dad reckons no worries
as jet ski lesions bleed out the horizon.

In momentary carelessness
fall to the hum.
On this estuary
we all write in white

Tom Collins

I fall beneath my cart of names
leave colour in the wound.
There is consequence in each unanswered call
silence beyond glance.

So, leave colour to the wound up
Eat feathers in the shade
silence any glance
open up this clever fade.

I eat feathers into shade.
Among birds I am a dog,
silence any chance.
We rut beneath applause.

Among birds I am a god
but children mock my graves.
We cut beneath plausibility
to deliver only ether.

But children are only grapes
we harvest their despair
delighted under ether, a stumpy photograph offered
to the gyprock lusts of life.

We divest their despair
then lose our hair
before their gimpy loves of looting
we are the kings, tossed out of town.

We lost our air
nobody is there
we were the kings, lost in brown
claim nothing just here.

We all fall beneath our cart of names...
consequence assured.

*Les Wicks has toured widely and seen publication in over 250 different magazines, anthologies & newspapers across 15 countries in 9 languages. His 8th, most recent book of poetry is The Ambrosiacs (Island, 2009). His poetry workshops have been conducted across Australia.
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