

Poetry contents

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TEXT poetry

B N Oakman

On the back of poetry

A flirtation with frugality entices me
to write shopping lists
on the reverse side of drafts of poems
the many not-yet-ready ones
so if I fumble the frozen peas
and overturn my list
my mind jumps
to thoughts of rhythm and meter and line
and sometimes even grasps for a rhyme
- a fleeting challenge
from a humble but insistent art
to the abiding tyranny of necessity.

BN Oakman is an economist whose prize-winning short fiction and poetry has appeared in or been accepted for Overland, Southerly, Eureka Street, Social Alternatives, Island, Tirra Lirra, Westerly, The Australian, The Age, The Canberra Times, Famous Reporter, Going Down Swinging, Imago, Australian Short Stories, Northern Perspective, The Mozzie, in anthologies used in schools, and elsewhere. <brubarb@aapt.net.au>

TEXT

Vol 12 No 1 April 2008

<http://www.textjournal.com.au>

Editors: Nigel Krauth & Jen Webb

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TEXT poetry

John De Laine

She smiled

Time burgles us.
It comes in the night,
and the next night
and the next.
We've no protection
from its rusted crowbar,
its old stocking face.
It ransacks youth,
It undermines us, and gags us.

We have finished.
We send it out. Finish again,
And send out again.
We bank the cheques, do the talk shows.

A work of art becomes marketable.
Poverty becomes success.
Rented rooms become a sky-home.
A bus becomes a Porsche.
Friends become acquaintances.
Congratulations become concealed knives.
Conversation becomes alcohol.
We forget the name of our first love.
Our performance becomes a topic in pubs.
Donations become tax deductible
and we forget the reason she smiled
that day.

John De Laine's first book of poems was published in 2000 in Friendly Street's *New Poets* series. He is presently a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Adelaide, where his thesis includes a novel, in verse, and an exegesis which explores the creative ideas of the poet Edward Thomas. He would like, one day, to visit Adlestrop, and listen to the birds of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. <delainej@internode.on.net>

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TEXT poetry

Paul Magee

That trees are graves at every step

1)

that trees are graves at every step (there's only one)
into the sky, constellating Brisbane

2)

Remember (the kid falling off the shelf) to press Record
for 'family comedy violence'. Kid remembers to cry - out loud -

Australia's Funniest Home Videos
finished, and we went out, via *Liquorland*

whereby bottles of people and landings of self
and disco-dancing games and karate
fell over at Lyndal's birthday party,

but that fall back forward

opens your ears eyes nose mouth the doors of the house
it touches silence.

3)

Unemployment, New Farm

Tattooed from ear to ear but blank-faced
a man walks, a blank screen with writing
to the retreating sea of secretarial staff
behind the counter, where they try smiling.

He will probably not quite add up, at *Employment Plus*,
the Salvation Army's drop-in / be dropped-out nor I,
ideas all over my face, three degrees in mind
and none in any way reliable.

I've been trained to read paper, heads, their
collisions called writing.

Authorship is uncertain as personality
and I surmise from Liz's lecture

I've got the wrong one. She's teaching us
networking and how employers value honesty over
skills; "I'm not very honest. Oh shit!" (well, I'm a writer)
escapes my lips. I produce tattoos.

4)

The text, unlocked, says little, it's just a text, a clothing
yesterday the door broke on our New Farm flat and
the tradesman doesn't work today.

*

The walking question marks to whom words are addressed
(the sending is all around us
punctuation is not death

that path short and winding that rode right through you
hard like breath

Paul Magee's most recent book, *Cube Root of Book* (John Leonard Press 2006), was shortlisted for the 2008 John Bray Poetry Award in the Adelaide Festival Of Arts. Paul is a senior lecturer in creative reading at the University of Canberra. He is the president of the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia, and has abiding interests in idleness, boredom, stagnation and revolution. <Paul.Magee@canberra.edu.au>

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