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**Australian Poetry**

**Rex Ingamells**

**The Camp Fires of the Past**

A thousand, thousand camp fires every night,  
in ages gone, would twinkle to the dark  
from crest and valley in the rolling bush,  
from mulga scrub and mallee scrub, from dunes  
of Central sand, from gaps in straggling ranges,  
from gibber plains and plains of iron-wood,  
through leaves and in the open, from the mangroves  
by shore of Carpenteria, from rocks  
and beaches of the Bight.....for countless aeons,  
a thousand, thousand camp fires burned each night,  
and, by the fires, the Old Men told their tales  
which held their listeners spellbound.... Every night  
among the fires men chanted to the beat  
of stick and boomerangs and clap of hands,  
or drone-and-boom of didgeridoo, the songs  
rising and falling, trailing, quickening,  
while eyes gleamed bright, through smoke drift, bodies shone  
and dusked in fitful glow amid the shadows.......

**Rex Ingamells**

# Ship from the Thames

# Stay, ship from Thames with fettered sails in Sydney Cove, this ebb of tide; your gear untangled from the gales, imprisoned at your anchor ride. The portly gentleman who are the pillars of the land come down and greet the Newcomes voyaged far to make a name in Sydney town. The Recoats, too with shouldered arms, marshal pale wretches from the hold, who, cramped in tempest and in calms have learned to do as they are told. Flash phaetons fill the streets to-day; inn-tables rock to sailor fists; the Governor, while the town is gay, checks over new assignment lists. Aloof, the slandered and abhorred behold from of a quarried rise, the cause of all the stir aboard a fiercer glitter in their eyes.

**Rex Ingamells**

# News of the Sun

##### The noon is on the cattle-track; the air is void of sound, except where crows, poised burning-black, cry to the dusty ground. Through mulga and mirage go none but brazen Boolee now, scorning the mercy of the sun beneath the niggard bough. But suddenly the mulga stirs; the hot leaves flash like stars; and, threading song on wing-beat whirrs, burst flights of gay galahs.

**Rex Ingamells**

# Boomerang

##### This piece of hardwood, cunningly shaped, was curved so evenly while piccaninnies gaped at a Warrior who chipped at it with pieces of flint, and formed it by meticulous dint upon dint. Outside his wurly he sat beside a tree, and chipped at it patiently for hours - not for me, but to kill the Wallaby in the rocky pass, to kill the fat wild Turkey hiding in the grass.

# A. D. Hope

# The Return of Persephone

Gliding through the still air, he made no sound;   
Wing-shod and deft, dropped almost at her feet,   
And searched the ghostly regiments and found   
The living eyes, the tremor of breath, the beat   
Of blood in all that bodiless underground.

She left her majesty; she loosed the zone   
Of darkness and put by the rod of dread.   
Standing, she turned her back upon the throne   
Where, well she knew, the Ruler of the Dead,   
Lord of her body and being, sat like stone;

Stared with his ravenous eyes to see her shake   
The midnight drifting from her loosened hair,   
The girl once more in all her actions wake,   
The blush of colour in her cheeks appear   
Lost with her flowers that day beside the lake.

The summer flowers scattering, the shout,   
The black manes plunging down to the black pit --   
Memory or dream? She stood awhile in doubt,   
Then touched the Traveller God's brown arm and met   
His cool, bright glance and heard his words ring out:

"Queen of the Dead and Mistress of the Year!"   
-- His voice was the ripe ripple of the corn;   
The touch of dew, the rush of morning air --   
"Remember now the world where you were born;   
The month of your return at last is here."

And still she did not speak, but turned again   
Looking for answer, for anger, for command:   
The eyes of Dis were shut upon their pain;   
Calm as his marble brow, the marble hand   
Slept on his knee. Insuperable disdain

Foreknowing all bounds of passion, of power, of art,   
Mastered but could not mask his deep despair.   
Even as she turned with Hermes to depart,   
Looking her last on her grim ravisher   
For the first time she loved him from her heart.

**Persephone**(or in Latin Proserpine) was abducted by Dis (Pluto), god of the underworld, while she was gathering flowers. Responding to the entreaties of her mother, Demeter (Ceres), Zeus allowed Persephone to spend six months of each year on the earth. Cp. Milton (*Paradise Lost*, IV.268ff):

Not that fair field

Of Enna, where Proserpin gath'ring flowers

Herself a fairer flower by gloomy Dis

Was gathered, which cost Ceres all that pain

To seek her through the world . . .

**Hermes**(Mercury) the messenger of the gods and patron of travellers, who conducted the souls of the dead to the infernal regions

# A. D. Hope

### The Pleasure of Princes

What pleasures have great princes? These: to know   
Themselves reputed mad with pride or power;   
To speak few words -- few words and short bring low   
This ancient house, that city with flame devour;

To make old men, their father's enemies,  
Drunk on the vintage of the former age;  
To have great painters show their mistresses  
Naked to the succeeding time; engage

The cunning of able, treacherous ministers   
To serve, despite themselves, the cause they hate,   
And leave a prosperous kingdom to their heirs   
Nursed by the caterpillars of the state;

To keep their spies in good men's hearts; to read   
The malice of the wise, and act betimes;   
To hear the Grand Remonstrances of greed   
Led by the pure; cheat justice of her crimes;

To beget worthless sons and, being old,  
By starlight climb the battlements, and while  
The pacing sentry hugs himself for cold,  
Keep vigil like a lover, muse and smile,

And think, to see from the grim castle steep   
The midnight city below rejoice and shine:   
"There my great demon grumbles in his sleep   
And dreams of his destruction, and of mine."

# A. D. Hope

# Parabola Year after year the princess lies asleep  Until the hundred years foretold are done,  Easily drawing her enchanted breath.  Caught on the monstrous thorns around the keep,  Bones of the youths who sought her, one by one  Rot loose and rattle to the ground beneath.

But when the Destined Lover at last shall come,   
For whom alone Fortune reserves the prize   
The thorns give way; he mounts the cobwebbed stair   
Unerring he finds the tower, the door, the room,   
The bed where, waking at his kiss she lies   
Smiling in the loose fragrance of her hair.

That night, embracing on the bed of state,   
He ravishes her century of sleep   
And she repays the debt of that long dream;   
Future and Past compose their vast debate;   
His seed now sown, her harvest ripe to reap   
Enact a variation on the theme.

For in her womb another princess waits,   
A sleeping cell, a globule of bright dew.   
Jostling their way up that mysterious stair,   
A horde of lovers bursts between the gates,   
All doomed but one, the destined suitor, who   
By luck first reaches her and takes her there.

A parable of all we are or do!   
The life of Nature is a formal dance   
In which each step is ruled by what has been   
And yet the pattern emerges always new   
The marriage of linked cause and random chance   
Gives birth perpetually to the unforeseen.

One parable for the body and the mind:   
With science and heredity to thank   
The heart is quite predictable as a pump,   
But, let love change its beat, the choice is blind.   
'Now' is a cross-roads where all maps prove blank,   
And no one knows which way the cat will jump.

So here stand I, by birth a cross between   
Determined pattern and incredible chance,  
Each with an equal share in what I am.   
Though I should read the code stored in the gene,   
Yet the blind lottery of circumstance   
Mocks all solutions to its cryptogram.

As in my flesh, so in my spirit stand I   
When does *this*hundred years draw to its close?   
The hedge of thorns before me gives no clue.   
My predecessor's carcass, shrunk and dry,   
Stares at me through the spikes. Oh well, here goes!   
I have this thing, and only this, to do.

# A. D. Hope

### Meditation on a Bone

A piece of bone, found at Trondhjem in 1901, with the following runic inscription (about A.D. 1050) cut on it: I *loved her as a maiden; I will not trouble Erlend's detestable wife; better she should be a widow.*

Words scored upon a bone,   
Scratched in despair or rage --   
Nine hundred years have gone;   
Now, in another age,   
They burn with passion on   
A scholar's tranquil page.

The scholar takes his pen   
And turns the bone about,   
And writes those words again.   
Once more they seethe and shout   
And through a human brain   
Undying hate rings out.

"I loved her when a maid;  
I loathe and love the wife  
That warms another's bed:  
*Let him beware his life!"*The scholar's hand is stayed;  
His pen becomes a knife

To grave in living bone   
The fierce archaic cry.   
He sits and reads his own   
Dull sum of misery.   
A thousand years have flown   
Before that ink is dry.

And, in a foreign tongue,   
A man, who is not he,   
Reads and his heart is wrung   
This ancient grief to see,   
And thinks: When I am dung,   
What bone shall speak for me?

Trondheim, a city in Norway

# A. D. Hope

### Tiger

*At noon the paper tigers roar   
-- Miroslav Holub*

The paper tigers roar at noon;   
The sun is hot, the sun is high.   
They roar in chorus, not in tune,   
Their plaintive, savage hunting cry.

O, when you hear them, stop your ears   
And clench your lids and bite your tongue.   
The harmless paper tiger bears   
Strong fascination for the young.

His forest is the busy street;   
His dens the forum and the mart;   
He drinks no blood, he tastes no meat:   
He riddles and corrupts the heart.

But when the dusk begins to creep   
From tree to tree, from door to door,   
The jungle tiger wakes from sleep   
And utters his authentic roar.

It bursts the night and shakes the stars  
Till one breaks blazing from the sky;  
Then listen! If to meet it soars  
Your heart's reverberating cry,

My child, then put aside your fear:   
Unbar the door and walk outside!   
The real tiger waits you there;   
His golden eyes shall be your guide.

And, should he spare you in his wrath,  
The world and all the worlds are yours;  
And should he leap the jungle path  
And clasp you with his bloody jaws,

Then say, as his divine embrace   
Destroys the mortal parts of you:   
I too am of that royal race   
Who do what we are born to do.

# Nine Bowls of Water - Poem by Robert Gray

Clear water, in silvery tin dishes  
dented as ping pong balls:  
a lemon juice tinge of the staling light is in them;  
they've a faint lid of dust.  
  
A potted water along a board slopped  
and dripping lightly.  
While the men work on the city road, excavating  
its charred blackness,  
  
the water waits  
behind a corrugated iron shed that is set  
at the pavement front,   
under the tall shadowing empty stadium.  
  
On that low plank, also, crude soap pieces,  
bright as the fat  
of gutted chickens - but, with a closer look, resistant,  
darkly-cracked, like old bone handles -  
  
one beside each bowl,  
and the rags are on their bits of hooked wire.  
The cars continue,  
but few people walk here between the lunch shed  
  
and brick wall. Set out along a wet bench,  
the kneeling water:  
this reality from which we have dreamed the spirit.  
We walk in grittiness,  
  
on papers, mud-scrapings,  
splattered with a sporadic jackhammer racket,  
past nine bowls of water - a gallantry of the union.  
Trees in avenues and sailing boats and women.

[Robert Gray](https://www.poemhunter.com/robert-gray/poems/)

Twilight

These long stars  
on  
  
stalks  
that have grown up  
  
early  
and are like  
  
water  
plants and that stand  
  
in all  
the pools and the lake  
  
even  
at the brim  
  
of  
the dark cup  
  
before  
your mouth these are  
  
the one  
slit star

# Wing-Beat - Poem by Robert Gray



In some last inventory, I’ll have lost a season  
through the occlusion  
of summer by another hemisphere.  
Going there  
the winter tolls twice  
across the year. The leaves of ice  
in their manuscripts  
are shelved on the air and each sifts  
fine as paper-cuts along the wind. I will go  
to crippled snow  
moving through the crossings, in the headlights  
of early nights.  
How glorious summer is to them  
who have caught just a glimpse of its billowing hem.  
‘Fifty springs are little room,’ an authority  
in loss warns, but actuarially  
I can expect to own  
ten summers, before the heights of blue close down.  
Although I’ve gone  
northwards, I shall cross the lawn  
at home – the trees and yard in bloom –  
in the mirror in an empty room.

# In The Park - Poem by Gwen Harwood

She sits in the park. Her clothes are out of date.  
Two children whine and bicker, tug her skirt.  
A third draws aimless patterns in the dirt  
Someone she loved once passed by – too late  
  
to feign indifference to that casual nod.  
“How nice” et cetera. “Time holds great surprises.”  
From his neat head unquestionably rises  
a small balloon…”but for the grace of God…”  
  
They stand a while in flickering light, rehearsing  
the children’s names and birthdays. “It’s so sweet  
to hear their chatter, watch them grow and thrive, ”  
she says to his departing smile. Then, nursing  
the youngest child, sits staring at her feet.  
To the wind she says, “They have eaten me alive.”

**The Glass Jar - Poem by Gwen Harwood**



To Vivian Smith  
A child one summer's evening soaked  
a glass jar in the reeling sun  
hoping to keep, when day was done  
and all the sun's disciples cloaked  
in dream and darkness from his passion fled,  
this host, this pulse of light beside his bed.  
  
Wrapped in a scarf his monstrance stood  
ready to bless, to exorcize  
monsters that whispering would rise  
nightly from the intricate wood  
that ringed his bed, to light with total power  
the holy commonplace of field and flower.  
  
He slept. His sidelong violence summoned  
fiends whose mosaic vision saw  
his heart entire. Pincer and claw,  
trident and vampire fang, envenomed  
with his most secret hate, reached and came near  
to pierce him in the thicket of his fear.  
  
He woke, recalled his jar of light,  
and trembling reached one hand to grope  
the mantling scarf away. Then hope  
fell headlong from its eagle height.  
Through the dark house he ran, sobbing his loss,  
to the last clearing that he dared not cross:  
  
the bedroom where his comforter  
lay in his rival's fast embrace  
and faithless would not turn her face  
from the gross violence done to her.  
Love's proud executants played from a score  
no child could read or realize. Once more  
  
to bed, and to worse dreams he went.  
A ring of skeletons compelled  
his steps with theirs. His father held  
fiddle and bow, and scraped assent  
to the malignant ballet. The child dreamed  
this dance perpetual, and waking screamed  
  
fresh morning to his window-sill.  
As ravening birds began their song  
the resurrected sun, whose long  
triumph through flower-brushed fields would fill  
night's gulfs and hungers, came to wink and laugh  
in a glass jar beside a crumpled scarf.  
  
So the loved other is held  
for mortal comfort, and taken,  
and the spirit's light dispelled  
as it falls from its dream to the deep  
to harrow heart's prison so heart may waken  
to peace in the paradise of sleep.

**The Wound - Poem by Gwen Harwood**



The tenth day, and they give  
my mirror back. Who knows  
how to drink pain, and live?  
I look, and the glass shows  
the truth, fine as a hair,  
of the scalpel's wounding care.  
  
A round reproach to all  
that's warped, uncertain, clouded,  
the sun climbs. On the wall,  
by the racked body shrouded  
in pain, is a shadow thrown;  
simple, unchanged, my own.  
  
Body, on whom the claims  
of spirit fall to inspire  
and terrify, there flames  
at your least breath a fire  
of anguish, not for this pain,  
but that scars will remain.  
  
You will be loved no less.  
Spirit can build, make shift  
with what there is, and press  
pain to its mould; will lift  
from your crucible of night  
a form dripping with light.  
  
Felix culpa. The sun  
lights in my flesh the great  
wound of the world. What's done  
is done. In man's estate  
let my flawed wholeness prove  
the art and scope of love.

**Homo Suburbiensis - Poem by Donald Bruce Dawe**



One constant in a world of variables  
- A man alone in the evening in his patch of vegetables,  
and all the things he takes down with him there  
  
Where the easement runs along the back fence and the air  
smells of tomato-vines, and the hoarse rasping tendrils  
of pumpkin flourish clumsy whips and their foliage sprawls  
  
Over the compost-box, poising rampant upon  
the palings ...  
He stands there, lost in a green  
confusion, smelling the smoke of somebody's rubbish  
  
Burning, hearing vaguely the clatter of a disk  
in a sink that could be his, hearing a dog, a kid,  
a far whisper of traffic, and offering up instead  
  
Not much but as much as any man can offer  
- time, pain, love, hate, age, ware, death, laughter, fever.

**The Dark Fires - Poem by Dorothy Hewett**

The dark fires shall burn in many rooms;  
will they sometimes miss me with my tangled hair—  
still girls in dark uniforms  
crouching in winter with their cold hands trembling,  
still voices echoing as our voices echoed  
and the faded frumped-up form  
of a mistress teaching French?  
Does she remember us or do we pass  
only like dreams of dark figures,  
some with different hair or deep voices,  
or merely countless hats hanging on pegs,  
countless columns of moving massed black legs?  
Our minds are sprawled on unforbidden lawns,  
our voices lie like queer leaves in the clipped grass,  
as we believe so we shall pass.

**Let Go - Poem by Jack Davis**



Let go of my hand  
Let me be what I want to be  
Let go of my hand  
The sands of time Are trickling before me  
I have not yet Achieved  
what I want to be  
Let go of my hand  
I want to stand alone  
In a sea of words  
Pluck out the phrases  
Soar like a bird  
I want to stand on a mountain  
Wait for the dawn  
Yet be aware of  
The approaching storm  
I want to fashion a rainbow  
That arcs through the sky  
And iron out the dilemmas  
Between you & I

**Racism - Poem by Oodgeroo Noonuccal**



Stalking the corridors of life,  
Black, frustrated minds  
Scream for release  
From Christian racist moulds.  
Moulds that enslave  
Black independence.  
  
Take care! White racists!  
Black can be racists too.  
A violent struggle could erupt  
And racists meet their death.  
  
Colour, the gift of nature  
To mankind,  
Is now the contentions bone,  
And black-white hatred sustains itself   
on the rotting, putrid flesh  
That once was man.

**Son of mine (TO DENIS) - Poem by Oodgeroo Noonuccal**

My son, your troubled eyes search mine,  
Puzzled and hurt by colour line.  
Your black skin as soft as velvet shine;  
What can I tell you, son of mine?  
  
I could tell you of heartbreak, hatred blind,  
I could tell you of crimes that shame mankind,  
Of brutal wrong and deeds malign,  
Of rape and murder, son of mine;  
  
But I'll tell you instead of brave and fine  
When lives of black and white entwine,  
And men in brotherhood combine-   
This would I tell you, son of mine.

**Understand Old One - Poem by Oodgeroo Noonuccal**



What if you came back now   
To our new world, the city roaring   
There on the old peaceful camping place   
Of your red fires along the quiet water,   
How you would wonder   
At towering stone gunyas high in air   
Immense, incredible;   
Planes in the sky over, swarms of cars   
Like things frantic in flight.

# Where Are We Going - Poem by Oodgeroo Noonuccal



They came in to the little town   
A semi-naked band subdued and silent   
All that remained of their tribe.   
They came here to the place of their old bora ground   
Where now the many white men hurry about like ants.   
Notice of the estate agent reads: 'Rubbish May Be Tipped Here'.   
Now it half covers the traces of the old bora ring.   
'We are as strangers here now, but the white tribe are the strangers.   
We belong here, we are of the old ways.   
We are the corroboree and the bora ground,   
We are the old ceremonies, the laws of the elders.   
We are the wonder tales of Dream Time, the tribal legends told.   
We are the past, the hunts and the laughing games, the wandering camp fires.   
We are the lightening bolt over Gaphembah Hill   
Quick and terrible,   
And the Thunderer after him, that loud fellow.   
We are the quiet daybreak paling the dark lagoon.   
We are the shadow-ghosts creeping back as the camp fires burn low.   
We are nature and the past, all the old ways   
Gone now and scattered.   
The scrubs are gone, the hunting and the laughter.   
The eagle is gone, the emu and the kangaroo are gone from this place.   
The bora ring is gone.   
The corroboree is gone.   
And we are going.'

**The Emerald Leopard - Poem by Dorothy Featherstone Porter**

You're lost if you steer.  
  
How did you get here?  
  
Leopard, that smell in the air.  
Leopard, that spoor at your feet.  
  
Your knots unfurled into a sail  
and you tacked into a high colour  
  
green.  
  
The leopard coughs from the horizon  
you head for her throat.  
  
She's beautiful.  
  
A roar of sea, a roar of fur  
you can look at her  
you can look at anything.  
  
A whiplash of tail  
  
as she looks at you.  
  
She's so dangerous;  
immense,  
she takes your trembling measure  
  
her eyes smoke  
  
your eyes close  
  
you want the cuff of her paw  
you dream  
of her weight on your chest.  
  
She doesn't move.  
A lush silence  
spreads from her stare.  
  
Her breath in your face.  
  
She shapes you  
sharp as light.  
  
You don't swoon.

# Numbers - Poem by Dorothy Featherstone Porter

I get magic  
(sometimes I get more  
than I bargain for)  
  
but I don't get  
numbers.  
  
Numbers do worse  
than humiliate  
or elude me  
  
they don't add up.  
  
I am no algebra tart  
ravished  
by the meretricious music  
of the spheres.  
  
My eyes and nose  
never streamed  
with incontinent ecstasy  
through geometry classes  
as my disastrous triangles  
collapsed in a cacophony  
around me.  
  
Perhaps it's a failing   
to grasp  
or even want  
the utterly perfect number  
burning through my retina  
like the utterly perfect morning.  
  
Instead I peer  
with nauseating vertigo  
into the deep dark pitch  
of numbers  
like an exhausted mammoth  
dangerously tottering  
on the edge  
of a bottomless mystery.

**Aurora Prone - Poem by Les Murray**



The lemon sunlight poured out far between things  
inhabits a coolness. Mosquitoes have subsided,  
flies are for later heat.  
Every tree's an auburn giant with a dazzled face  
and the back of its head to an infinite dusk road.  
Twilights broaden away from our feet too  
as rabbits bounce home up defiles in the grass.  
Everything widens with distance, in this perspective.  
The dog's paws, trotting, rotate his end of infinity  
and dam water feels a shiver few willow drapes share.  
Bright leaks through their wigwam re-purple the skinny beans  
then rapidly the light tops treetops and is shortened   
into a day. Everywhere stands pat beside its shadow  
for the great bald radiance never seen in dreams.

**Cockspur Bush - Poem by Les Murray**



I am lived. I am died.  
I was two-leafed three times, and grazed,  
but then I was stemmed and multiplied,  
sharp-thorned and caned, nested and raised,   
earth-salt by sun-sugar. I was innerly sung  
by thrushes who need fear no eyed skin thing.  
Finched, ant-run, flowered, I am given the years  
in now fewer berries, now more of sling  
out over directions of luscious dung.  
Of water crankshaft, of gases the gears  
my shape is cattle-pruned to a crown spread sprung  
above the starve-gut instinct to make prairies  
of everywhere. My thorns are stuck with caries  
of mice and rank lizards by the butcher bird.  
Inches in, baby seed-screamers get supplied.  
I am lived and died in, vine woven, multiplied.

**Ernest Hemingway and the Latest Quake - Poem by Les Murray**

In fact the Earth never stops moving.  
  
Northbound in our millimetric shoving  
we heap rainy Papua ahead of us  
with tremor and fumarole and shear  
but: no life without this under-ruckus.  
  
The armoured shell of Venus doesn't move.  
She is trapped in her static of hell.  
The heat of her inner weight feeds enormous  
volcanoes in that gold atmosphere  
  
which her steam oceans boil above.  
Venus has never known love:  
that was a European error.  
Heat that would prevent us gets expressed  
  
as continent-tiles being stressed and rifted.  
These make Earth the planet for lovers.  
If coral edging under icy covers  
or, too evolutionary slow  
  
for human histories to observe it, a low  
coastline faulting up to be a tree-line  
blur landscape in rare jolts of travel  
that squash collapsing masonry with blood  
  
then frantic thousands pay for all of us.

**Inside Ayers Rock - Poem by Les Murray**



Inside Ayers Rock is lit  
with paired fluorescent lights  
on steel pillars supporting the ceiling  
of haze-blue marquee cloth  
high above the non-slip pavers.  
Curving around the cafeteria  
throughout vast inner space  
is a Milky way of plastic chairs  
in foursomes around tables  
all the way to the truck drivers' enclave.  
Dusted coolabah trees grow to the ceiling,  
TVs talk in gassy colours, and  
round the walls are Outback shop fronts:  
the Beehive Bookshop for brochures,  
Casual Clobber, the bottled Country Kitchen  
and the sheet-iron Dreamtime Experience  
that is turned off at night.  
A high bank of medal-ribbony  
lolly jars preside over  
island counters like opened crates,  
one labelled White Mugs, and covered with them.  
A two-dimensional policeman  
discourages shoplifting of gifts  
and near the entrance, where you pay  
for fuel, there stands a tribal man  
in rib-paint and pubic tassel.  
It is all gentle and kind.  
In beyond the children's playworld  
there are fossils, like crumpled  
old drawings of creatures in rock.

**Observing The Mute Cat - Poem by Les Murray**

Clean water in the house  
but the cat laps up clay water  
outside. Drinking the earth.  
  
His pile, being perfect,  
ignores the misting rain.  
  
A charcoal Russian  
he opens his mouth like other cats  
and mimes a greeting mew.  
  
At one bound top-speed across  
the lawn and halfway up  
the zippy pear tree. Why? Branches?   
Stopping puzzles him.   
  
Eloquent of purr  
or indignant tail  
he politely hates to be picked up.  
His human friend never does it.  
  
He finds a voice  
in the fly screen, rattling it,   
hanging cruciform on it,  
all to be let in  
to walk on his man.  
  
He can fish food pellets  
out of the dispenser, but waits,  
preferring to be served.   
  
A mouse he was playing  
on the grass ran in under him.  
Disconsolate, at last he wandered  
off - and drew and fired  
himself in one motion.  
  
He is often above you  
and appears where you will go.   
  
He swallows his scent, and  
discreet with his few stained birds  
he carries them off to read.

**Monolith - Poem by Bruce Beaver**



At the foot of a northern pylon of the Harbour Bridge   
I have kept my vigil since the mighty span was built.   
I come early in the day from worn-out corners of the area   
and sit when the sun is out until the waning afternoon,   
thence to another role, another manifestation of duty.   
On my way I pass a cavern echoing with traffic noise.   
When the sun is setting it blazes up like a testing tunnel   
of the cosmic fire at the beginning and ending of universes.   
It reminds me we are not that far in time from a kalpa’s ending.   
More than four thousand million years in the lives   
of the starry and the planetary entities   
who influence us and are never truly seen.   
At the pylon’s base I meet with seeming fools and sages,   
more of the former, alas, but it was ever the same   
at the other Thebes. The great towering stone columns could fittingly house   
the troglodytic priests and harbour an inward turning flame   
in bifurcated flowering for the known and unknown god   
and my own dilapidated dispensation.   
The only way the scene differs now   
is in the lack of overt piety,   
the thinning out of conscious pilgrims passing by me   
here upon the seasonally withered grass.

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