

# SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES:

## The Clemente Australia Anthology



M. Griffith J. Murray & P. Howard (Eds)

Published in Australia by  
Garratt Publishing  
32 Glenvale Crescent  
Mulgrave, Vic. 3170  
[www.garrattpublishing.com.au](http://www.garrattpublishing.com.au)

Copyright © Australian Catholic University 2016

All rights reserved. Except as provided by the Australian copyright law, no part of this book may be reproduced in any way without permission in writing from the publisher.

Text editing by : Michael Griffiths, Peter Howard, John Murray  
Cover image Copyright © Chris Barnick  
Typesetting: Mike Kuszla, J&M Typesetting  
Printing and quality control in China by Tingleman

Cataloguing-in-Publication information for this title is available from the National Library of Australia

[www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au)

ISBN: 9781925073317

### Acknowledgements

Every effort has been made to trace the original source of copyright material contained in this book. The publisher would be pleased to hear from copyright holders to rectify any errors or omissions.

Garratt Publishing has included on its website a page for special notices in relation to this and our other publications.  
Please visit [www.garrattpublishing.com.au](http://www.garrattpublishing.com.au)



# Contents

Acknowledging the Authors	Greg Craven	5
Establishing Clemente Australia 2003	Peter Howard	6
My Student Experience of Clemente	Heather Bowman	7
World Café Celebrations Ballarat	Kyme Bailey	9
Preface	Kevin Hart	10
Reflections on Teaching Clemente Australia Students	Michael Griffith	11
Clemente Students - Writing Themes...		
The Space Around Me	[context, community, home]	17
How I Got Here	[past/memory]	35
Shaping Experience	[creativity]	39
Struggling	[setbacks & frustrations]	61
We Are Thinking	[change]	81
Going Forward	[trust, hope, spirituality]	103
Spirituality		113
Learning		131
Hope		141
Epilogue	<i>John Van Gulick</i> [Clemente Graduate]	145
Index of Contributors		

# Acknowledgements

The cover image was produced by Chris Barnick, resident at the Mission Australia MAC Centre in Surry Hills during the time that many of the Clemente units were running. The figure at the centre (John) is John the Lawyer, otherwise known as John McDonnell who attended several Clemente Literature units and produced some outstanding work some of which can be seen in this anthology. John, a former lawyer, is renowned amongst the community of disadvantaged as a caring, helping human being who always puts the concerns of others before his own.

This anthology is the result of a collaborative effort amongst Associate Professor Michael Griffith, Associate Professor Peter Howard (National Leader, Clemente Australia), Dr John Murray, Paul Waite, Jennifer He, Sr Maria Wheeler and Catherine Metcalfe. Dr Elaine Lindsay has meticulously edited the final text. All are staff of Australian Catholic University and feel privileged to share with all the insights of the Clemente students.

Financial support for this publication has come from both Australian Catholic University and Carroll & O'Dea (Lawyers).

All reasonable efforts were taken to obtain permission to use copyright material reproduced in this book, but in some cases copyright holders could not be traced. The editors welcome information in this regard.

## *Note on the illustrations and the art work on this anthology*

Student work has mostly been published on-line in the form of BLOGS. The BLOG site in which they have written their work allows students to support their texts with visual images and designs. These form part of their creative presentation. All photographs included within the blogs are by the students themselves.

## Acknowledging the Authors

The Australians who have contributed to this Clemente Anthology share with us their lives, thoughts and dreams through their life challenges across the years. They have used words and images to bring to the surface a lens of life that many other Australians rarely experience. Their poems, poetry and images teach us of the human spirit that often lives about us unseen. Their hope in the future, the opening up of possibilities and their key sense of that which is about them are their gifts to us. This Anthology opens our thoughts to the lives of others as expressed by them. Too often it is the third person who describes the lives of people encountering disadvantage...not here!

We are indebted to the courage of these authors and other Clemente students in the ways in which they lead us into their world as part of the broader Australian community. Indeed, their expressed thoughts and ideas shape our community and support us, as Australians, in knowing more about one another.

These authors wrote their works as students of Australian Catholic University as they undertook study in a number of literature based units in the Clemente program. The quality and insightfulness of their words and images are self-evident. They have shed light on some dark times and in doing so have moved and shaped the university towards a better understanding of the gifts and potential of people who are often not as valued as they should be within our community. For this we are all indebted.

To all those people, including university staff, lecturers, learning partners and organisations who together provide the learning opportunities for Clemente students I thank you for your ongoing efforts and commitment. This Clemente Anthology is a powerful testimony to what Australians can achieve in coming together for the mutual joy for all. Australian Catholic University is extremely proud of the part we play through Clemente in realising the hopes of people through life's challenges.

Professor Greg Craven  
Vice Chancellor and President  
Australian Catholic University

# Establishing Clemente Australia

“If one has been ‘trained’ in the ways of poverty, what is needed is a beginning, not a repetition... if we learn through the humanities to want to seek freedom, to be beginners, if we learn to live a life not of reaction but of reflection, then we’re prepared to go on to do wonderful things and have a full life. We’re free in ways that other people are not.”

Earl Shorris, Founder, Clemente Course in the Humanities.

In 1995 Earl Shorris, a social critic and author in New York, was researching for a forthcoming book and visited the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for Women in Westchester County, N.Y. where staff and inmates had developed a program to deal with family violence. Earl wanted to see how their ideas fitted with what he had learned about poverty. One of the inmates gave an opinion on why poor people were poor. She told Earl it was because they lacked “the moral life of downtown”...meaning, she said, exposure to “plays, museums, concerts, lectures, you know.” Earl replied “You mean the humanities?”... “Yes, the humanities,” she said.

Earl decided to test the theory with an experimental course and founded the Clemente Course in the Humanities...with the Director of the Roberto Clemente Family Guidance Center in Lower Manhattan offering the Center’s conference room as a classroom.

Following a visit to Australia by Earl Shorris in 2003, Australian Catholic University, in collaboration with the St Vincent de Paul Society and with financial assistance from the Sisters of Charity and Sydney City Council offered the first Australian Clemente program at the community centre of Vincentian Village in East Sydney that same year. In 2016 there are 13 centres offering the program across Australia.

Clemente Australia is a ground-breaking university course for Australians experiencing multiple disadvantage and social isolation. It provides the resources and opportunity to support people in making changes in their lives through university-level education. It uses a “strengths” based model that sees students as having the strength and capability to shape their own goals, change their dispositions and improve life choices. The approach to learning is respectful and open, recognising that the various life experiences of the students contribute an opportunity to create rich knowledge together. The design of space, place and activity promotes balance between social support and self-direction and a sense of taking ownership of learning within the group and the opportunities to realise possibilities.

Associate Professor Peter Howard  
National Leader, Clemente Australia  
Australian Catholic University

# My Student Experience of Clemente

## Heather Bowman – Clemente Graduate

It is not easy, ever, to admit that there are areas of a life which are imperfect. Facing up to one's responsibilities and duties as an adult takes courage and fortitude. Sitting in a room listening to lectures for two hours a week is not what most of us would consider as the most effective way to live an adult life of dutiful responsibility in which all perceived flaws are eradicated by force of will. Therefore, it was not without a sense of abrogation of my adult responsibilities that I undertook the journey – the free ticket – to an adventurous exploration of the world of the liberal arts offered by the Clemente program.

Understanding the way in which the world works so often has to begin with an understanding of the self. The units offered in Clemente provided expert guidance to those of us who were struggling to understand the injustices and inequities we sometimes encountered in life. Studying introductory units of Ethics, Sociology, Australian Aboriginal History and Literature provided an effective entry point into deeper consideration of not just the self, but the wider world too. The world suddenly became alive, the structure of existence, how we interact as human beings suddenly took on a clarity that had been absent before. I watched as my fellow travellers on this journey also developed a renewed sense of connection to the world around them, to their communities and even to themselves.

The journey was not always a comfortable one. The seats were free, but the right to remain in the seat had to be earned. As a Clemente student you quickly realise that you are a part of something which goes way beyond the self. You are now a member of a unique team of individuals, committed to improvement of not just the self, through developing a broader knowledge, but also to improving and understanding our communities; for those sitting in these seats it comes as a shock. Community is something which holds Clemente together, which makes it a force for change in the world. Knowledge without understanding and reflection is useless.

Literature, in particular, challenged students to reflect upon humanity's subjective experiences as represented by wordsmiths as varied as Tim Winton, Jack Davis and Judith Wright. All the other disciplines seemed to coalesce into one as the alien shores of haiku, and sonnet, allegory and narrative expressed exactly what it is to be human, to feel, to exist, to love or to hate. Understanding crystallised, and literature was the catalyst. We, too, were encouraged to express ourselves creatively as we were gently introduced to the world of blogging. The world theoretically could now listen to our pleas for justice, to our musings on nature or simply to our subconscious streams of daydreamt thought. A shout, or a whisper, a simple utterance, could now be heard – we were finally voiced. Active engagement with the world was now more than a possibility.

Above all Clemente provided individuals with a renewed sense of hope. It nurtured a community of belonging where previously only a sense of injustice lurked. Utilising the academic skills we were slowly developing, we were challenged repeatedly throughout the academic process to reflect upon our experiences of the world in a more informed way and to be actively engaged in creating better lives for ourselves and for those we encountered. Education and the creative process which is embedded within literature, is the passport to an enhanced awareness of the human condition.

Heather Bowman  
Clemente Graduate, Campbelltown  
28th Sep 2015



# World Café Celebrations – Ballarat

## Kyme Bailey – Clemente Graduate

Today standing here in front of so many people, many of whom are strangers, I am so far out of my comfort zone. If anyone had told me two-and-a-half years ago that I would be standing here I would have laughed and called you crazy. However, I am standing here, and that is due to the Clemente program. Being a part of Clemente has taught me many things. Yes, I've studied some amazing units, but my biggest lessons I have learnt are that I am capable of anything that I set my mind to and that I should never ever underestimate myself. When I was first told about this program and asked if I would like to be a part of it I almost didn't do it because I doubted myself so much, but I decided to give it a go. In the back of my mind though was that little voice saying "You can't do this, you'll drop out or fail, you're fooling yourself for even trying." As you can see that little voice was wrong.

I couldn't have done it, though, without the amazing support offered to us students. The learning partners who come in on a Thursday to support us and help us work on our assessments are wonderful, to get another point of view or perspective. The staff from the ACU and the local library teaching us research skills and essay workshops are an invaluable help. Most importantly, though, none of us would make it through without Narelle, she is the rock of the program, from the lunch that she supplies, which is always great, but most important, the emotional support she offers us all is amazing. I know personally I have gone to her in tears when I think that I can't possibly complete something or even when something in my life is going pear-shaped. Narelle is always there to listen and to give advice, and she is truly an amazing person.

When we enter the Clemente program we enter as strangers, all of us on our own journey, all of us with our own story. Over the course of the program we meet many people from all walks of life, as we get to know them we realise they are now a part of our own journey. Together as we learn, we laugh, we cry and we support each other, soon the strangers that entered are now not only classmates, not only friends but family, the Clemente family, a family I am so proud to be a part of. On behalf of my fellow Clemente family members I would like to say thank you to all involved in making this program the success it is. I know I am grateful for having participated, my time as a student has come to an end and what I do next I am not sure, but I know that having completed this program gives me the confidence to go on to do further study, which in turn will open new doors for my future.

Thank you.

Kyme Bailey  
Clemente Graduate, Ballarat  
2011

## Preface

Clemente Australia is one of the very best things sponsored by the Australian Catholic University. Students usually come to tertiary education with many advantages — health, training, finely honed social skills, immense support from family and friends — but those who labour under disadvantages can benefit as much, if not more, when brought into a university community. This is particularly so with the study of literature. To read a fine poem or a splendid story is to move outside oneself and perhaps learn to see oneself in a new light, one that illuminates a path to be taken. And to write poems and stories is to make those abstractions that trouble us — social isolation, depression, the feeling of hopelessness — concrete. They are made to speak directly from a given situation that is real or imagined. In seeing on the page before one a poem or prose piece that embodies something that beleaguers us, one transcends one's distress to a certain extent. Sometimes there is simply a sense of relief, as though a burden has been lifted. Sometimes a burden can be viewed, the challenge it presents weighed, and it can seem smaller. Then one can move forward or if not forward then around what has been troublesome. One might not always be able to move on, to be utterly free of what has bothered one, but one can always move forward or sideways; and in moving forward or sideways, one is beginning to master one's situation.

In reading the poems and prose pieces in this anthology I am moved to ponder John McDonnell gazing out from his new flat in a high-rise complex and then acknowledging “But such a long way down.” Among the many possibilities that open before us each day are some that are dark, and to fail to recognize that fact is to become prey to those dark possibilities. It is not what we don't know that threatens us; all too often it is what we don't know we don't know that can cause grief. Jean Voisin tells her journal, “The paper is my audience / that is enough to fulfill me.” It's true: no one who writes is ever truly alone. The very act of writing presumes the possibility of someone else able to read what is on the page, even if no one ever does. Now here is the *Clemente Anthology* and so now many people can read what was once written with only oneself as an audience. Other people can be fulfilled by reading poems and passages of prose, but the fulfillment is never complete, never final: the act of reading what others have written is always a spur to write more oneself and to write better than one has done before.

Certainly nothing in this anthology was ever truly confined to one reader. Always there have been others reading what has been offered, and not only reading but encouraging the person writing. First and foremost, Michael Griffith has been reader, advisor, and supporter. Now he appears as editor of the anthology, and the work he has done is an inestimable good for the community.

Professor Kevin Hart

Poet and Edwin B. Kyle Professor of Christian Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia

Professor of Philosophy Australian Catholic University.

# Reflections on Teaching Clemente Australia Students

Associate Professor Michael Griffith

Clemente Australia students enter their study having experiences of multiple disadvantages. Many have experienced homelessness, addiction, mental health episodes, depression, financial difficulties and unemployment. Some have lived on the streets, in cars, “lounge surfing” and in crisis housing. They have all encountered challenges in their lives that have taken them along unexpected pathways. They have “street” and life experiences that most people never encounter. Education in the humanities and the study of literature provide opportunities to examine their lives in new ways. Their writings provide insights and understandings of new worlds for many readers. They act as a lens through which the reader can witness the gifts and capabilities of those whom we often see from the corner of our eyes, sitting in the parks or sleeping on benches about our cities. Their writings make us appreciate the human beings before us as persons with talents. Their words support the reader in gaining a deeper appreciation of the life challenges they face.

The writings reproduced in this anthology have been selected from the extensive BLOGS (Live Journal and WordPress) produced by Clemente students. These writings bring to life the heart and soul of these students struggling to make meaning of their difficult lives. What we see here is a powerful advocacy of the creative processes they are engaged in and a witness of the life experiences they are having to deal with. The outcome is a body of writing that can shed light on the difficulties faced by us all.

David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* is a novel frequently studied by Clemente students in their literature classes. At its core, the book celebrates the transformative, redemptive power of the outcast in Australian society. Clemente students have found great comfort in Malouf's optimistic vision of the creative role played by the outcast. For Malouf, his central, outcast, character Gemmy Fairley is a touchstone to a different, more spiritual perception of reality. He acts as a catalyst, liberating social conformists to a deeper understanding of the nature of experience, even to a sense of the sacred. Jock McIvor is one such character who finds the world transformed in the wake of Gemmy's arrival:

It was as if he [Jock] had seen the world till now, not through his own eyes, out of some singular self, but through the eyes of a fellow who was always in company, even when he was alone; a sociable self, wrapped always in a communal warmth that protected it from dark matters and all the blinding light of things, but also from the knowledge that there was a place out there where the self might stand alone.

Wading through waist-high grass, he was surprised to see all the tips of beaded green, as if some new growth had come into the world that till now he had never seen or heard of.

One of our Clemente students did indeed carry something of Gemmy Fairley's transformative power into his classes. John Van Gulick, completed his Certificate in Liberal Studies and then enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree at ACU. Before his untimely death in 2009, John managed to score High Distinctions in all his literature units. When he spoke in class he shared his life experience and brought passion, breadth of insight and understanding to all who had the privilege to share a class with him. One of the first poems that John offered to a Clemente class at the Vincentian Village in Darlinghurst expressed his own sense of a new beginning through his study of literature.

I've lived so long as another man  
Never really knowing, who I truly am.  
Through clouded horizons I never could see,  
from tumultuous storms I would ever be free.

A child of abuse and a victim of crime  
A life on the edge and a doer of time.  
Locked into behaviour I could not repel  
Believing you make your own bed where you dwell.

From parties to prisons and pill packs and more,  
syringes and pot pipes were all I'd adore.  
And never a Searchlight and never a kiss,  
Could pierce the veneer of my protective bliss.

And now in my midlife something strange I detect,  
A shifting perspective on which I reflect,  
A new man is growing, a spirit emerging,  
Guided invisibly by a hand so encouraging.

Oh my soul now awakened Oh how I rejoice,  
I lean in, you whisper and I hear your voice.  
The elements conspire and weave in me strength,  
Building foundations that give my days length.

Now hope is a banner that covers my sky,  
Over fear and resentment I've learnt how to fly.  
Though I tremble and stumble I still find my way,  
To the centre of peace I now find in each day.

John, who had had little formal education, has here written a remarkable poem and demonstrated the value of opening people experiencing disadvantage to the miracle of poetic language as an instrument of insight, vision and hope. John went on to write some of the best literary critical essays on Shakespeare and William Blake that I have ever read from an undergraduate student. In truth, John's capacity is not isolated. Many Clemente students bring with them a storehouse of rich life experience, wisdom and understanding that help to deepen the response of those around them. On-campus students who have the good fortune to interact with Clemente graduates often say how their own understanding of literature and life is truly deepened by their opportunity to work with those who have had to struggle to get there.

### *Gathering the Writings*

I began teaching literature to around 15 socially disadvantaged and homeless students at Vincentian Village in 2006. With the onset of Web 2.0 tools and digital technologies, the Clemente students came to have rich interactive opportunities in their learning formerly unavailable. This took the form of doing weekly Web logs (BLOGS) based on their study of the literature and incorporating reflections on their life experiences.

The decision to introduce this technology was technically challenging, since many of the students did not know how to type and few of them had experience with computers. However, with patience, it was possible to familiarize the students with the necessary skills to begin blogging. Students were asked to choose one topic from a range of topics each week and write a short piece in the form of a creative or critical response to a poem or a story. Students often found themselves writing directly from their own experience, using the literature being discussed in class (for example a poem by Judith Wright or a story by Henry Lawson) as a model for their own work. The students' writings were show-cased on screen during class time for comment and discussion, often forming the basis for exploring further literary ideas and techniques.

A wonderful creative synergy emerged as students came to know the work of their peers and to hear of each other's life experiences. This process established a sense of community and cohesion. Their creativity, often triggered by their reading of classic literary texts and underpinned by their own complex life experiences, was now shared and openly discussed with others. There was the discovery of how the shaping of their own experience into words could bring deeper insight into their own lives. By far, the most important outcome of this whole process was that the voices and words of the homeless students began to be read, heard and understood.

John McDonnell (one of the contributors), captures the immense sense of possibility, albeit fragile, that comes with the creative attempt to closely observe his immediate surroundings and shape this experience into words.

## High rise blues

Sitting on the floor in the empty flat  
Waiting for a caller who does not come  
The power is off, not yet connected  
So I am left alone in the darkness  
To wonder and ponder  
And watch the clouds in their gradual drift  
And speak; my voice resounds across the room;  
And wonder if my life too is nothing  
But a dark empty shell.

I rise to my feet and my mood lightens.  
Before me the sky stretches, limitless.  
For now the beauty of the fifteenth floor  
Is a bird's eye view of the countless lights  
Maybe life's chances stretch before me so.  
But such a long way down.

### *Organising the Clemente Writings*

This anthology has been organized around the key themes of:

The Space Around Me	[context, community, home]
How I Got Here	[past/memory]
Shaping Experience	[creativity]
Struggling	[setbacks & frustrations]
We Are Thinking	[change]
Going Forward	[trust, hope, spirituality]
Spirituality	
Learning	
Hope	

These help to demonstrate the range of interests and ideas that were prompted during the Clemente students' time in class. Some of the offerings were produced during completion of their Certificate in Liberal Studies course. Some were written as part of a BA degree at ACU, others as they moved on to new locations. Overall there is a strong sense that the creative activity fostered by the Clemente program has had a powerful positive impact on students' lives. This is a rich feast of creativity that illustrates how the human spirit can truly flourish under adverse conditions.

Saint Francis of Assisi, reflecting on his deathbed on the key event of his life, his meeting with the leper, wrote: “And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body” *Testament*.

This anthology reflects the insight, the passion, the embodied complexities of life lived on the edge, as expressed in the prose, poetry and visual images of Clemente students. The blogs have been published- visually- as they first appeared on the chosen blog site, together with some of the on-line comments received by the blogger.

To those who agreed to participate in this Anthology their writings powerfully demonstrate to all readers the fact that creative and critical intelligence is not the preserve of those who have had privileged education or opportunities. Often such intelligence lies most strongly with those who have struggled and suffered with circumstances that most of us know little or nothing about. This anthology is a tribute to all Clemente students.





.....

T H E   S P A C E  
A R O U N D   M E

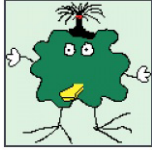
.....

# Anonymous

## Bedsit

9th Sep 2011

---



Early in the day, when the sun is up, fingers of yellow light might find a chink between grimy beige curtains and deposit into the air of my room a slim lozenge of gold in which glowing motes swirl and jig. So morning might find me on my downy mattress on a narrow steel bed frame. A chaos of bed clothes covers me. Near my head, a tiny, circular table bearing a small television – little used – of black plastic. Take four or five paces and you would reach the far end of the narrow little room. There you would see a scratched, wooden door with a sturdy lock that exits on to the passage way. To the right of the door a set of cupboards and a diminutive kitchenette – filthy sink, cheap plastic kettle, chrome microwave (also dirty) and tiny refrigerator barely eighteen inches tall that reeks when opened. Against a side wall stands a round, faux-marble-topped table used as a work station. Against the opposite wall is a cheap, rickety wardrobe of dyed pine. There is a wall-to-wall carpet of some ghastly, out-dated yellow and blue design covered in a thick pelt of dust.

But wait, there is more. There is much more. On almost every bare surface and on the floor are countless mounds of books. Stacks of them, heaps of them, piles. Great mounds of tomes, vast masses of numberless volumes. There must be hundreds of them, thousands maybe. Fiction, non-fiction, semi-fiction, historical fiction, fictional history, biography, autobiography, science, philosophy, politics, literary theory, cultural criticism, poetry, drama, novels, short stories, books on art, architecture, music, dance. Endless genres, limitless varieties, an unbounded body of knowledge and erudition. The very universe in print. And all of these titles piled, stacked, heaped up into hills; towering mountains of books, perpendicular cliff faces of books, crumbling precipices of books large and small, old and new, thick and thin. Oh joy!

This is my room, my chamber, my cell.

# John McDonnell

## My New Place

26th Oct 2008

---

I have just been allocated a flat in a high-rise and my experience in the empty apartment inspired this poem

### High rise blues

Sitting on the floor in the empty flat  
Waiting for a caller who does not come  
The power is off, not yet connected  
So I am left alone in the darkness  
To wonder and ponder  
And watch the clouds in their gradual drift  
And speak; my voice resounds across the room;  
And wonder if my life too is nothing  
But a dark empty shell.

I rise to my feet and my mood lightens.  
Before me the sky stretches, limitless.  
For now the beauty of the fifteenth floor  
Is a bird's eye view of the countless lights  
Maybe life's chances stretch before me so.

But such a long way down.

---

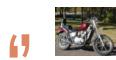
## Comments



**Michaelgriffith said:**

That is a fabulous short poem John ... well done. It captures beautifully the mixed emotions, the joy, fear and possibilities of this new situation. What a beautiful way to christen this new stage in your life. Well done! and Thank You!!

Michael



**necros99 said:**

### High rise

I bet the world looks different from fifteen stories up, the clouds are almost within arms reach. Good to see you are able to look at the bright side of the fence, often depression is caused just by our view on things, our surroundings may certainly influence us though, but again it is our perspective which affects our mood.

Paolo

# Rhonda Barrett

## The lone Wolf

Unlike people, they are never really alone because they keep their friends close by.



# Daniel Smith

## The Abstract Night

4th Nov 2008

---

### Night has fallen

The black velvet abstraction is upon us.  
Cooling, Calming Night  
Blurring sight, objects merge  
The leaves melt into the sky  
Buildings are shadows with boxes of lighted life  
And in that night the wolf moves  
silently speaking into the night.

---

## Comment



Michaelgriffith, 10th Nov, 2008 22:40

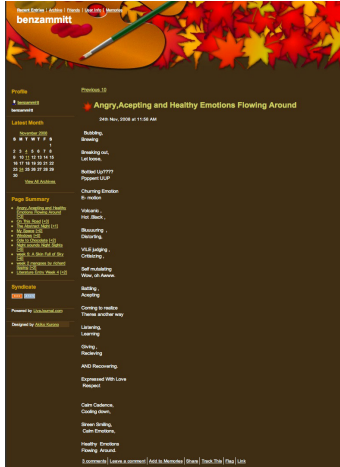
You are developing a fabulous lyrical style: “black velvet abstraction” is a powerful phrase that captures the physical and emotional feel of the experience. The image of the “wolf” is powerful and hints at layers of excitement and fear ... an excellent lyrical poem. Well done Daniel.

Michael

Daniel  
Smith

# Angry, Accepting and Healthy Emotions Flowing Around

24th Nov 2008 @ 11:58am



Bubbling,  
Brewing  
Breaking out,  
Let loose,  
Bottled Up????  
Ppppent UUP  
Churning Emotion  
E- motion  
Volcanic,  
Hot .Black,  
Bluuuuring,  
Distorting,  
VILE judging,  
Critisizing,  
Self mutalating  
Wow, oh Awww.  
Battling,  
Accepting  
Coming to realize  
Theres another way  
Listening,  
Learning  
Giving,  
Recieving  
AND Recovering.  
Expressed With Love  
Respect  
Calm Cadence,  
Cooling down,  
Sireen Smiling,  
Calm Emotions,  
Healthy Emotions  
Flowing Around.

# Anissa Chatt

I've given all I can it's not  
enough but we're still on the  
pay role. For a minute there  
I lost myself

27th Oct 2008



Normally I am handed hate in a teacup.  
But inside me, I'm handed shots of love by my bartender.  
Retreating back into my home, into myself. Where I am  
safe, loved. Nothing and no-one else can make me truly  
happy like that. Only all the many things that make me  
smile.

Babies with dribble down their faces  
Shaggy dogs on a sniffing mission  
Big men on small green bikes  
Restaurants called Oscillate Wildly  
Giggling toddlers on daddy's shoulders  
Cocktails with exotic names and questionable  
ingredients  
Sugar on my tongue  
Thunderstorms  
Baking and other disasters  
Chlorine permeating my skin  
Literal hilarity  
Arm dangling dead from the bed and trying to catch a  
breeze in a curtain  
Finally having myself back

# John McDonnell

## The New Shoes

---

At the beginning of the year, my friend John was hospitalised with a severe spinal infection and was unable to work for a couple of months. When he returned to his job as a casual cleaner, he was not able to do many hours so for a while he had very little money. He is not good with money – for more than one reason. With his first pay, he wanted to buy a pair of shoes; his old runners were nearly worn out. We went shopping and tried Paul’s warehouse, where there was a two for one sale, and he could have had two pairs for ninety dollars. But he didn’t like them; wrong brand. We visited various shops and looked at different shoes before his eyes really lit up. A pair of two hundred dollar blue Nike runners with exposed springs took his fancy. ‘If it’s not Nike, it’s nothing.’ He had to have them even though they should have been outside his budget. He was delighted with them and wore them to work. He soon found they were not really suitable shoes for his purposes and continued to wear his old ones. The first week he had a decent pay cheque he raced to the shoe shop and bought two new pairs of shoes - ASICS. Again two hundred dollars each but these were perfect; he was happy.

My friend Alan lives in the high-rise at Waterloo. Bedbugs were common down there and his flat somehow got infested. Housso moved him out while they were fumigating the flat. The ‘bed bug men’ arrived unexpectedly at seven a.m. and Alan had to pack his clothes in a hurry for his month sojourn away from his flat. He forgot to pack his shoes so he found himself with just an old pair of thongs he was wearing. That aside, he was delighted to find that Housso put him up at the Meriton serviced apartments, a dream compared to his ‘shithole of a home’. The complex includes a pool and a gym. The only problem for Alan was that he could not use the gym because he had no shoes. Like John, Alan is no good with money; he is inclined to spend his on drugs.

Alan visited me the day after he moved and explained his problem to me. Later that day we ran into John and I introduced him to Alan. I explained Alan’s problem to John and asked if he had any old shoes at home, thinking he might still have the old shoes from before he was sick. John and Alan both have large feet. He said he thought he’d thrown them out but we went to his place so he could look. He went into his room and brought out the blue Nikes. ‘You can have these.’

Alan couldn’t believe it. His eyes widened and he said, ‘Are you sure?’

‘Yes’, said John, ‘I never wear them now I’ve got the ASICS. They’re so comfortable.’

‘Thanks mate’, said Alan.

The shoes were a little tight but Alan was able to go to the gym. It was fortunate he had them because a couple of days later his thongs broke and otherwise he would have had no shoes.



# Coralie Hinkley

## a lament for his life

### 16th Sep 2008

My mind today is on a man called Russell who is dying of cancer and my urge really today is to write a story about a part of his life, which he expressed to me yesterday. I did not see him today so I could not continue the story.

It is a very sad story how he sleeps in Centennial park and how he drinks bourbon and that is how I got into conversation with him yesterday. He put this bottle on the table and I said 'Hey what is that, you shouldn't be drinking that. Is that alcohol?' And he said: 'Yes'. And I said: 'You shouldn't be drinking this here'. And he said: 'you wouldn't understand'. And I said: 'Yes I would'. And he said: 'The reason why I have it is because of the pain'.

And then for the next thirty minutes he told me the story and slowly I got quieter, put my head on my hand and looked at the eyes in his face and I listened to his story. And he could see that I could sincerely understand what he was saying. He promised to meet me today up at Paddington, but he didn't turn up. And I am worrying, I hope he does come, because his story is really quite wonderful and it kind of touched me, affected me.

He spoke about the ducks in the park and continued to say intermittently: 'animals are better than people' and I can relate to that.

## Comments

  **Michaelgriffith said:**

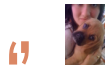
Hello Coralie. That is a very touching story - I hope to hear more ... this is a beautifully crafted and sensitive piece of writing ... well done. You are up and running. So now I can also make you into a LiveJournal Friend - and you can do the same. Simply open your LiveJournal and then open my LiveJournal (<http://michaelgriffith.livejournal.com>) and then click on the line at the top of the page which says 'Add them as a friend'.

Good work

Michael

 **erikagroschup2 said:**

coralie I don't like the word 'wonderful' in your story. I would say quite 'sad'. that's all. Bye bye from Erika

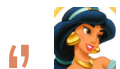


“ aussielatina said:

great stuff

hey there,

My name is Candice and I am a second year at ACU I thought I would read your journal and let me say I liked your story. It is sad to realize, however, that sometimes we can jump to conclusions without knowing the story, you decided to listen and you learnt the truth instead of thinking that the man was simply a drunk. I hope to hear more about this encounter hopefully you can see him again, sometimes I feel that we as a society tend not to listen to those who are in need, who need to be heard, it was a good thing you did and thank you for writing about it.



“ nancy\_m said:

Your Story

Hi Coralie

I really like your story so far, so I hope you get to meet that man again, and I hope he tells you a little more. I also like ducks. I remember having two yellow little ducklings when I was a kid and I loved them very much. Sometimes animals are kinder than people, but there are also some good people too. I hope you continue to enjoy your English classes:)

Nancy



“ ghattoman7 said:

Hi Coralie,

This little story has really affected me. I deeply hope he comes and talks to you too.

I understand what it feels like to have physical pain for long periods of time. But I guess if you're dying it doesn't matter what you do to your body. Physical pain is the worst, you'll do anything to get rid of it.

I got to say I love animals very intensely, and I too feel they are better than people. Animals can truly feel what you are going through. They love you so deeply. It's a gift to love and be loved by animals.

Bye,

Marc De Laconzi - Ghattoman 7

# Coralie Hinkley

## A Life for us

30th Sep 2008

I no longer see Russell. I have been searching for him for several weeks. I feel sad and distressed at this. I heard that he was drinking milk rather than alcohol. But I do not know how this helps the pain. And I really cannot comment on this. I cannot answer this question. I will pray that Russell will get better and that his suffering will decrease. I know that the park ranger is aware of him and will keep an eye on him. The ducks and geese have lost a dear friend. But have they?? I then said to the park ranger 'will you please come over here and tell me if you know any more about the poor homeless man who sleeps here in the park? Is there anything more that you can tell me about him. I am still very worried.' The park ranger replied 'he is all right miss. He wants to look after himself. Instead of alcohol he is now drinking milk.' 'How can drinking milk help him with his cancer pain?' The ranger, the ducks and I all shook our heads. The ranger answered me 'I will try to keep an eye on him and help him if this is possible. The ducks and geese miss their dear friend. They do not go any evening to the grassy spot under the tree where Russell slept every night, where the ducks kept him warm and the geese watched over him and protected him while he slept. Now, Lady, instead they swim across to the middle of this big pond. They greet the morning sun, chew the young leaves and play together in the warm sand and wait at night for Russell. I believe that as dawn approaches he will surely come, swimming through the slimy water, crawl up onto the hot sand and his friends will shelter him forever.' I have seen Russell again recently. 'Don't worry about me' he said. 'I'm all right. Just dig a hole. Throw me in it and put a sign on it... Rest In Peace.... (Requiem [Requiescat] in Pace).

## Comment

 mj\_13, 27th Oct, 2008 05:01

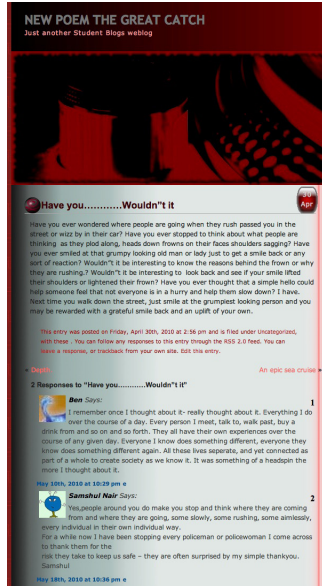
Hi Coralie,

This story is really sad. I don't even know Russell and I worry for him. I hope he's okay. Isn't it funny (as in odd not haha) that the honesty of a complete stranger can touch us so much. I noticed in your last entry you said that Russell thought animals are better than people. In some ways I see how you relate. Animals do not judge us, they do not discriminate, they do not have expectations (well not that we know of anyway). It's quite sad that someone feels that way though, that they have had such a terrible experience with people that they no longer have faith in them. I'm glad you shared this story with us because it has really prompted me to think a lot, and I know that I will now share this with my friends.

Michelle

Jenny  
Nielsen

Have you.....Wouldn't it  
30th Apr 2010



Have you ever wondered where people are going when they rush past you in the street or whizz by in their car? Have you ever stopped to think about what people are thinking as they plod along, heads down frowns on their faces shoulders sagging? Have you ever smiled at that grumpy looking old man or lady just to get a smile back or any sort of reaction? Wouldn't it be interesting to know the reasons behind the frown or why they are rushing? Wouldn't it be interesting to look back and see if your smile lifted their shoulders or lightened their frown? Have you ever thought that a simple hello could help someone feel that not everyone is in a hurry and help them slow down? I have. Next time you walk down the street, just smile at the grumpiest looking person and you may be rewarded with a grateful smile back and an uplift of your own.

## Comments



**Ben said:**

I remember once I thought about it - really thought about it. Everything I do over the course of a day. Every person I meet, talk to, walk past, buy a drink from and so on and so forth. They all have their own experiences over the course of any given day. Everyone I know does something different, everyone they know does something different again. All these lives separate, and yet connected as part of a whole to create society as we know it. It was something of a headspin the more I thought about it.



**Samshul Nair said:**

Yes, people around you do make you stop and think where they are coming from and where they are going, some slowly, some rushing, some aimlessly, every individual in their own individual way. For a while now I have been stopping every policeman or policewoman I come across to thank them for the risk they take to keep us safe - they are often surprised by my simple thank you. Samshul

# Jenny Nielsen

## The space around me.

21st Apr 2010



Sitting here, looking around my own personal space, 'Jenny territory', I can't help thinking, finally somewhere I can call my own, to do what I like in, to tidy or not, to share or keep solely for myself.

Right now I am sitting looking at the computer, black-hearted screen reflecting my frustrated reflection back at me, letting me in just a little bit further each time I turn it on. Sooner or later I will conquer all.

The wall in front of me is blank, beige and boring, nothing exciting just a wall! Further down the wall on the right there is a transformation. Chests of drawers, hatched, white, relics of the former occupant overflowing with all sorts of things from the past and the present. Books, magazines, soft toys jostle for space next to ornaments and memories too precious to throw away. The corner near the door is the resting place for the wooden rocking chair, piled high now with things just dropped there to be put away later. The next wall is long, covered in a hotch-potch of paintings and embroidered pictures. At the end of the room there is a large window covered with bright sunshine yellow curtains. When the sun shines just so the whole room is bathed in a yellow light. This room, my sanctuary, my space, untidy mostly, but always there, ready to escape to as needed.

# Coralie Hinkley

## A gift

30th Sep 2008

---

I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE A DISCOVERY WITH YOU THAT I MADE A FEW DAYS AGO.

One morning I was walking through our beautiful garden which is attached to our building.

I walked up the winding pathway towards the front gate breathing in the cold shivery air, pulling my shawl closer and tighter and closer around my shoulders. Halfway up the garden path and almost to the front gate, I stopped and saw something.

Flowers, of a different colour. I walked over and saw a ring of flowers, very small. It seemed to me, hiding in a crown of green leaves.

'What are they?' I breathed the question in. I knelt down and looked closer. I did not recognise them at all. 'What are they?'

The cold morning air streaked the skin of my bare arms. I knelt down and looked closer still. 'What could they be? Are they... no, they're not. But they must be! Oh, I know! They are Pansies! How could I have found anything so beautiful? Velvety purple, pale mauve, small green stems. Yes, yes, they are pansies!' I picked one, soft. It lay quietly and shyly in my hand. I picked two or three, no one saw me, and then I smelt them. I put my nose deeply into the velvety centre. 'Oh, what a beautiful perfume!'

I picked the rest of the pansy flowers, still slightly wet from the morning dew and vanished down garden path.

---

## Comments

**mattyd2 said:**

Love it!

It made me get up and go and check mum's garden out. I was able to find the beauty in most of the flowers and have a deeper appreciation of natural beauty.

Vivid descriptive words create powerful imagery and I could almost smell the pansy.

Matt

**Pcuffe said:**

a gift

Hello Coralie Peter Cuffe enjoying the poetic imagery and dreamlike mystery of your short story. it reminded me of the Pre-raphaelite poets who often used vivid floral imagery and explored ethereal romantic themes. Stay tuned for journal outline of a film script I am developing, cheers Peter.

# Damon . . . When Silence is Golden

13th Sep 2010



Welcome to the Jungle – Darlington Road, Kings Cross.

A crisp breath of cool morning air

But a volume of traffic sounding so near

Sincerely adorned, carefully aborne

A welcoming light for the bottom bunk at dawn

It's agility to rise, a graceful glare

Appreciative

An opening window

So close, So near

Realisation

'It's because there's no room to spare!'

Traversing four walls

Again through the next door

Mundane the scenery

Nothing changed from before

Now down the stairs

A common room

Samely busy when it's after noon

Through to the Kitchen

Windows of that which gleam...

But, a view jammed shut

And barred to mean?

So, out to the streets

Not a road less trodden

It's the golden mile...

And many o'those lost

Many forgotten

Here I reside, all to be seen

There's no evidence of else

But, can nothing have been?

Surrounded by dwellings

Still

More apartments will rise

Birthed

History Repeats

Telling

A simile  
Mongrel  
Many live  
Iniquitous  
Welcome  
The neon  
Concrete  
Jungle

---

## Comments



“ **Michael Griffith said:**

Hi Damon - that is a fabulous start for your Literature Journal Blog. This is a free-form poem that beautifully describes your known landscape and does so with a sense of rhythm and an appreciation for the power of the sounds of words. There might be a few changes I could suggest to the form of the poem, but let's see what else comes spontaneously before we dig around the roots too much. Well done. Michael



“ **Damon said:**

Thank you Prof. Michael! 😊 I thought it may have been a high risk adventure, especially for a first entry(lol). But, I was hoping that the theme and prose would not engross and capture the reader too deep into thought, and be more of a welcome in it's construction and format than open in speculation of content. Of course, I'm very open to conjecture and I also know that I have much to learn too, so hopefully I can maintain some consistency here and always aim for improvements. Thanks again.



Anissa  
Chatt

24th Nov 2010



I wish I were traveling on a freeway beneath this graveyard western sky.  
I wanna set fire to this city

The summers of careless abandon are the memories to cling to  
Late night walks through blooming gardens  
And the cool evening breeze on deserted streets off the grid  
Only to wind up in a dark park entangled in  
Tree branches and liplocks and the feeling of being 14, your heart in your throat  
Surrounded on all sides by a battalion of fearless brushtails, encircling and encroaching  
in the crackle of suiciding leaves.  
The backstreets off Collins are bathed in the stench of hot rotting garbage  
In Yarraville it only smells of happiness and moist grass.



.....

H O W I  
G O T H E R E

.....

# Jenny Nielsen

## An epic sea cruise

2nd May 2010

---



About fifty one years or so ago my parents decided to make a better life for themselves and all of us, five children in all, from a reluctant fifteen year old down to the youngest two at five. I don't have a lot of memories about Wales but some things do stand out, like having our own personal 'keep' to play in and long walks towards Mt Snowdon, of bitter cold and an old farm house belonging to my grandparents. The memories fade after a while but some things still come to mind. The day we left I remember the snow deep at the side of the road, of my brother disappearing up to his waist in it and everyone trying not to laugh, of sadness on my grandparent part at losing their only daughter but acceptance as well though really I was too young to understand.

The ship we sailed on was the SS Straithard long since scrapped, a wonderful play ground for children. Several things stand out in my memory about the trip, the week of seasickness, my oldest brother boasting he was the only one not sick [until the Great Australian Bight] and he was the only one sick, the fancy dress parties put on for the children, the crossing of the equator and the traditions involved, having tea and biscuits every morning to wake up to and I remember once being told off by one of the crew for sliding across the deck using the deck chairs [my brothers made me do it!]. It wasn't til much later we learned that the sea was so high passengers were told to stay below!! I can still remember sailing through the Suez Canal, of seeing sand for miles, of getting off the ship at Port Said as it was known back then, of the smells and the people everyone selling something or wanting money, of the little boats that would come alongside the ship selling things to the passengers and getting a leather work camel as a surprise. I still have it somewhere. The memory I have of arriving in Australia is one of surprise, an ice cream I was given was smoking or so I thought! We started off as seven people starting a new life, alone, now we have multiplied to over twenty, the opportunities looked for have been found, dreams realised, lives fulfilled. Memories are wonderful things, it's the one thing no one can take away from you.

# David Gillett | A Vivid Memory

---

I remember the summer of '72 and the thrill of early adolescence  
Where the foray of everyday adventure brimmed with promise and excitement  
The feeling that life's secrets would soon be revealed and fully fledged I would become  
How I longed to explore the mystery of sweet smelling girls, saving my best balancing  
trick or witty off the cuff remark for the moment of maximum effect  
Often to feel the tortured pangs of heartbreak as I lost out to an older boy  
Then turning inward to find my irreparable fault, then outward, then around  
Till finally I struck inwards  
Not everyone's life it seems, was about picnics and noodle salad.

# Samshul Initials AP

13th Apr 2010

---



Going through my knick-knacks  
I found a blue handkerchief with initials AP  
I held it in my hands and sat for a while  
Then, slowly opening its folds  
I thought of you  
I remembered our sewing class where  
You embroidered the AP and were so proud  
Even though the needle pierced finger left a spot of blood  
It was special. I received it as a Christmas present  
And oh, how special I felt!  
So, recently I have surfed the net as we do these days  
Could not find you there.  
Have asked our friends who at the time seemed so dear.  
Some do not remember you were there.  
Visited our old neighbourhood in the South Pacific.  
There was no trace of you there.  
But, that mango tree still stands strong,  
As shady as always, green, strong, in blossom about to bear fruit.  
Our dolls. Our tea-sets. Our bangles.  
That mango tree, under which we played, sixty years ago.  
If only we could be there once again!  
Wondering where you are, my friend;  
Where?  
Could you be just around the corner from me?  
Are we oceans apart?  
Or, are you with the ones God loves the most?

.....

S H A P I N G  
E X P E R I E N C E

.....

# Fran Opperman

---

Here is a painting from Fran Opperman, a Clemente graduate who came to ACU and studied BVAD but sadly passed away in December 2011.





# Daniel Smith

## Ode to Chocolate

28th Oct 2008

---

Rich and Dense  
strong and sweet  
Creamy sensation  
Smooth chocolate

Summer dreams relaxing  
lasting taste  
Liquid, Solid, Biscuits and sauce  
Small large all shapes and sizes  
Warm on a cold night  
Sticky and sweet in summer  
OH CHOCOLATE  
OH ODE TO CHOCOLATE

---

## Comments

 **mattyd2 said:**

MMMM ..... chocolate

Yummy I want some chocolate now. Man you have a great way of describing sensations.

great stuff

Matt

  **michaelgriffith said:**

I agree with Matt - you are a SENSE-sationalist in the best senses (excuse the pun) of the word, Dan. You really do have a feel for the onomatopoeic qualities of language ... great work ... more please!!!!

# Paolo Literature Alive (Necross 99) 13th Nov 2008

Current mood:  contemplative

I just posted a comment on one of David's older entries, actually it was a question posed by Michael to David, and it got me thinking: the comparison of living history with literature. I believe more and more that literature allows living history to 'jump from the page' so to speak, into our very souls, the core of our being. A headline may read 'terrorists have blown up two buildings in downtown NY' but 'terrorists hijacked various passenger planes and crashed them into the World Trade Centre. After a great inferno in which many people burnt or fell to their deaths, both buildings collapsed, one after the other, to the shock and horror of the entire world watching and the city was engulfed in an enormous cloud of ash and debris resembling a nuclear blast.' Both accounts are examples of history and literature but the second not only gives more detail, it allows you to live out the experience moment by moment through the eyes of the people present. Another example would be the audio commentary during the Hindenburg zeppelin disaster. One doesn't need to be seeing the video-footage, but only listen to the journalist's raw emotion, to be able to 'capture the moment' expressed and felt by those present. Being present at an event is an experience all of itself, often without words, but every day, every minute, every moment is an actual event. Literature is a means of expression which we can use to bring an experience to the present, so we not only 'keep history alive', but it also gives us time to reflect on ourselves and the world around us.

A speck, a pintail,  
Shot forth - the light sooo bright,

One step two stride,  
That's it, now free,

An ocean, step aboard,  
A friend, advice alive,

A statue, an anchor,  
Offspring, lead them forth,

Resting, enjoying,  
Relaxing, meditate,

Time to reflect, Time to admire,  
What's next, true aspire.

## Brigitte Von Mergl-Grote ‘Lights, Camera, Action...’

Those famous words are generally applied in a Hollywood movie production. When an end of semester stage show is performed in the familiarity of the trusted classroom at the Nagle Centre in Campbelltown, one could assume that the play would be a gigantic flop, a waste of time, perhaps even an embarrassment to the amateur actors. Of course one has not considered the most wonderful lecturer, Associate Professor Michael Griffith, who not only chose an award winning play, but somehow matched the characters of its performers, as if Peter Gow had written *Away* just for the little group. Some scenes ended up on the ‘cutting floor’ due to time constraints and an insufficient number of stars.

Have you ever performed in a play where you just read the lines? One might be forgiven for expecting that this method of acting would be easier than the laborious learning the script off by heart, or tedious rote learning. Imagine, being in front of an audience, being blinded by the light of a projector, which is used as part of the wings transforming plain classroom walls into a hotel room or schoolyard. It does nothing for one’s complexion however. Appeasing the audience, keeping in rapport with the spectators, ensuring all is said and done, keeping alive the dynamics with fellow actors, staying on cue, producing the correct tonal quality, are activities one is not normally conscious of.

With a bit of ad-libbing here and there, the audience will not know any difference and yet a so called ‘pregnant pause’, a disruption in the flow of dialogue would be obvious to even the most discerning person.

Generally it is said that if a performer lacks some anxiety prior to his performance, he is not giving his best to his craft. What was totally unexpected was the sudden onset of nerves half way through the performance. How does one make the butterflies fly in formation when engulfed in the play, after all the conscious mind can only do 7 +/- activities, which includes motor functions.

An extraordinary phenomena occurs when actors are on stage, they seem to feed on each other’s energies and mysteriously ‘read the other actors minds’, they project and perform as if a collective consciousness has taken over; a bond develops among the actors, which might not have otherwise.

One of the characters I portrayed was a mom who appeared in a play whilst on vacation. She was a mermaid and spoke with an American accent. When the mermaid was granted human form by her ghost lover and received legs, the former mermaid exclaimed with an American accent: ‘I can wawk, I can wawk’. In her excitement, she first started walking with an unsteady gait and as she became more confident, she leaped into the air joyfully. This was not part of the script. The jump was great,

sadly 'what goes up must come down'. The landing was the problem. It jarred the hip, rendering severe pain and not being able to walk properly after the play.

A combination of euphoria and humility overcame me. What determined this sensation? My conclusion is simple. The classmates, our caring lecturer and everyone who is involved with the Clemente program are the reasons for the emotional high. It is you, the audience. You laughed at the appropriate moment, you became involved in our performance and perhaps you identified with some of the characters. It is very gratifying for the soul if a 'cast of thousands' can create a different state of mind among the audience, shutting the door to the harshness of the 'real world', leaving it outside and escaping, even if just for a few minutes to escape into a land of make-belief. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your experience, dear audience.

# Mirjana Ferkula

## Forest Sanctuary

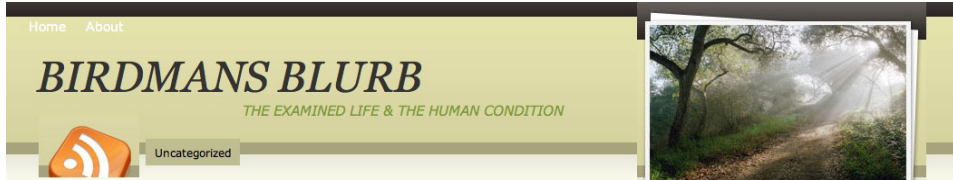
---



I live amidst trees, in a forest; an assortment of pines, oaks, firs and beeches, among others. These trees are as important to the place I call home as any dwelling. The forest has meandering paths throughout where the branches benevolently arch over, forming corridors of trees. As I traverse these tree corridors I sense something of the primeval, of the rudimentary of life.

It is a place to commune with nature, with life; a place to feel the breath, warmth and heart beat of the earth. Here I am free to unburden myself, to release all worldly cares and attune myself to the forest; not through any cerebral means, but through my senses: seeing hearing and feeling. I steep myself, my senses, in the forest. I saturate myself with the colour, sound and scents of nature till I am as green and brimming with life, with vigour, and feel as grounded to life as the trees.

# BIRDMAN | WRITERS BLOCK



'I Try To Think But Nothing Happens,' well there you go (or is that there I go) my first bit of plagiarism (or is it just unoriginal thought or the highest form of praise). Anyway moving write along (now that was intentional poetic license or is it literary license or a license for my pet fish Eric). Hey! This is great my second bit of borrowed material. Whoa! Things are hotting up here.....

Hey! No they're not. I couldn't think of anything to say just then for several dots, periods, full stops or whatever their called. I could pretend they were for literary effect or is that affect.....

Oh no! It happened again

Maybe the word I wanted was infect. I like insect you know the creature with an exoskeleton and six legs and mandibles and the rest of those features that distinguish them as an insect. But.....Mmm, what was I talking about? Now there you go I wasn't talking I was tapping keys on a..... keyboard, that's it (not mind you of the musical variety). But I'm sure you understood what I meant, implied, inferred (now there's another two words I get confused on, with, about). Well now let's see what was I righting about? Now that was on purpose just to see if you're paying attention. Because I do know how to spell riteing, after all I am a riter you know.

Now I am tapping, and talking. Who do I think I'm talking to, not myself I hope? Well not so bad I suppose, I mean I could be talking to you and that wouldn't do would it. What me being a literary artist and all (what does that mean when folk say 'and all' and are they presuming or assuming, another couple of those words).

Anyway on with the task at hand whatever it was. Now what was it? Ah I remember! 'I Try To Think But Nothing Happens'. So, I'll 'Try Not To Try To Think'. I'll just not think. Not thinking. Not thinking. Not thinking, I know what, I've been dieing to use this great line somewhere. But first, looking back in retrospect Tick Tick Tick Tick Ping! Times up! Did you pick it or did it go wright over your noggin?



sleep all day, waking occasionally for a bit of 'sensual gratification'. Then you have the audacity to yawn at a gem like that. Another bloody 'know all' critic, not a single sound of encouragement. You're an ignorant Philistine. Just what is your contribution in the 'Scheme Of Things' anyway?

Oh now we're up and about are we. Pray, do tell me what monumental spark of inspiration has stirred her grace. Don't look at me with those insatiable eyes, and don't come slinking over here thinking you can sensually rub me up the write way. Hoping to redeem yourself, get on my good side. Well let me tell you, no amount of rubbing that soft silky body against me is ever going to get you into my good books. Oh that's write when all else fails straddle my lap, dig your nails into my shoulders and lick my ears like a thing possessed. Okay I give up I surrender; I'll give you what you want. After all I'm only human and a mere servant of she that must be obeyed. So what will it be Puss, Tuna? That's write, might as well, not accomplishing much here anyway. Bloody righters block! Should be a law against it.



# John McDonnell

## The Old Man

17th Nov 2008

---

The old man sits in the same seat at Edward Eagar Lodge every day for free morning tea and lunch. He never speaks to anyone. He always wears the same well-worn blue weather-proof coat and dirty beige cap. Everyone knows he sleeps rough. His grey hair, weather-beaten brown features and toothless mouth admit his seventy-something years.

One day two female volunteers are visiting and speak to the old man. The old man tolerates them as they fuss about him. Seeing this, Eva, the housing officer comes over. Normally she ignores the old man but this day she fawns over him. She says loudly, in her Polish accented voice, as if she cared, 'Oh Robert, how are you? I saw you on Saturday. My dog likes you, you know.' Eva pretends concern and the old man pretends she is not shrilling at him. 'I can get you accommodation if you like', Eva says, feigning warmth. The old man ignores her. Eventually the old man leaves the women, takes his plate to the heap of dirty crockery and departs without a word.

Another day he gets up after his meal and lifts the large kit bag he always carries onto the table. 'Bloo-dy Immigration Department', he says with venom in his foreign accent to himself. He fiddles with his bio-friendly green shopping bag and then tries to hoist the kit bag by its shoulder strap on to his shoulder. He fails to successfully lift the bag. 'Bloo-dy Immigration Department!' A minute's pause and he tries and fails again. 'Bloo-dy Immigration Department!' The old Irish lady opposite him says 'Can I help you now?' He ignores her. Another minute passes and then he lifts and drops the bag again. 'Bloo-dy Immigration Department!' 'He wants to do it himself, you know,' says the old lady. After another minute he makes another unsuccessful attempt. 'Bloo-dy Immigration Department!' He regards the heavy kit bag, which presumably contains his worldly possessions, for a couple of minutes. 'Bloo-dy Immigration Department!' He then puts the strap onto his shoulder and with a great effort heaves the kit bag up. Satisfied, he picks up his green shopping bag and walks away.

---

## Comments

  **necros99 said:**

When I read your entry, I feel like I'm reading a well written book or short story. You've got a great natural style, the words seem to flow from your pen freely and one shares your narrative descriptions as if they were in the room with you. With this type of writing you could seriously make money, or fame, whichever takes your fancy. Let your imagination flow. Even a description of life in Surry Hills could be as good as *Down and Out in Paris and London*.

Paolo

  **michaelgriffith said:**

That is a powerful prose vignette John. You clearly excel in this simple, honest descriptive style. Let's see you develop this skill some more. You could make a collection of such vignettes about people in Edward Eager. That would make a fabulous contribution to the literature about the marginalized. Well done!!!!

Michael

# Suzanne Hunt-Tuzo

## Pilot and Me

I went to the pet shop to buy myself some fish food for my two fish. It was a pet shop in Melbourne Central, a shopping centre near where I lived and worked in the city of Melbourne. I got the fish food, and I came home with a rat.

What happened was, I was kept waiting in the pet shop and as I waited, I noted a small white and brown animal in an aquarium nearby, sleeping with its beady eye half open. Straight away it had my admiration. I wished I could do that, sleep with my eyes half open. I would be able to keep an eye on a lot more if I could sleep with my eyes open. I looked away. I was feeling maternal. A cute fluffy bunny caught my attention. It was on sale for \$20. I looked back at the creature on my right. Still asleep but looking at me. I wondered about buying myself a creature. It sure was taking time to serve me as I waited in the queue. I would love a bunny, I thought. I could keep it in the bathroom where I lived, or in my room, at the Duke of Kent Hotel in Lonsdale Street. I would use my expertise to conceal the bunny. He had beautiful floppy ears. I was almost seduced but something happened that changed the course of events for the next two and a quarter years. I turned back to see the sleeping creature on my right and it was no longer asleep. No way. This small animal had awoken and was doing some amazing acrobatics with the torn up newspaper in its aquarium. It was skittering and hopping and somersaulting up, down, back and around. It looked so happy. I decided there and then that we were going to become an item.

I asked the shopkeeper what I was witnessing - a male rat - she said. Really? I thought he was very clever and he had won my heart. How much is he I asked. Fifteen dollars I was told. 'Sold' I said to her.

'What do I need to look after him?' I asked. 'Well you'll need a big cage when he grows but right now he only needs a small cage. With his food and the fish food he'll cost you \$126.' The rabbit would have ended up cheaper but I liked my merchandise.

So I paid for my rat and I paid for my fish food and I went home without any money but with a very happy heart.

I snuck him into the Hotel with me and put his cage at the end of my bed head. My bedroom and living quarters were only 9 foot by 7 foot in area. It was a very small room.

I told two of the other patrons of the hotel about him and they were very happy for me. 'What are you going to call him?' they asked. Well I didn't know but 'Pilot' was suggested because I was at that time the opposite of an airline pilot. I was partly mentally ill and my life was all over the place. My neighbours had suggested to me that I try to behave like an airline pilot, someone in complete control of themselves and I

thought that was a good idea, despite the fact that I couldn't for the life of me do it. So Pilot was my new baby, or I was his. Sometimes it was hard to tell.

First off, I took him out of his cage and he went hopping. I laughed at his silly antics. He would jump one way then jump and in mid-air turn around the opposite way, then jump back again. He could dance. He chewed things (oh dear). I put him into his cage at my bed head. I heard him rustling and rustling. I turned around to look at him and he suddenly stopped. So I lay down and looked the other way. He started again, rustle, rustle, rustle. I turned around to look at him. He froze. As long as I looked at him he refused to rustle in the paper. I went to sleep comforted as I heard my new friend fossicking and rustling in the shredded paper in his cage.

One of the other patrons admired Pilot, but asked me not to bring him into the kitchen for his own sake. If someone else came in and reported his presence it would cost the Hotelier a \$3,000 fine. The Health Department mustn't know that Pilot was about. However, before I took Pilot out of the kitchen, he got admiration for nimbly hopping onto my left shoulder as I dried my hair with the hair dryer on my right side. He then hopped onto my right shoulder, unprompted when I changed to dry my hair on the left side. It was thought he was very clever.

Something I didn't appreciate fully was just how much he chewed things. Soon all my work clothes had at least one hole in them and when he chewed a tube of Bepanthen antiseptic cream and was frothing at the mouth, I learnt how to get to the Lort Smith Animal hospital in record time - it wasn't far away.

He was given an injection and I took him home. Luckily he was quite all right.

I was cross with Pilot when I let him out in my room and he hid under the bed. He only ran out to nip my toes and hurt me, then scampered back. My toes weren't edible and it was upsetting. One tetanus injection lasted for twenty years, the doctor told me.

Pilot seemed to possess a sense of humour. He played games.



When I let him out in my room, he would travel everywhere, on the top of the wardrobe, under the lamp on the coffee table, onto the desk, on to the shelves. Sometimes he managed to get inside drawers from the back of them or up into them from the floor. I would look for him and wherever I seemed to look he would be the opposite to where he actually was. He made a lot of noise and he jumped from pillar to post. The bunny hopped up and down my bed. Cheeky as the day is light was Pilot. He loved life so much I was smitten with him. Fish weren't nearly as exciting.

I took him to work with me, in a green environment bag or in my backpack. When at work I deposited him into a big drawer next to me or I took his cage and the secretary of Births Deaths and Marriages sat him under her desk. She was so amused by his presence that she emailed a picture of him over to England, her place of birth, saying 'guess what? I've got a rat under my desk'. Pilot posed suitably for the photo.



A few people at work loved him. My boss unfortunately didn't. She took one look at my skivvie neck and saw it wobbling and went white when I said I had a baby rat in there. It was hard for her to go white because she was Sri Lankan but I swear she did.

So he had his friends and his foes and I didn't think twice about leaving him in the drawer next to the credit card machine I was using until I came back from lunch and saw a boss sitting at my desk. I hoped and prayed that she wouldn't open the draw next to her, less for my sake than for hers. Some people don't like rats: well I suppose I don't like the feral ones either.

I got into work one day and I emailed all Pilot's and my friends. I said 'Pilot is here. I've got his toys and his carrots. If you'd like to pop by at tea time he'd love to see you. He's in my drawer, Suzanne' and promptly sent the email to a judge in the magistrates court by mistake as Births Deaths and Marriages was part of the Justice Department at that time. Luckily I didn't specify what he was, but she would have wondered at a child called Pilot who ate carrots and fitted into my drawer.

When I went back to the pet shop in Melbourne Central for food they told me all Pilots brothers and sisters had escaped and were living on the premises. That they couldn't catch them.

Pilot bit and chewed everything. One day a girl at work said my shirt had been eaten at the back. It was a black shirt so she kindly coloured in the flesh that was showing with black texta.

Often on a Saturday I would go and see my mum at Southland shopping centre with Pilot in his green environment bag. I remember hanging him on the hook in the lady's toilet and then forgetting I had him and walking out. Just to be jolted in time by the realization that he was still hanging on the door handle.

I would visit Coles with him swinging in tow. He loved adventure. On the way out the checkout girl asked me if she could see in my bag please. Of course, I said, and Pilot popped his head out of the bag to say hello. The girl didn't report me just smiled in shocked surprise and we went through.

My mother was a bit embarrassed by him and tried to pretend he wasn't there. He looked so rattish that she couldn't cope with him being a pet, in fact a much loved one by me. No, its not normal she told me and she didn't like me showing people.

One day, I was lying on my bed in the Duke of Kent Hotel, when I heard a crunching sound. Immediately alerted I jumped off the bed and grabbed Pilot, with a packet of degas tablets between his teeth. Degas tablets are exactly what they sound like, you take them and they degas your body in loud farts. What they could do to a small rat I didn't know. Again I found myself rushing to the Lort Smith Animal hospital. Pilot had ingested several of the tablets.

It was latish at night. 9pm in winter to be exact when I took the crackling Pilot on the tram to emergency. I say he was crackling because he was. He seemed to be burping. Obviously the degas tablets were doing their job. I tore into the main entrance at Lort

Smith. I told them my problem. They told me to take a seat. Pilot seemed quite happy apart from the noises he was making. The vet came out and told me it wasn't serious. That the ingredients in the tablet were harmless to Pilot. He had rung around several vets and got this information, then checked the internet. Pilot was given the all clear. Phew, I thought. That was a close call.

Despite loving Pilot my mental illness was beginning to rage out of control. I couldn't organize myself at all. My work was suffering so much they put me on half days every day. Keeping Pilot was a little beyond me when I could barely keep myself.

Pilot proved to be a fast growing rat and I had to return to the pet shop to buy him a bigger cage. I bought him a birdcage which was sufficient in size to house a fully grown rat. The people at the pet shop told me Pilot's brothers and sisters were creating havoc in the store. They would eat through all the packets of food at night, including dog and cat food and leave the place a mess. It was costing them thousands of dollars in lost merchandise every week and they couldn't catch them. The rats had gone feral and were hiding behind the shelves, jumping out when things were moved and flying past the hapless staff. When I complained at work to someone, that Pilot had chewed my mobile phone he said to me 'He's trying to contact his brothers and sisters at the pet shop to tell them how good he's got it'.

'Very funny' I giggled and slipped Pilot into my bag.

Sometimes on the train, Pilot would like to come out and have a look around. I would get mixed reactions. Someone sitting next to me might suddenly move or a couple a few seats away would be giggling at Pilot. He tended to polarize reactions to him, people either loved him or hated him.

Pilot was better in his new cage. When I was sneaking it into the Hotel I told the boss's nephew it was a bird cage for my niece's birthday and she was getting some birds.

I set Pilot up with his new home, which had a lot more room. I used shredded birth and death certificates from the Registry for his bedding. I put branches in his cage, which he climbed eagerly.

Finally, I think management found out about Pilot. I was given two weeks notice one day, and told everyone was given same. However I found out later that this wasn't true.

I answered an advertisement in the Herald Sun for a room in a boarding house not far from the pub and I asked them if I could move Pilot in with me. I was told I could on the condition that when he died I wouldn't replace him.

So the day came where I got a removal van for all my stuff and Pilot and moved us over to Fitzroy. Pilot was very upset by the move. He was in his bird cage in the back of the van and he was very frightened.

When I moved him upstairs to my new digs he was acting strange. He hardly moved for about five hours after the move.



Finally, the old Pilot was back. I took him out of the cage and showed him his new home. It was much bigger. He skittered and jumped and climbed and hopped all over the place.

A man in a downstairs room became my friend. I didn't tell him about Pilot.

But one day I was at home and I had a terrible time. My back was damaged from moving and carrying all my stuff on my own, not just from my parents to the pub but from the pub to the boarding house. It was at night time and I could barely move from my knees and was in serious trouble. I couldn't get into bed. I couldn't catch Pilot. I couldn't manoeuvre myself.

I eventually managed to get my back onto the floor but then I was in too much pain to move. I was in agony. All night I lay in pain. I couldn't move and Pilot was under my leg. At the beginning of the night he had been skittering and hopping all over my room, at one stage peering cheekily down from my bookshelf above where I lay. He then seemed to appreciate that I was immobile and that's when he hid himself just under my leg.

He was still there in the morning when I rang the ambulance. They came but they couldn't get in my door. I had been told by the receptionist that I didn't have to worry about the fact that I couldn't open my door but they were very pissed off that they couldn't get in. So I told them where to go and how to get there. Then the landlord came and told me I needed to co-operate with the ambulance people but the ambulance people wouldn't come back. They were very touchy about my treatment.

That's when Jimmy came in from downstairs. He told me he would ring the ambulance. In the mean time I rang the secretary of Births Deaths and Marriages and asked her if she'd babysit Pilot for a few days while I went into hospital. She said her son and husband would pick Pilot up and take him in his cage to Ferntree Gully until I was well.

So when the ambulance people arrived I asked them to give me the green environment bag for Pilot and I popped him in the bag. I asked one of the guys to give the bag to Jimmy. My back was so bad I needed laughing gas to get down the stairs.

I went to St Vincents hospital by ambulance. Back at the boarding house Jimmy had been given a green environment bag with something in it. He put his hand in and pulled it out quickly. Pilot was hanging on to his finger by the teeth. Ouch. This was Jimmy's first introduction to Pilot. He managed to get him off and took him up and put him in the cage. Then he went and had a tetanus injection.

Jimmy was 64.

While I was in the hospital the secretary of Births Deaths and Marriages, Sandra, sent her husband and son down to pick up Pilot and look after him. Pilot had a lovely time. He was thoroughly spoilt with Kiwi fruit and other delicacies. He was returned to me two days later when I was out of hospital.

The doctor had prescribed medication for my bad back. I was given Panadol, indomethacin suppositories and valium to stop my back spasming. My back was still very bad and I was determined to walk a lot the day I got out, exercise being very good for a bad back. So I popped Pilot in my back pack and took off, forgetting that I had a packet of Panadol in there. As I stopped at Melbourne Central for a massage I left Pilot inside my bag under the makeshift bed. When the massage was done, I opened the bag. I suddenly realized the Panadol was in there. Grabbing the packet I inspected and found teeth marks on all eight tablets. In other words, Pilot had taken another overdose.

In great consternation I jumped up and ran to Elizabeth Street where I jumped on the first tram to the Lort Smith animal hospital. I ran into reception, plopped Pilot on the desk and said 'Save him, please, whatever you do, please save him'.

The nurse took my details and I was ushered into the emergency room. The vet looked up Pilot's record and was very stern with me. 'This is his third overdose', she said. 'Why does he keep getting poisoned?' I told her I didn't realize he would chew so much. She told me it was a very severe overdose and that he would have to be administered medication every two hours for twelve hours and even then he might die. I promised her he wouldn't be in again and thanked her for her help and left the hospital with Pilot and two types of liquid, which I had to squirt into his mouth every two hours. I was to return the following morning with Pilot.

Well it went well, I gave Pilot his charcoal mixture and his liquid every two hours but between midnight and two am in the morning I fell asleep briefly. In that time, Pilot managed to get out of my hands, climb under my bed, find an indomethacin suppository and start chewing on that.

As soon as I jolted awake I wondered where Pilot was. When I found him under the bed with the indomethacin suppository I nearly died. 'Pilot' I screamed. I was so scared for him. I got the charcoal mixture and I gave the whole lot to him something that probably saved his life, because the indomethacin didn't get absorbed. But I didn't know that when I took him back to the vet at the Lort Smith animal hospital the following morning. I told the vet as bravely as I could that Pilot had taken more poison, knowing that Pilot needed more care. She was furious with me. I had rung my sister in the mean time and told her what was going on. Apparently Pilot was going to need intensive care not only at Lort Smith but over the next night at Essendon Veterinary Surgery, because Lort Smith didn't keep emergency animals at night and Pilot was going to need monitoring. My father offered to pay the bill to try to save Pilot. I was heart broken having to leave Pilot at Lort Smith that day and even more upset when my sister and I took Pilot to Essendon the following night. Pilot looked very sick in the emergency room but when I cuddled him to my chest on the way to Essendon he showed signs of improvement.



I was told it was touch and go, he had ingested some very dangerous medicines. I rang my mum and my work supervisor (the Sri Lankan one who didn't like rats) and I pleaded with them to pray for Pilot's life which they did and next morning when I





went with my sister to pick up Pilot he was alright. All my Christmases had come at once. What a little fighter Pilot was. My room was now free of all medication, it was all kept in a box out of Pilot's reach.

I continued to take Pilot out with me in his green environment bag. I used to take him to church and he would sleep through the service and not come out of the bag which I put on the floor just in front of my pew. Some friends asked me to knot the bag because they had visions of Pilot getting out and women screaming as they jumped on pew seats to escape the rat.

One day I was very tired when I got to church. I was led to the Sunday school room with Pilot who was fast asleep. I was told I could lie on a mat on the floor and given a cushion for my head. I promptly fell asleep only to be woken up by a bite on the toe. Pilot at woken up before me.

I had woken up to a bite on the foot from Pilot once before.

I was very sleepy and Pilot's cage was near my feet. It was morning and I decided to sleep in. I was, however, aware that Pilot was rattling his cage wanting to get out. I ignored him. Occasionally my foot would knock the cage as I went in and out of sleep. Pilot waited patiently for a time when my juicy toes came within biting distance. He then gave me a massive bite. 'Ouch' I screamed as I jumped out of bed. 'You nasty little creature.' My foot was bleeding. There's no worse alarm clock than a rat bite I thought. Alarm clocks although hated by me were preferable to this.

I nursed my wound and took him down to see Jimmy. He ran along the bed and sat on Jimmy's pillow washing himself. Jimmy was ok about that until Pilot left his calling card on Jimmy's pillow. 'Get him out' he said to me, but let him back almost immediately.

Pilot liked exploring Jimmy's floor. He bit through the telephone cord and I had to get a new one. Jimmy was bitten again by Pilot who was running up and down the bed. Pilot saw his ear and couldn't resist it. Jimmy was very patient with Pilot. He grew to love him too.

I was invited to a party by people from the church. I took Pilot and hung his bag on the door handle while I helped with the food. Not long afterwards, the door opened and there was a flurry of activity in the lounge room where about 8 people were congregated. I went in and there was Pilot, startled out of slumber, sitting in the middle of the room.

'Sorry', I said 'I'm really sorry'.

A lady said to me it was ok but I needed to tell people if Pilot was with me or they'd get a terrible shock. She said 'Its ok to bring Pilot with you but just let people know he's there, Suzanne.' They were nice people though and in the end thought it was very funny.



But I was getting sicker and sicker and I needed to be in hospital for my mental illness. I wasn't sleeping and was terribly tired. The next day after the party I went to the

police and asked for help. I was put in St Vincents psychiatric hospital. Pilot was ten minutes away in his cage in the boarding house.

I was very lucky in that Michael, one of the owners of the boarding house, offered to look after Pilot for me till I got out. Michael searched for the best stone fruit in Melbourne for Pilot, cleaned his cage, let him run free in my room and put a fan on when it was very hot. Michael was Pilot's guardian angel and Jimmy helped too.

I was in hospital for two and a half months. Pilot was living in my rented rooms scot free and being fed and loved and looked after. I thought to myself Pilot must be the only rat in the world who has his own rooms in a boarding house. Pilot was doing better than me. He lived under a wardrobe in my room, storing his food there and hopping around the room. He was very content. I was a bit jealous. I thought it was funny.

When I got out of hospital Pilot was getting on. He nibbled a tube of Nyall hair removal cream. I rang the vet in Sandringham and they told me to bring him in if he got sick. He didn't.

The little bugger had survived 5 overdoses. Everything I owned had his teeth marks. Books, clothes bedding the lot.

I enjoyed his old age. I remember holding him above my head as I lay down one night and watching him chew his food. It was cute. His mouth wobbled, his teeth chewed, his whiskers trembled and he enjoyed every mouthful.

Soon after that I left him with Jimmy in a small cage. It was winter again and Jimmy put him near the heater for warmth. Pilot died in his sleep. He was two and a quarter years old.

I cried but I thought of all the wonderful and not so wonderful adventures we'd had together. He had given me a lot.

BIRDMAN : SOMETIMES I CRY  
25th May 2010

---

I think of you  
I think of me  
At times I think of us  
Sometimes I cry  
I feel for you  
I feel for me  
At times I feel for us  
Sometimes I cry  
I hope for you  
I hope for me  
At times I hope for us  
Sometimes I cry  
I pray for you  
I pray for me  
At times I pray for us  
Sometimes I cry  
I think of you and how you make me feel  
At times I hope and pray  
The joy of God you bring  
Will surely last forever  
I laugh so much  
Sometimes I cry



.....

S T R U G G L I N G

.....

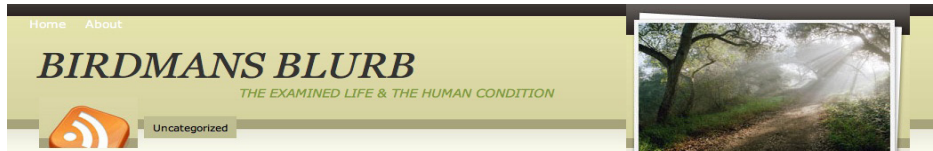
# Anonymous | Dissonance

---

my words stumbled out  
I made a fool of myself  
tongue tied, two left feet  
you laughed, twisting the knife in  
anxiety's rising.  
this room is loud, the temperature is stifling  
my heart pounds, terribly frightening  
gotta get out, too breathless now  
my feet are frozen to the trembling ground.  
I have removed my clothes, shed my skin  
I stand here in my bleached bones and marrow  
I am exposed, swept away in a tide of shame and sorrow.  
this room explodes throwing rainbows across the shadows  
too many faces in the crowd armed with stones and arrows.  
the predators approach, wide eyed, sharp teeth, lopsided grins  
I suffocate as they chomp the atmosphere  
I take my soul, wrap it in a bubble, throw it far from me and I disappear  
drowning under the niceties, ignoring the complexities, disassociating, unravelling.  
Nine bells tied around my ankle, ring  
a discordant clattering in an ordinary gathering where normal reminds me of all that is  
aberrant.  
the bells sing, chiming and reminding me  
in this moment all I have to do is breathe to be

# BIRDMAN LOOKS

25th May 2010



You looks and I looks  
 We all looks together  
 But nothing ever looks  
 What anybody thinks together  
 Zampatti and Gucci  
 Determines what's cutie  
 So just remember  
 When you think you know what's better  
 Yes! What really goes together  
 You don't know  
 You don't know  
 We're not really all together  
 Because believe it  
 As you're told  
 You don't know  
 Your own mind  
 You looks and I looks  
 We all looks together  
 But remember  
 You need their direction  
 Because you're just a lamb  
 So off to the slaughter  
 As we all really oughter  
 You don't really really matter  
 So wear wear wear their clothes  
 Be somebody  
 You don't choose to be  
 They don't worry  
 They don't care  
 Only that they sell  
 And not for you or me

Whether you run with the pack or huddle with the flock, the end is all the same. In the meantime you are responsible, know your own mind. Consider life's choices.

Rui : WE MIDDLE-AGED  
Cao : 7th Oct 2010

---



We middle-aged sense them immediately.  
The clear faced youth with no ideas absolutely.  
Princesses in wonderland are sure of finding their white  
knights.  
The ambitious boys are so confident the world is their  
oyster.  
The baby boomer geniuses are so reluctant  
to admit their defeat in changing the world.  
And we middle-aged have realized the hypocrisy,  
yet still holding on and on, not easy.  
Only our everlasting hopes and love,  
never fails to inspire our daughters and sons.



# John McDonnell

## Writer's Block

I have had writer's block, almost since the last literature course ended nearly a year ago. The Sunday after the course ended my friend Kevin died of a drug overdose at Edward Eagar Lodge; he was being reckless because he had advanced bowel cancer. At the same time I had a houseguest going crazy from drug-induced psychosis and I reluctantly had to evict him on Christmas Eve because he became unacceptably violent. After that my friend, Les, who I was helping, had a total relapse into alcoholism and his life was in a total mess when he was violently killed in Taylor Square in mid-February. In March I had a second house-guest go crazy from drug-induced psychosis. These disturbing events were additions on top of my normally crowded life.

During the winter I was heavily involved in the Milk Crate Theatre professional production, *Intersection*, which took up two-and-a-half days a week.

Since this Literature course started, I have performed five shows of *Intersection*, participated in a regular MCT six-week workshop and performed in and attended the last show. As part of that show I read 'Writer's Block'. I have also seen *Our Town* and *Twelfth Night* at the Opera House, as well as *The Dysfunctionalz* at Darlo Theatre and *Yellow Moon* at Belvoir Street Downstairs. In addition to going to the NSW Art Gallery with the class, I visited the White Rabbit Gallery and also the 'Paths To Abstraction' exhibition at AGNSW.

I would have wanted to write about all these as well as other events in my life and do some other creative writing. I find it difficult to find the time to do so and then it is a struggle when I am trying to do it. Finally, I am a slow typist and sometimes the MAC computers and/or WordPress play up. What I have written is much much more than I had written in the previous eight months. I haven't had the time to do any critical writing directly related to the course content for the blog but I think Michael G. knows what I am capable of. I hope he likes what I have written. I have been finishing some unfinished drafts.

The twelve weeks of the course have gone very quickly and I am regretful that this is my last Catalyst course. The need to write this blog has kept me writing and I hope I will continue to write in the future.

# John the Lawyer

## Crack, Snow, Slip, Trip

16th Oct 2009

---

A small cramped room  
Bare but for mattress and television  
The bare essentials  
A few clothes lie scattered  
Bare mattress of thin foam  
No sheets no blankets no pillows  
Old television bears only static  
The babble of the goddess  
  
She lies on the mattress  
Lightly dressed  
Alone with the television  
Staring intently  
Now above at the ceiling  
Now across at the television  
Each beckons her awareness  
As her young mind drifts in flight  
  
Who shall say how a seer sees?  
For her  
Cracks on the ceiling  
Form patterns of endless diversity  
Snow on the screen  
Delivers a world of stimuli  
She is high  
She is low

# Anonymous | The meeting place

The river divides us  
 I have no desire to sit on the nose of the wolf  
 Only to be gobbled down on the other side  
 A morsel for his savage pride

The skin is thin  
 Strangely quivering with life  
 What manner of thing brings and breeds such beings  
 What strange souls abide

The estuary where soul meets flesh  
 A crucible of black magic traders in market stalls  
 Crabs scrawl across the shore  
 What strange words they speak  
 Who are the words for?

The eyes are like storm skies  
 A patch of light that smells of spring  
 thick clouds like winter nights  
 each of us dances with lightning  
 each of us rolls our feet to the beat of thunder  
 each of us drenched with rain and shame  
 drowning in ignorance  
 and the waves roll in, the waves roll out  
 gestation begins in the womb and mouth  
 like sailors without a deck, each of us surrendering to the big wet

each of us froths like white diamonds  
 our struggle falls out  
 we do not write our stories in the sand  
 instead we write out stories in the psyche  
 we write our words in a place where the wind cannot go and sweep our sketches away

we wonder at those little ones, the ones with souls like glass  
 we see them in the streets of our cities  
 broken shards

we cover our ears, we don't like the shrill high pitched sounds of agony  
 the stained glass window so carefully polished, gleaming and streaming pleasant light  
 strains with the stains of sound  
 bulging like a balloon fit to burst  
 and the screaming continues until more shards fall to the shores  
 only the wind listens now

# herdinator

## WELCOME TO SOMEWHERE...

13th Jul 2012

---



Opinions, poems & Short-short Stories of Fictional Shite

ka-ching  
the old cash register says  
the sound of coins  
rattle in their tray

weathered notes  
old and fray  
lay waiting to  
be used and abused

ka-ching  
money rattler  
shaker and move  
become rich and  
slide right into the groove,

fingerless palms  
temptations  
where dreams become greed,  
an addiction like nicotine  
hard to control

weak at the knees  
friends you'll have;  
no name faceless beings  
who ka-ching to your needs,

a division of greed  
diversion from humanity.

# Shannon Harris

## SOOTY

Another moment in the day of a child - innocence at play in the (infrequently) sunny London urban-scape.

My mind is numbed by the security of familiarity.

Eldon road is alive with subdued urban quietude – the proletariat paradigm.

From round the corner, a boy appears, dragged by two avid greyhounds. Looking for trouble - they approach - the bustling forced into bestial fervour by instinct. Vicious teeth, unbridalled by token wire muzzles. Lunging, the last skerrick of cat-tail is snared.

Moving like lightning, the quickness of the cat - not quick enough.

O Sooty, I thought (hoped) you were safe, half way up the tree that stood as a sentinel outside your home.

Dragged back to earth - the killing ground.

O Sooty, disemboweled before my impotent eyes. Torn apart by the nature of THINGS, of the animal, the disgusting, hidden visceral violence, the nature of the beast. Worse still my cousin Christine, wrenched by emotion. Pathetically anointing the maddened dogs with gravel (the only weapon available to the desperate), like so much confetti.

PLEASE FORGIVE ME DEAR COUSIN.

My absolute impotence, suffocated by shock, the vulnerable innocent eight year old mind BLITZKRIEGED. As if the dogs had attacked me.

Poor Sooty. Glistening wet internal organs stuck by the light of day. The WRONGNESS of it all.

Another injustice in a man made world of injustice.

Violence is no way for a well loved family pet and companion to exit this world.

Violence is a horrible way to damage an innocent child.

Violence is no way to punish a lovely teenager.

Gary my poetry  
Messenger 24th Sep 2008

---

I never knew my father well  
He was always there, as if I could tell  
His brutality was an inherited one  
Passed on & on from father to son  
He worked hard night and day  
At least that's what he would say  
To put some food on our plate  
But all I needed was a friend a mate  
The things he gave me were important ones  
Lessons of life that seemed so dumb  
He never looked inside of me  
To see the things that i could see  
A life of youth with reason to fight  
But never quite finding that distant light

You're stupid stupid stupid & dumb  
That's what I've got for a son

A boy within with mistakes to make  
With opening eyes and a world to take  
Venturing out to the world around  
With a narrow vision too - what I found  
Anger, Darkness, Envy and Greed  
Your gift to me your life your seed  
His brutality was an inherited one  
Passed on & on from father to son

You're stupid stupid stupid dumb  
That's what I've got for a son

My teenage years for I'm nearly a man  
Responsibility I accept the best I can  
Lessons in life I could have been taught  
Well at least you would have thought  
Instead I struggle to learn them right  
As try to stay on track, looking in to the light  
It gets harder and harder to stay on track  
Self-esteem and guidance are the things I lack  
I stumble and fall I feel like a burden  
I feel in myself i really am hurting

A negative thought the first one I'm feeling  
From the rest of the world i must be concealing

You're stupid stupid stupid dumb  
That's what I've got for a son

Well that's it he must be right  
And I have lost the will to fight  
I thought I had a talent somewhere  
Something to give something to share  
But I was mislead confused deceived  
That my talent would shine If I believed  
Now my feelings are down to three  
Anger, Hate & stupidity  
Until this time my feelings were strong  
That fate was pulling me along  
I had a place a meaning a future  
But now I know I'm only a dreamer  
This thing I inherited at my birth  
Is in my mind the thing that's first

Stupid stupid stupid dumb  
That's what I've got for a son

Well now I'm older and wiser as well  
My future is brighter as far as I can tell  
I'm smarter & stronger and the guidance I lacked  
I've found for myself and I've taken it back  
Self-esteem wasn't on your list  
One of the important things that you missed  
I was stupid and ridiculed beaten and broken  
Held on my bed turning blue from a chocking  
The wrongs I have committed in my life  
Will be paid by me x thrice  
So if that punishment fits the crime  
I will always be able to pay in time  
This thing I inherited at my birth was moulded  
And folded by you at first

You're stupid stupid stupid dumb  
I'm your creation that's what you've done

Rosemary Astill : Cafe Society  
14th Oct 2008

---

Glitter, litter, night splinter  
Voyeur lost in the crowd

I wake another day in the  
cellar the daylight  
vampire's tomb

Squint and blink and dread  
surfacing in the bright

Sunglasses for shelter  
Straggling mindless  
Homing signal on auto pilot

I make my way to the even  
brighter lights  
and laminex reflections

The hustling sea of faces  
mobile

Din and anonymity

Noise that makes me feel  
safe

No need to participate  
I'm an extra shadow on  
the canvas of life



# Erica | Eviction

23rd Sep 2008 at 4:59 pm

---



10 Evictions - when I am in awful trouble I look up to the stars in the sky.

Nothing more comes to my mind right now ... but there is a lot more to come....

---

## Comment

 michaelgriffith, 29th Sep, 2008 01:35

Hello Erika - Servus!... I love this start to your story ... let there be more please ... dein Freund, Michael.

# Erica | A Nightmare – but also reality

## 14th Oct 2008

---

I was on a bus to anywhere and didn't know where to get off. We reached the end of the road, the driver said 'everybody out'. When he left to return to the other end I stepped onto the bus again. When we got up to Charing Cross the bus driver told me to get off. Said I, 'no, not here anymore'. He wanted to know where I was going to. Said I, 'I don't know'. When we got to Central Station I hopped onto the 470 bus and kept going. At the end stop the driver said 'Everybody out!' I said 'No, not I, I don't know where I am going. This is not my stop'. 'Okay said the bus driver, stay on. I will drop you off where you always got off.' I said 'No, no. I don't live there anymore.' Back to Central Station, I chose route 422. It's nighttime and rather late. Something happened. I went forwards and return - to the busdriver's great concern. Said I 'I'm homeless, where can I go? Could you give me a home?' The bus driver said 'ring 18 something, for a bed for the night'. It was Mother Theresa house for the fifth time and Mission Beat picked me up at Central Station.

Actually there was no audible speech in this dream ... you see it in words and pictures, but you can't hear it. That was the nightmare, the dream. And I woke up to reality ... still sleeping in a comfortable bed in a nice room, birds singing, making cracking sounds except for the bell birds' presentation ... while I have been given the 'get out' as if I were a rotten dog, a few hours later.

*Erica Groschup died shortly after she wrote this description of her circumstances.*

Anissa  
Chatt

Cause I'm so eager to identify  
with someone above the  
ground, someone who seems  
to feel the same.

22nd Dec 2009



I wrote an ode to a dead friend while he was still  
walking  
Begging him not to die, that he would if he didn't change  
his situation

And I could write a million odes and songs and love  
letters

But they will go unread and ignored and I, unheard.

He spent the last few years of life listening to his own  
eulogy and he still chose to go ahead.

He still chose her knowing it was certain death.

He still chose to die.

I shouldn't begrudge him his choice, because I too will  
have mine. But I can't help but be enraged that he chose  
to throw away all the work for the old safe coat of  
proving to them that his life was worthless.

To let them win.

They didn't deserve the win.

I warned you!

I told you it would kill you, you read it there on the  
page, explicit.

And still, the lure of self pity was too powerful.

I'm so sick of the fucking junkies and delicate flowers  
who will let themselves be lured by them

And in this town I see junkies everywhere.

They are upstairs, in the cafes, sitting on buses, doing  
deals in the sunshine in alleyways. Nighttime is not even  
needed as a cover.

The only things that scurry away in alleyways are the  
catlike rats.

Anissa  
Chatt

‘Lately, all I get are storms  
and fevers. Lately, I feel lost,  
I feel lost.’

1st May 2009



At Bourke Street I am at a crossroads watching long plumed birds take off in the cooling breeze and horses gallop in the setting sun, all mocking me in their limitless freedom.

I am so envious of the birds, dropping down roof tiles as if they were positioned pieces in a Tetris game. They get to frolic in the cooling evening against a backdrop of clouds carrying the pink of the sunset on their backs. They have the freedom of a home, resting away in ever jiggling trees.

The sky here seems endless and curved, cupping the rows of suburbia. The dirty cheeked sky laid against the flat land, the miles of horizontal chains of gentrification. The great plane of the Melbourne steppe.

Here is a toothless grimace passed off as a smile, for how could you smile through decades of being told you are worthless?

Even I once started to believe the hype.

Anissa  
Chatt

‘The smell of hospitals in  
winter and the feeling that  
it’s all a lot of oysters but no  
pearls.’

16th Jul 2009



6 stops on a tram from Richmond  
I indulge in Vodka and tears  
As day falls away into the street lamp orange sunset  
The silvered fish stand tall on hidden tails.  
See, the Melbourne eye is blinded  
Cataracts are being removed one by one

The shock of winter has fallen away to surprise at warm days and freezing nights that  
betray the fact this city is masquerading as a coastal one.  
Yet another implied assumption that is buried in the dust of reality.

It is a desert here, although it shouldn't be.  
Moving through structures made of sand,  
Life stalls on ribbons of road cutting off communities  
There, under freeways and train lines and roads filled with endless golden arches, they  
can hide away, boom gates ensuring we are all stopped from crossing over.



The famed laneways offer up a mixed bag

Fearless rats scuttling about and snakes hibernating in bins

Or in bars, sardonic, hobo-chic cocktails, glass held in paper bags, where it's all suddenly chic and unaffordable.

On the Upfield line, beer in paper bags is plentiful and on Little Bourke Street a cocktail in a paper bag will cost a cool lobster.

John  
McDonnell  
(John the  
Lawyer)

Politicians  
14th Nov 2010

---

Politicians are pigeons  
Rats of the airwaves  
Descending on discarded bread  
Squabbling for the choice morsel  
Not fussy about their food  
Pecking apart chicken pieces  
Careless of their own kind  
Quick for the main chance  
Cooing to please  
Yet wary of people.  
Dirty filthy birds  
That leave nothing  
But shit behind them.





.....

W E A R E  
T H I N K I N G

.....

# Jenny Nielsen

## Confidence refund

22nd Apr 2010

---

At the beginning of the Clemente program last year I honestly didn't know what to expect. With a not so gentle push from a particular family member I finally took the step and started the course. Little did I realise how much my life would change. Having been brought up in a family with four brothers there wasn't much chance for me to stand out, brought up with the idea that I should be seen but not always heard, I have tended to stay in the background more than I should. The Clemente program has helped me to realise that I may actually have something to contribute, that I know a little more than I realised and should make myself heard more. Who knows one day I may be 'that little mouse that roared!'

BIRDMAN | LETTER TO BILL THE BARD  
29th May 2010

---

To The Bard: William Shakespeare  
New Place, Stratford-Upon-Avon  
This Emerald Isle

Dear Bill

I have tried to read and better appreciate your works of and on since my teenage years but it was always a struggle at best, unless I used a scholarly edition of your works, which defined all the strange words along the way. But I began to read a literary work called 'The Holy Bible' and as my knowledge of Scripture grew so did my appreciation for your works. There is no question Bill that you were well acquainted with the Bible as there are many Scriptural references and themes in your plays.

Reading the Scriptures has given me a shared knowledge with you Bill and helps me identify scriptural allusion. I have also noticed Bill you don't just use Scriptural references but also larger Biblical themes of justice and mercy, love and death, resurrection and redemption.

Knowledge of Scripture is useful for more than just your works Bill; it has opened up other literary works for me to because so many works of Western literature use biblical plots, imagery and references. But sadly there is a decreasing number of people who are actually familiar with the Bible and as a result a decline in readers of quality literature and meaningful insights into life.

For me I am thankful for The Author of Life blessing the world with you:

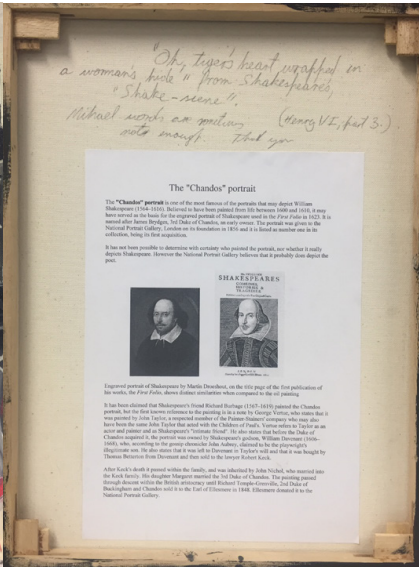
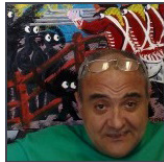
Bill the Bard

Thank You for Your Time

Yours in Faith

Birdman

# Jacko [Jack Franco] 2009



## Certified Qualified Alcohol and Other Drugs TAFE- Cert IV – Dip.

*Remembering Babylon*: Australian mead from wild honey might take you to Heaven or Hell.

Mead is an alcoholic drink made by fermenting honey with water, often with added herbs-spices; for example some of these additives were used by indigenous people through the world, and they are quite powerful psychoactive agents.

In a philosophical work by Aldous Huxley titled *Heaven and Hell* (1956). The title might have been inspired by or derived from 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' by William Blake's alchemical - psychedelic experience. This essay discusses the relationship between bright, colourful objects, geometric designs, psychoactive, art, and profound experience. The reference to Heaven and Hell brings out the two possible sides of mystical experience.

When one opens the doors of perception one can experience both extremes.

Huxley uses the term antipodes to describe the '*regions of the mind*' that one can reach by meditation, vitamin deficiencies, self-flagellation, fasting, or (most effectively, he says with the aid of certain chemical substances like LSD or mescaline. Huxley defines these as 'antipodes' of the mind as mental states that one may reach when one's brain is disabled biologically and can then be conscious of certain 'regions of the mind' that one would otherwise never be able to pay attention to, due to the lack of biological/ utilitarian usefulness.



Huxley states that while these states of mind are biologically useless, they are nonetheless spiritually significant, and furthermore, are the singular 'regions' of the mind from which all religions are derived. He provides the following example: he says that the Medieval Christians frequently experienced 'visions' of Heaven and Hell during the winter, when their diets were severely hampered by lack of critical nutrients in their food supplies such as vitamin B, vitamin C, and these people frequently contracted scurvy or other deficiencies, causing them to hallucinate.

He also adds that Christians and other religions fast in order to make themselves delirious, thus inducing visions and views of these '*antipodes of the mind*'. Today, Huxley says people can reach these states of mind without harm to their bodies with the aid of certain drugs. Huxley believed this state of mind allows a person to be conscious of things that would not normally concern him because they have nothing to do with the typical concerns of the world.

There seems to be a relationship between bright, colourful objects, geometric designs, psychoactives, art, and profound experience. Attempting to bring out the two possible sides of mystical experience. When one opens the doors of perception one can experience both extremes, pointing us to the reality that can be seen as Heaven or Hell in the ordinary lived experience of every day life.

Posted: Wednesday, December 2nd, 2009

---

## Comment

### Anonymous

Jack, I find this entry of yours interesting. I never knew that fasting and vitamin deficiency could cause hallucinations. What I like most is the way Huxley uses the term 'antipodes' of the mind to describe the nether zones accessible by fasting, meditation, hallucinogenic drug use, etc. This makes perfect sense and fits in with what we've been studying in class – in discussions of the 'other', in the way that the Australian antipodes has been seen as a benighted place: savage, untamed, its flora and fauna grotesque, the very land in need of civilising. It's all about opposites I suppose – North and South, dark and light, and (of relevance here) conscious vs. subconscious. As psychologists would express it, the painful, unexamined emotions that we can't deal with are mentally 'split' from us as we suppress them. But the result is that we now unwittingly project these emotions outside of us and onto people around us – this is the process that underlies the phenomenon of paranoia. So if we can access the painful emotions in our subconscious and come to terms with them we will be able to incorporate them into our minds and not cast them onto others. No more paranoia, no more mysterious 'other'. Perfect mental health! Problem solved!

# Samshul Nair

## Letter to Ms Wright

26th May 2010

---



Dear Ms Wright

A few months ago I started a Literature course at the Nagle Centre in Campbelltown. This course comprised three segments, Poetry, Prose and Drama. I was not very keen on the first segment as I always found poetry too difficult to understand and time-consuming till I studied your poem, 'The Wattle Tree'.

What a marvelous piece of work you have enriched my life with! I did find it a bit difficult to understand it initially but after discussions with my teacher, my learning partners and my classmates I now have a much deeper understanding of this poem. Every day when I wake up in the morning these days I am more appreciative and grateful for the four truths, the earth, the air, the water and the sun, which previously I just took for granted. It has made me realise that just like the wattle tree I also have been blessed with the truths and all I have to do is be truthful to my own self and move forward in any direction I choose, with truth and honesty, of course. I know that truth will bring joy to others around me. Your 'Bird' and 'Age to Youth' have also inspired me to enjoy freedom and to see myself more and more as part of nature, to love myself and to be free.

Above all, Ms Wright you have motivated me not only to read more poetry but also to write some of my own, to use the hidden voice I have found within myself to express myself. I consider myself very lucky to have discovered the Nagle Centre and your works and will attempt to immerse myself in nature, the four truths, and live a life of honesty and freedom and perhaps one day, I might also emerge like the wattle.

Thank you sincerely for transforming my life.

With best wishes

Samshul Nair

# Emma Sheed (ejs1) | Giving this poem writing business a go.

8th Oct 2008



Here goes, I'm giving poem writing a chance. I can honestly say I never thought I would write another poem in my life (nor want to) I think the last time I even tried was in early high school, and that suited me fine. Doing this subject though has really sparked something in me though. I haven't enjoyed doing something this much in such a long time. Particularly something 'school' related!

Here's my attempt at a poem. Hopefully you guys can work out what it's about without me telling you. It's called:

## The Surprise

All black and soft and bossy,  
 She came to me as a chore,  
 A favour,  
 To invade my tiny space  
 With her demands,  
 Her needs,  
 Her presence

This new place frightened her,  
 The roar of buses,  
 Cars and thumping bass,  
 School children who twittered and squealed,  
 Me with my cheek pressed against the carpet, peering under the bed and  
 beckoning her out,  
 She, with her saucer sized eyes staring back,  
 Defiant in her fear

Soon she was everywhere,  
 The gust of air from a closing door  
 Would send tufts of her hair  
 Eddying around my kitchen  
 Or bouncing along the lino floors  
 Like tumbleweeds in an old Western film

And just like that,  
 The chore had become a gift,  
 I began to smile down at her

As she pushed her head into my ankles,  
Or laugh when I woke to the sound of  
Her little motor purring away,  
Like a miniature engine turned over  
And idling on my bedside table  
Perhaps it was her shadow,  
Who followed me from room to room,  
Never far behind my last step,  
Or her want to play,  
Regardless of my mood and  
Oblivious to the day's anger  
Or disappointment  
Whatever it was,  
I knew that I had come to love  
This funny little creature,  
And though she was not mine,  
And I would have to let her go,  
She had indeed been a gift,  
Of the most surprising kind.

This is quite scary, putting this up for all to read. I suppose it's a risk, but it's a healthy one. I hope you like it.

Xo

---

## Comments

 michaelgriffith said:

That is fabulous Emma. I don't want to change anything here. It is fresh and captures the immediacy of that remembered experience vividly. You also have an instinctive sense of how the lines shape themselves around the movement of what you are describing. This is VERY promising and I would encourage you at all costs to continue finding things to put into poetry. Well done!

 ejs1 10th Oct said:

Thank you so much Michael for the positive feedback. I really enjoyed the process of writing this poem however I was a little apprehensive about sharing it. That you and a few other people enjoyed it makes it all the more sweet.

I will certainly take your encouragement on as I love writing and it would seem that that includes poetry! Thank you again, I'm so, so pleased this poem has been well received. Great inspiration!



Jenny Nielsen | Depth.  
30th Apr 2010

---

In everyone there is an inner person fighting to emerge, there is a creative being just crying out to be heard. Whether it is through poetry, prose, drama or any of the other 'arts' everyone has something they are good at. Even if it seems at times (especially when I read a wonderful poem or read a story someone has written) and I think 'I could never top that or write as well' there is always something you can do, differently perhaps but just as well. I have never been able to write a deep meaningful poem. In fact even when I have tried I have become slightly embarrassed about putting my feelings down for all to see. This [slowly] is changing. Now I realise that no matter how I write as long as it is readable, entertaining it doesn't matter if it isn't too too deep as long as it gives pleasure and brings a smile to people's faces.

John  
McDonnell  
(John the  
Lawyer)

Deserts

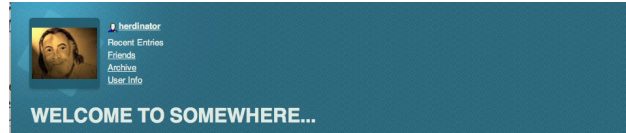
14th Nov 2010

---

Deserts are not all boring  
Camels are not all nasty  
The desert blooms after the rain  
The camel knows its driver  
Sands endlessly shifting  
Leave a map without markings  
The sands of time flow away  
So the traveller leaves no trace

# Ian Herd (Herdinator) | A Redfern Winter 13th Jul 2012

---



the trees are bare  
wet leaves  
line the streets  
naked trees  
the birds ignore  
brown vein leaves  
washed up  
debris across  
a colden shore  
remnants of life  
dried skin that flakes  
bare trees  
shivereen  
unlike the proud one  
outside my window  
an evergreen.

Ian Mornin' Tuesday  
Herd 13th Jul 2012

---

beautiful Sydney sun  
be kind  
give me thought  
inspiration  
passion  
on my un perfect being  
un perfect mind  
the pen is full  
ready to touch the virgin paper  
that spreads comfortable upon my desk  
ready to be inked  
oh sweet Tuesday  
the best day of the week.

Ian  
Herd

13th Jul 2012

---

the coffee's warm  
this early morn  
not a sound  
a whimper  
from the homeless hound  
nor a distant siren  
even in the night  
I see shadows  
from the dimmed street light  
a smoked yellow hue  
that lingers above the tar  
yet  
my gothic angel  
asleep  
lost in her dreams  
in the arms of her mistress  
my quilt  
scented with their sex  
this morning night  
so quiet.

Ian : forgotten soldier  
Herd : 13th Jul 2012

---

ignore the ramblings  
of a layabout  
a lonesome soul  
darkened by hardship  
sacrifices  
and control

he who volunteered for war  
came back  
insulted by the crowds  
telling him he was a hero  
these people that weren't even there  
only his family;  
wife and three children cared,

but the months of nightmares  
it took its toll  
the booze, the beatings  
his wife endured; crazed and out of control  
leave he did  
with nowhere to go,  
at night in the park  
under dim street light

his ramblings  
his tears  
evaporate  
into the city smog.

## Anonymous : Where to from here?

---

Where to from here? The Catalyst course is coming to an end – only a few days until the final performance of *Away* and then it will all be over. In one sense I look forward to courses ending because then the pressure is off and I can turn my attention to other things, but there is also a sense of loss – a mild form of grief perhaps? ... It's a sad time but I remind myself that the future will bring more: more courses (at the MAC or elsewhere), more camaraderie, more friendships and more learning. I just love learning new things. Not just because I get something extra to add to my CV, but for its own sake. Learning academic subjects is thrilling. And I'm not exaggerating! I just love it. What a way to expand the mind. I'm already looking forward to next semester's Catalyst program. Astra is trying to organise courses in art history/theory and sociology. These sound amazing. I'm just salivating at the thought of them! Especially sociology as I've never studied that before. Roll on February!

Anissa  
Chatt

'We've got a box to put in  
your brain, hard wired for  
downloading'

20th Apr 2006

---





Class was good. Class is always good. It takes a few minutes for my brain to adjust to the fact that it is being stimulated.

Oh! We are thinking!

Oh, we aren't talking of money and customers and expectations and budgets and approvals and targets.

Oh, we aren't talking of needles and immune levels and infection and bloods and obs and lethargy.

Oh, we aren't trying to find a place to live, trying to survive or get a pension or feed or find someone to pay the bills that have no way of being paid or filling out forms.

Or filling out forms.

Or filling out endless mountains of forms.

We are thinking! Hurrah! On second thought, that actually involves work. It involves awakening a sleeping giant. Maybe it needs a lay in.

I love words. I love poetry and fiction and writing.\* I love talking and feeling and ideas. I love intuition and points of view and style. What I loved most about class was talking to Phil and Tania, talking of the marginalised, talking about justice, talking of dignity, trying to solve the world's problems over an omelette.

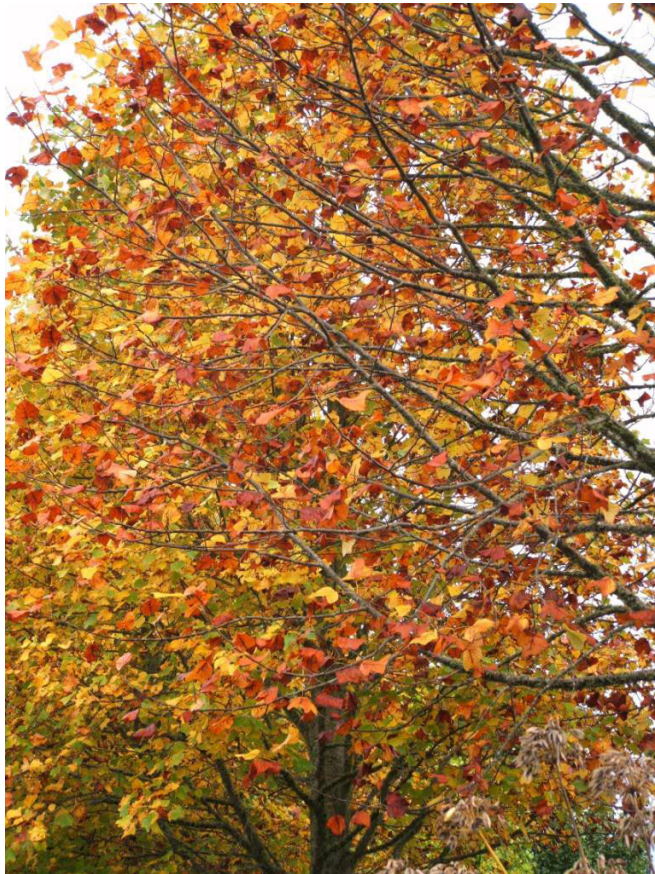
\*when I'm not being a perfectionist

Anissa  
Chatt

‘Rise up every day to blind  
beat and burn, show me no  
mercy’

6th May 2006

---



I am intrigued by the subject matter that seems to capture Australian writers. I've noticed a pattern, perhaps a little haphazard like your first attempt at making a quilt, the squares not quite meeting, the lines a little frayed. Nevertheless, it is there, faint and obvious. The line seems to have been drawn in the dry aussie scrub, a line between men and women. The female Australian authors we have explored seem enraptured with nature. Judith Wright talks of nature in reverent terms. The land to her is a woman, powerful, nurturing, all encompassing: 'I am the earth, I am the root'. She speaks of the wattle tree as if it is not only perfect in it's being, but 'knows' and is almost godly. Barbara Baynton also speaks of the bush with respect: 'There is no sound so human as that from the riven souls of these tree people, or the trembling sighs of their upright neighbours whose hands in time will meet over the victim's fallen body'.

The male authors, on the other hand, clearly value the quintessential Australian notion of mateship. The Giraffe in Henry Lawson's 'Send Round the Hat' is your good ol' aussie bloke, pitching in for a mate, self sacrificing, simple, perhaps a little dim-witted. In 'Hard Luck Story' the poet Francis Webb shares an intimate moment with a stranger over a cigarette. The idea of mateship is also strong in Mark and Lars, the poet searching for Mark's severed finger while 'a red blur of absence seep(s) through the end of his bandage'. This whole idea of mateship and relationships between men is made even more poignant after ANZAC Day. I find it hard to understand a relationship that exists built on small gestures that are never spoken of.

Anissa  
Chatt

‘You’re so cute when you’re  
frustrated dear. You’re so  
cute when you’re sedated  
dear.’

21st May 2006

---



There is something about Tim Winton's 'The Turning' that I have fallen in love with. I carry the story with me everyday, packed away neatly somewhere between my bursting spleen and overextended rib cage. I don't mean to take it with me, I don't mean to be consumed by it, but somehow it is there. It's the reason I can't let go of this essay. I want to write and write and write. I have no idea where this change came over me. The last time I wrote essays, it was a chore. It was an exam. It was what I had to do, along with working, and paying rent, and trying to not be sick and trying not to be homeless, and partying too hard and heart break, in order to finish my HSC. Now I love writing. I love pondering the piece and its issues. I love finding a point to connect. I love being able to compare it to my own experience. I love the simple fact that we as humans are all innately the same. What strikes me most about 'The Turning' is the fact that Winton manages to capture small town Australia and the despair so perfectly. I know because I have lived it. I have had baths out of buckets. I have been happy, overjoyed when I had so much as an egg for dinner. I've been the stranger in my home. Most of all, I've been resilient in the face of hate. Winton writes of domestic violence like he has lived it. He describes beautifully the feeling of being trapped and of having to find some sort, any sort, of inner strength to survive. I know what it's like to be alive when everyone else is already dead.

Daniel : Windows  
Smith : 4th Nov 2008

---

As i stare out this window, i question whose it is, MINE? YOURS? OURS?  
Through this window it should only be me, but then i didn't make it!!  
In this house there are many windows connected in many ways.  
Made of the same wood from the same tree.  
The builder built the windows not me, NOT ME.  
Through it i see forward ever forward.  
Reflections of what's past i see through the window behind me.  
There are so many things that make up this window and me.

.....

G O I N G  
F O R W A R D

.....

# Shayne Bowditch

## Post: Writing the Sacred

---

It's not how I usually choose to spend a lazy Sunday.

Sitting in the Gleeson auditorium listening to David Malouf read from his award winning novel *Remembering Babylon*. David's words brought the little scamp Gemmy Fairley to life.

'Do not shoot,'... I am a B-b-british object!' Gemmy, and *Remembering Babylon*, were my introduction to Australian Literature and the basis for my first ever essay for MG.

'Willet's Boy' I still have the original (hand written) essay for which I received a credit.



The forum also included a presentation on 'Writing The Sacred in Art' by Artist Jeannette Siebols. Jeannette's work was simply inspirational. I'm not certain what category Jeannette's artwork fits into but it's something I could see myself emulating. Although I left the conference early (after lunch), I left fully inspired, to create my own Art.

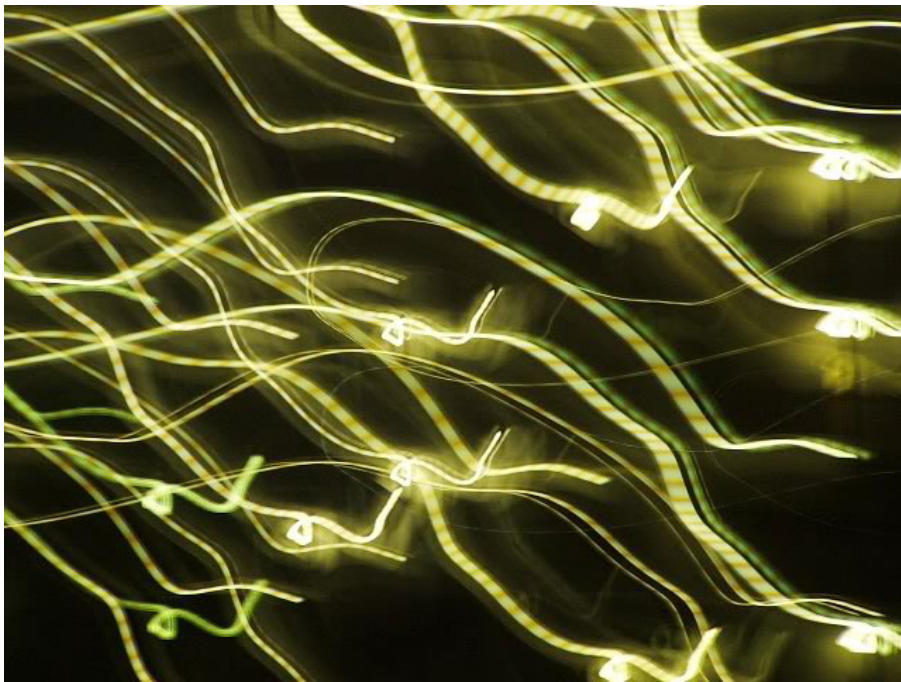
I took a shit load of photos, one of which you see here. Others can be viewed on my web site: <http://shayne2.wordpress.com>. All in all I enjoyed the day and thank Michael, not only for hosting the event but also for the kind invitation.



Anissa  
Chatt : 'The absorbed skies bleed  
stars of innocence' (Francis  
Webb 'Five Days Old')

13th Apr 2006

---



I have light, I have hope. This course is hope. It is hope that, after 7 years of wishing, I might soon be a full time uni student. It is hope that one day soon, the haze will lift from my brain, my stiff limbs may crack and stretch, that I might have a minute in a day, just a minute, where I feel healthy. Just give me a minute. One little minute.

My brain is being shocked back into being stimulated. Years of working corporate jobs has left me a robot, able to perform tasks quickly and accurately and beaten into submission - 'just don't ask why, don't ask why, do, complete, go home'. Now my brain swipes me away, irritated at being woken, far earlier than it expected. I want to use it and it objects. A few long lost poets and a glimmer of recognition. Being intellectually stimulated is something I've cried out for for years. I'm finally silent and my brain is fed.

# Daniel Smith

## Night sounds Night Sights

15th Oct 2008

---

The night, eerie and cool  
Intimate light, the moon  
Visually minimising, abstracting all  
Slow and quiet at 3 in the morning  
Sound intensified Shoes smacking on pavement  
A train's horn blows and the clanking and shunting fades into the distance  
Slowly sounds building as the hours pass  
Birds talk to each other greeting the morning  
Soft and subtle turning to bright  
Goodnight, goodnight  
goodnight to the night  
Coffee, toast and Cereal  
GOOD MORNING

---

## Comments



**michaelgriffith said:**

Daniel... so good, and refreshing in its use of language. You really do have a poetic talent ... love that onomatopoeic line about the trains .... 'horn blows and the clanking and shunting fades....'... fabulous.

Well done

Michael



**Benzammitt said:**

**fading trains**

Thanks Michael. I Really do enjoy Poetry. Cheers Daniel



**michaelgriffith said:**

Let's see some more Daniel... this is too good a feast not to have the after-dinner mints!!!!!!

Michael



**nancy\_m said:**

**Your Poem**

Hi Daniel,

What a lovely poem - but O, how I wish I could feel the same about the birds as you do. For me, where I live, they are so noisy. They wake me up every morning with their chirping at 5.30am before I am ready to get up! Anyway, keep up the good work - I also like the image of the moon that you have presented - I have never thought of it in that way.

Nancy

Rui  
Cao

EAGLES  
7th Oct 2010

---



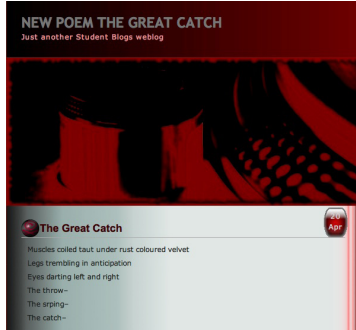
An eagle flies high,  
yet with his eyes fixed firmly on the ground.  
A man with talents of a genius,  
bending over the most trivial tasks in order to keep his  
family fed.  
Years have gone by,  
A repetitive job has led him nowhere near his dream.  
Yet he is happy to see his love  
rising from an innocent girl to a capable professional.  
14 years of toil and struggle,  
finally he received the most precious gift of love -  
their new born baby son.  
They both realize this gift of life  
is far better than any dreams they ever had.  
So just like the mighty eagles,  
they are forever flying high!

# Jenny Nielsen

## The Great Catch

20th Apr 2010

---



Muscles coiled taut under rust coloured velvet  
Legs trembling in anticipation  
Eyes darting left and right  
The throw -  
The spring -  
The catch -

## Nigel

---

I used to sit on a milk crate in the dingy back corner of my work depot and gaze out this door wishing for a way to escape my life of drudgery.

I realised the image itself would make a great photo and so I snapped it one day when the sky looked really cool. I think it brilliantly captures the feeling of being liberated from the darkness into the light.

The incredible thing is that I am now taking the necessary steps to make the move away from that dead end job I despised. The most interesting point is that management, my once imagined jailers, are doing all they can to assist me in making this necessary change. I am eternally grateful.

It all came about after my severe bout of depression last year. People who wanted to help kept appearing and things fell into place. Now I am one subject away from completing the course that will help me go to university and try and improve my options in life.

I've met so many amazing people along the way and heard so many inspiring stories. People in the various fellowships and in the Catalyst course have helped me re-connect with the human race.

I want to say thank you to everyone that is involved in the course and I look forward to seeing you all again in the future.

Suzanne  
Hunt-Tuzo

FROM SCHIZOPHRENIA  
TO MENTAL HEALTH VIA  
CLEMENTE AND ACU

In 2008 I was in St Vincent's psych. ward, after my first semester of Clemente. I was put on very strong medication to beat the delusions and paranoia I was suffering. When I came out of hospital, I did three more semesters of Clemente. I was supported by Mary at ACU. My health was improving as my studies progressed.

My spare time was spent with homeless people and drug addicts back then.

When I enrolled in university after graduating from Clemente I was looking after my partner Jimmy who was in a nursing home. I was allowed to bring him to lectures and he spent time practising walking up and down the ACU foyer pushing his wheel chair. I did several subjects, one at a time while looking after him. This year in February, he died suddenly. The ACU counsellor helped me through the bad times.

This semester, when my grief had died down and my illness was well under control, I decided to try and do two subjects at once. I have had a great semester so far and this is why.

One of the new students at IACE has helped me on my road to happiness. Despite not being my tutor, she offered me her company on Mondays before my history lecture. She introduced me to her friend who is always with her. We had a few laughs together before my lecture. The thirty-three year age gap seemed to disappear. Then, I would bump into her and her friend on another day. They invited me to study in their study group, introducing me to the whole group. I wrote my history in the midst of camaraderie and kindness. They offered me their ideas. It was a good time; I felt like I belonged and was accepted.

Mary and her team from IACE support me, offer me encouragement and point me in the right direction I need given any particular challenge. They respond to my life and academic hurdles with generosity, never with judgement, affirming my strengths, which offers me a sense of dignity and respect.

The IACE angels have changed my life. My tutor is absolutely fantastic and gives me great support every week without fail. I know where I can go to get the best help at the university. And because of that I have learnt to trust people a lot more recently. One of my history class students always talks to me and sits next to me in class and tutorials. Young people have reached out to me so much in the last six months that my confidence has grown. They don't see me as different so I feel more part of this world and academic environment. When I see people in my lectures I wave and say hello now. When I go to lectures I say hello to everybody. It's really exciting to see people respond, some of whom I would have been afraid of six months ago. Some young people may keep to themselves, but others are just beautiful. Ask Mary, who is the catalyst of Clemente. She is always so positive, views others as equals and surrounds herself with people who are just gifts.

Studying two subjects seems to be going very well. My psychiatrist obviously thinks so because she is giving me a 25% reduction in medication on Wednesday.

It's nice to feel part of ACU. It's a better feel being among the rush of students than sitting around amongst homeless people and alcoholics, waiting for something to do. I have that much more respect for myself.

Right now I'm the most happy I've been for a long time. No one can tell I have a serious mental illness. Life is good. I'm going on a three-day retreat with the university later on this week. I can kiss mental illness goodbye really. I'm swapping it for an Arts Degree. I'm a student first and foremost. It's like having a job. My family are very happy for me and support me in reading my essays. Relationships with them are better than ever. Nobody judges me. Why would they? I'm at ACU studying for a degree.

Studying gives me challenges on a daily basis sometimes and I try to meet those challenges. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to be at university. Uni gives my life a richness and sense of connectedness and equity that I couldn't get any other way.

# Suzanne Hunt-Tuzo

## Butterflies

---

People are like butterflies  
Vulnerable and frail  
And so we shouldn't criticize  
Because that's when people fail  
We may look sturdy, strong enough  
But that can be a lie  
Inside we may hurt so damn much  
We wish that we could die  
We don't see people as they are  
Or hear their inner pleas  
We just accept that they're ok  
When they appear at ease  
But like a drop of rain can end  
A butterfly's life on earth  
Painful events can kill us too  
And feelings of no worth  
Treat every body as if they're sweet  
And watch them prove you're right  
And life will improve a great deal more



.....

# S P I R I T U A L I T Y

.....

Coralie Rosa  
Hinkley 7th Oct 2008

---



Here is a poem for my LiveJournal... I was inspired by "One Perfect Rose" by the American writer Dorothy Parker which we had in our book of readings for this unit. This poem is called "Rosa".

minoans  
    painted  
roses  
    on the walls  
        at  
        Knossos  
the upper back  
    unsheathed  
is breathed  
    the rose opens out  
        opening  
    a bird  
nestles  
    in the armpit  
        circling dancers  
    carry  
        a rose-wreath  
Ariadne's crown  
Horus  
    child of Isis  
sometimes  
    holds  
a rose  
in one hand  
    a finger to his lips  
    with the other  
        in silence  
before the mystery of mysteries.

---

## Comments



**michaelgriffith said:**

Coralie- so good to see you being inspired by the poems in our anthology... and this poem really captures the weaving energy of your own lifetime gift- the dancer.... lovely to see the way you can translate physical bodily movement into the living texture of the word on the page.

Well done

Michael



**necros99 said:**

Non-conformity

At first I was trying to see the picture you were drawing with the words. On reading MG's comments I realised that the words were dancing on the page. What I really like is the way each line has it's own place, there is no conformity from each line to another, really good improvisation (in a drama sense) is displayed.

I am also intrigued by your emphasis on ancient mythology, anthropology and the beauty of nature.

Paolo.

PS. When we first started you were so doubtful of your ability to use the computer to communicate your thoughts. I don't know why though, you seem to be doing just fine, in fact I think you are doing better than most in almost every aspect.

BIRDMAN : LORD WHY DO YOU LOVE ME  
25th May 2010

---

(One sinner's prayer)

Lord why do you love me

My sins are many

I am a fallen soul

Lord why do you love me

I am selfish vain and proud

I am unworthy

Lord why do you love me

I put my trust in fate

lived my life in folly

Lord why do you love me

I fear it is too late for

this flawed being

Lord why do you love me

My belief so incomplete

faith that ebbs and flows

Lord why do you love me

My cup runs over with

regret and remorse

Lord why do you love me

A yoke of shame rests

heavy on this soul

Lord why do you love me

I am a broken being

dressed in rags

Lord, do you hear me

Lord, are you listening

Lord, I don't know why you love me

But please, don't stop

Lord

Remember me

Though I may stumble and the world blind me.  
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

# Anonymous | What gives me most joy in life ...

---

What brings to me most joy in life?

A glimpse of the rosy orb of the sinking sun –  
the day's drowsy eye – throwing its warming rays  
across a rosy-blushing landscape;  
transforming the sky into a palette of ruddy oils  
and blasting the world with a thousand tints of pink and gold.

As crimson seeps and spreads across the bowl of heaven's canvass  
the eye begins to dim. When the moment is right,  
heart swells and, floodingly, transformation comes.  
It is as if the portals to an inner world swing wide  
to disclose that private orb of mind's eye,  
and, in a flash of brilliant white, all is oneness.

Then, as Earth rolls and turns its face from Sol's warming stare –  
the planet's ceaseless winding in a golden veil –  
the eye droops and sleeps. As twilight comes,  
and shade cascades from vale to wooded vale,  
the world  
I divide. I find myself again.

Anonymous | The sacred  
12th Oct 2009

---

Within a corner of a verdant wood  
a garden lies encircled  
by a storied, mossy wall;  
in the wall an archway.

I wish, back handed, to gently lift  
the serpentine ivy  
that from the keystone falls,  
and bow the head and pass beneath  
and witness sights as if till now unseen:

grass bejewelled with pearly dew;  
a tiny wren – soft, feathered ball  
with twitching tail and beaded eyes,  
gone in a flutter;  
wild apple trees bowed with load most rich  
and bees in their blossoms enclosed.

The whole brimful of birdsong most melodious.  
And during that perfect hour of morn  
fresh Phoebus lets fly, aslant,  
his darts of purest gold.

A touch of the sweet and sacred,  
The wider world's pulsating heart.  
A veil lifted on the unexamined core.  
A journey from the shadowy, flickering cavern  
upward to the bright and blinding sun.  
Life's inner sanctum behind the stale façade.  
A very Eden before the fall.

# Anonymous

## Comment on David's blog

Dave

Yeah, aren't these moments great? Interesting to hear that you experienced one of these blissful states of connection while looking out at a beautiful blue sky with the sun shining after having been at the beach, as these are the times when I can feel this sense of peace too. Another time that does it for me is when I witness a beautiful sunset. There are also those blissful moments, much less commonly experienced, when the self disappears entirely! I think this is what mystics call a direct experience of God – unmediated and face-to-face, as it were. Incidentally, this state can be induced by hallucinogenic drugs, as many people who have tried LSD will know.

Works of literature can contain stunning descriptions of this condition of absolute connectedness when the self dissolves and we no longer experience boundaries between ourselves and the world around us. One such description appears in Jack London's *Call of the Wild* when the protagonist (a dog!) is hunting a snow hare through a forest in the moonlight. The experience comes to Buck "as to an artist in a flash of white light or to a soldier war mad on the field of battle, offering no quarter" – I'm quoting from memory but it goes something like that. I recommend this book by the way; it's beautiful and easy to read. But the best description comes from Eugene O'Neil's play *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Here a young man describes a state of oneness with the universe while at sea on the deck of a ship at night, staring up at the sky and stars and knowing that there was absolute connection: the ship, the sea, the sky, stars and himself were one. Awesome stuff.

## Comment



Michael Griffith, December 1st, 2009

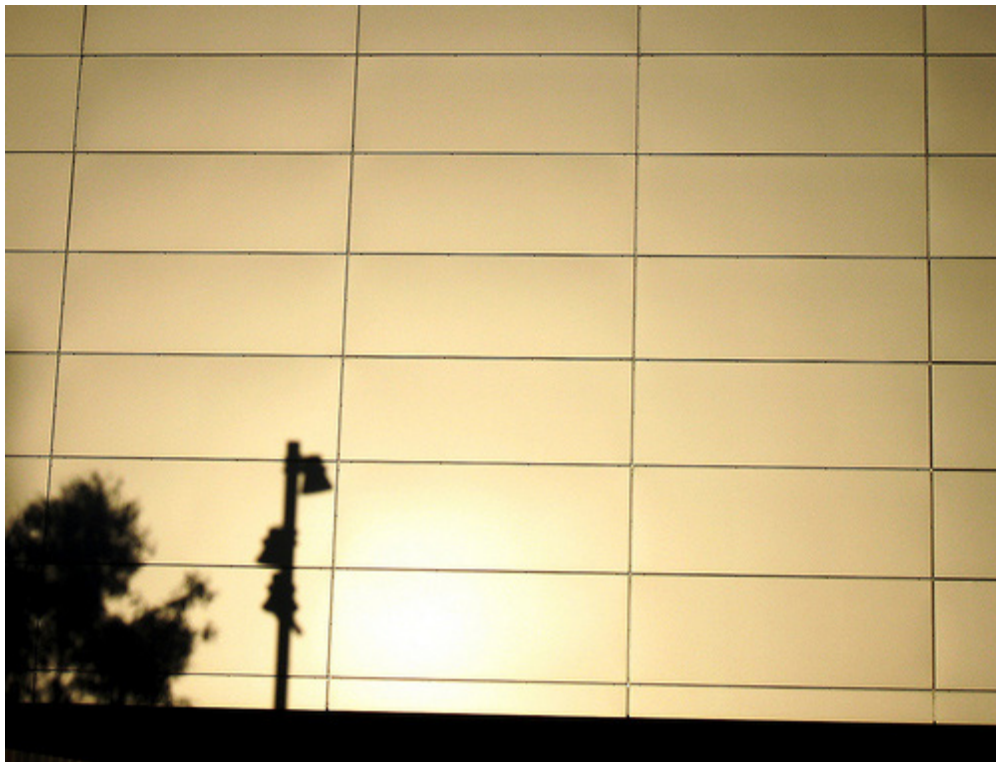
I remember that moment in *Long Day's Journey*... that is a great link to what we have been considering. I think you will find a few similar moments in the play we are studying now. I look forward to reading your reflections on what you think this play is trying to express.  
Michael

Anissa Chatt

Ill be sittin with a stranger  
tryin to keep it together  
swimmin around waiting for  
a change in weather

26th Oct 2008

---





\*Inspired by Blake in general and his Illuminated Wholeness\*

I wish there were a way to communicate the myriad of emotions in life. For once this language I've embraced late, misunderstood often and only began to love when I was finally at the end of raising myself, fails me.

Love comes in so many forms.

Happiness is not just one state, it is fluid and for me often intersects with love. Happiness has many words: joy, contentment, peace, melancholy, triumph. Ecstasy, consumption, overwhelming emotion, agony.

Just as photo, lyric and poem together create the whole. I cannot communicate or articulate without all three.

All I can do here is give you lyrics of songs and hope that while you read you also listen.

Then perhaps we will be on the same page where language so unheroically and pitifully falls down.

THIS is what I feel.

THIS is what I want you to feel and one day down the track recollect and not know where you lived this before.

Share, in this moment united in beat, and pause.

Crescendo, rhythm, lyric, breath.

See, the truth is that everything goes through a filter.

Meaning expands in context.

Stamp out my existence to make myself known.

There is a part of me that is eternally immortal. It is the creative conscious, something we cannot fully own. When we go it too goes back to the great ball of energy, everyone living and dead interlinked by imagination. Someone is only so if we continue to tell their stories. Someone was only here if they were painted, photographed, wrote, made music or buildings or art.

I no longer have corners of my mind.

Everything is circular;

my brain is spherical,

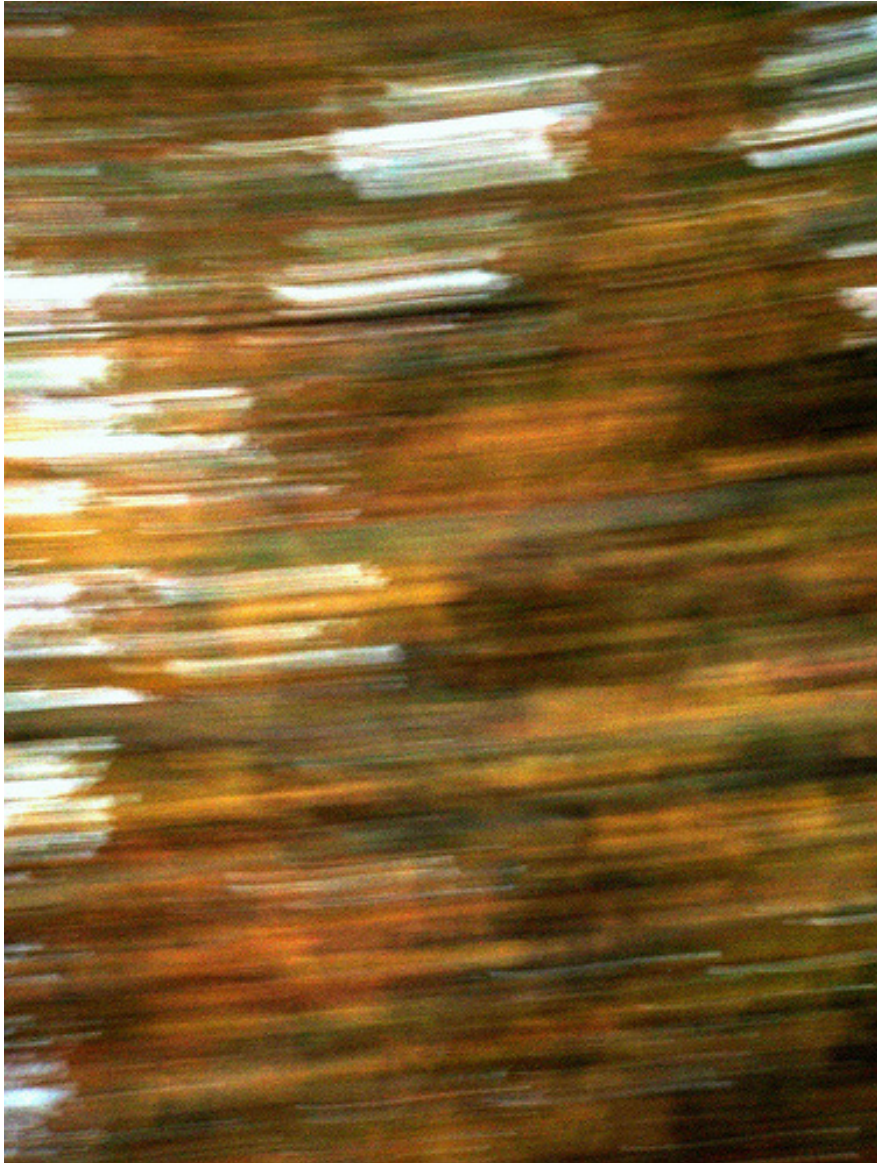
the universe eternal.

Anissa  
Chatt

“Man was made for Joy  
& Woe; And when this we  
rightly know Thro’ the World  
we safely go.”

7th Aug 2008

---



Just a few ideas I had on a cold winter's day and confirmed through Blake. The egg before the chicken. Literature week 2\*

Life is suffering but at the same time there is great beauty in that suffering.

When I ceased to be surprised by all the suffering that was being heaped upon me, that I was heaping on myself, that I felt I had to radiate to acknowledge well, only then did the power of suffering dissipate. It was like a herd of wild mice all on top of one another and suddenly being startled, running off in all directions taking with them their power to horrify, to scare, to shock.

The status quo has never been this sanitized Westernised image we are constantly fed. Life is hard work and pain and pure unadulterated joy.

Life is death.

Death has no power to shock. How can it? It only has the power we give it. It is not tragic or horrific.

It is organic. We cannot, try as we might, stave it off. But in a world that has been so convinicenced that we no longer know work or pain, the fear of the natural just explodes.

The Big Bang within.

We don't even realise this is a spiritual epiphany in itself. It is the gathering, the build up of so much energy within that we are unconsciously propelled to consciousness.

Death and transformation are so demonized that we whittle away all our energy trying to run the other way, and in the process we run away from the self and are torn away from grace.

True peace.

True meaning.

Anissa  
Chatt

“All I am is a piece of wood  
cut from something living.  
Touch me I don't feel so  
good”

1st Aug 2008

---



Literature week 1- Ginsberg on Blake

Consciousness is entirely a worldly domain. It does not continue but we are all the same. Energy resonates throughout the world, a heartbeat under the surface. There can be nothing inherently good or evil, important or insignificant. A brick has energy, a human has energy, a tree too. We all vibrate, just with different frequencies.

There is no god but that which we hold inside us. Our subliminal connection to everything else living, and our vibrations. That is spirituality. Of course Religion and Spirituality are philosophies apart.

There is also no afterlife. All we have is this very second here. Here. Here.

And when we die, when the physical has become dust and swallowed up by the earth, or after we have floated up into the sky in pieces of ash as our body burns on a funeral pyre, then we cease to exist. There is nothing left of us but the memory that others give of us.

We never really belonged to ourselves to begin with. That life force that cannot be quantified, the life force in all animals and plants, that belongs to the universe. It is eternal and we too become eternal. that spark of life that gets snuffed out, that goes back to the great mass of energy.

The only way we go on is in that mass. There is no consciousness, simply a unit of energy that once filled a human being and is now part of the eternal whole.

Suzanne  
Hunt-Tuzo

BLESSED

---

I might not have money  
But I have lots of time  
I don't have to work  
And that is so fine

I get up each morning  
And savour the day  
If its blue sky with sunshine  
Or rainy and grey

I don't mix with city folks  
Or those wearing suits  
I don't have a car  
With which to commute

I've wonderful people  
In my life that I love  
And so I am blessed  
By the good Lord above

Linda : 8th May 2010

---

Linda's comment on Tolstoy's 'Love':

To have the eloquence to express simply a story of magnitude; to guide man to the source within; I feel Tolstoy and I share this philosophy.

To know that we all have God in us; that life is in living this truth of love; that we are one, is everything to me.

It is a long time since Tolstoy and I shared company. I miss our afternoons of tea and good reading. We shared so much, I learnt so much. I must pick up my old friend.



# Daniel Smith

## On This Road

11th Nov 2008

---



On this road my feet were placed  
Along this road i roam  
At times I wander off  
Stumble, fall, hit my head and bleed  
I wake, walk, get back on the road  
My heart soars and off i go again

When at first i started elders did guide me and so to God  
Elder am i now  
Not yet a guide and God is still with me  
Strong and stout

A partner on this road i have today  
I hope for good and good times to come  
Today this day i have my good day  
A kindred soul who burns brightly  
My heart burns in response  
What we have is now  
What we hope for is forever.

---

## Comments

 **michaelgriffith** said:

I love that opening stanza which has a pilgrim's progress feel about it: the metaphor of life's journey. The poem works well but it could be streamlined/ shaped a little to give it more power. How does something like this sound? I have corrected a couple of spellings and have just rearranged the lines a little to help the relationship between the power of the words and the movement of the lines- it is always good to read the poem aloud to yourself and then adjust words and line lengths to help the poem "sing" its meaning as loud and as clear as you can manage:



On this road my feet were placed  
 Along this road i roam  
 At times I wander off  
 Stumble, fall,  
 hit my head and bleed

I wake, walk,  
 get back on the road  
 My heart  
 soars and  
 off i go again

When at first i started  
 elders did guide me  
 and so to God  
 Elder am i now  
 Not yet a guide and  
 God is still with me  
 Strong and stout

A partner on this road i have today  
 I hope for good and good times to come  
 Today this day i have my good day  
 A kindred soul who burns brightly  
 My heart burns in response  
 What we have is now  
 What we hope for is forever.

**”** jezigirl 23rd Nov, 2008 11:01 (UTC)

This is so beautiful Dan.. Your teacher is right, it definetly has a 'pilgrim' feel to it, and it gives me shivers reading it.

Love Pinkyswear





# LEARNING



# Suzanne Hunt-Tuzo

## A MOTHER'S LESSON

---

As I go through my life each day  
And people upset me so  
I hold on to the words my mother said  
And try to make them grow

“You’ve got to put up with a lot” she said  
When you have a family  
“you’re locked into a contract  
And you are no longer free”

“You’ve got to put up with a lot” she said  
So much is out of control  
You must grin and bear it with a generous touch  
And not let people ruin your goal

“Put up with the hurtful things that are said  
And done that make you rage  
If you want to stay young put up with it all  
And each day start a new page”

“Don’t hold onto a grudge” she said  
“They hurt you all the more  
Put up with being told you’re wrong” she said  
It was my mother’s law

“Life doesn’t turn out the way you want”  
My mother said to me  
“But you must get on with your lot in life  
Wear a brave smile and agree”

My mother is no longer able to teach  
Me any more things about life  
But I have learnt her lesson well  
To shut up and keep out of strife

# Jenny Nielsen

## Last time.... 28th May 2010

---

It has been a very short twelve weeks[well nearly twelve] I didn't think I would enjoy the subject as much as I did but it has been fantastic. As a teacher you have managed to inspire me to go further with study [chaotic sentences will hopefully be tamed and made shorter], thoughts sorted out and brought to heel and confidence improved. Thank you for bringing to life poetry and prose and drama, I never thought I would enjoy reading Shakespeare or Hemingway but I have.

Once again thankyou for a fantastic twelve weeks and the little "excursion" into the world of Blackboard at least now I know my computer wont bite.. [I hope] Jennyn

# Anonymous

## Away

4th Dec 2009

---

It has been great fun rehearsing *Away* but very nerve-wracking too. (I'm dreading the performance next week!) Matt has been great and the play seems to be coming together nicely. I think that my anxiety over performing and the concentration on trying to learn my lines and do a decent job has distracted me from pondering the play's themes and meanings. This is inevitable I suppose but unfortunate. Still, it's clear that *Away* is about redemption, healing, and all that. It's also about not living in the past and hanging on to things that must be let go of such as memories of the son killed in Vietnam. So much of the play is tragically sad: Tom's imminent death; Roy's misplaced pride; popping a bex (whatever that is) to mask emotional pain; the snobbery of the wealthier couple; the ongoing conflict in Vietnam; the very emptiness of the characters' lives at Christmas time when all should be happy and at peace. I'm not sure which character is the most happy. I wonder. They are all quite messed up I think. Things will start to make more sense at the rehearsals next week and during the performance perhaps. I'll wait and see.

# Anonymous

## Where does a novel's meaning come from?

18th Nov 2009

---

Just had our session with David Malouf. Well, very interesting! Never asked questions of a famous author before. It's one thing to watch the video of Malouf, quite another to see him in the flesh and direct questions to him.

It's enlightening to hear the writer himself give his opinions on his own work. Thing is, they can say things that surprise the reader. I don't think this happened today so much but, as Michael has said before, authors sometimes insist that the readers' views are the correct ones and that we can interpret a text in any way that suggests itself – there is no right or wrong way and to refer to the author for the “correct” meaning is to miss the point that it is the readers' “horizons of expectations” that count. In other words, meaning is derived not from the text alone but from the readers' interaction with it. In literary theory circles there is a name for this – ‘reader response criticism’ I think. I find this approach fascinating; it seems so counter-intuitive because one naturally assumes that enough analysis will extricate the true meaning from a novel or whatever, perhaps with an appeal to the author (if possible) when a text is unclear. But to accept that we construct the meaning ourselves in relation to the work is to knock the author from his pride of place. So can we say that a work can signify absolutely anything if we so choose? Apparently not. After all, we still have to provide a reasoned justification for our arguments; we can't say any old rubbish.

Why am I banging on about all this? I thought I was talking about Malouf's visit. I just get carried away sometimes. But it is so interesting to me. Does anyone else think so?

Michael  
Griffith:  
Clemente  
Lecturer

David Malouf visits homeless  
Clemente students at Mission  
Australia

24th Nov 2009





David Malouf- my old teacher at Sydney University in the early seventies- agreed to come and speak to the handful of Clemente students studying “Remembering Babylon” as part of the Sacred Australia unit that I am teaching at Mission Australia in Surry Hills. The book is such a beautiful celebration of the real importance of the marginalized to the health of the nation as a whole. Gemmy Fairley- as a result of his complex and traumatic experiences- brings to the coastal community of North Queensland an insight and understanding that many of us are in need of. Sadly the novel shows that only a few are capable of understanding and learning from Gemmy. The epigraph to the book - from William Blake- “whether this is Jerusalem or Babylon we know not” - is a sobering reminder of the key question we might ask about contemporary Australia: is this a place of potential harmony between human beings of all races ( a potential Jerusalem), or is it the place in which cacophonous voices of misunderstanding and hatred will continue and grow???? Malouf’s answer to this implicit question is ambiguous. In a real way he leaves it up to the reader to decide whether the outcome of these events will be positive or negative. It is ultimately up to us whether it will be a Jerusalem or a Babylon. Here we are, arrayed around the literary master. Thank you all for taking part and for so eagerly bringing your questions to the exchange with David.

Michael

# Franco

## [Jack Franco]

# Another Skin

12th Nov 2009

---

Inspired by: David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon*, Published by Chatto & Windus, England, and Random House, Australia, 1993.

The book won the inaugural IMPAC Award and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and the Miles Franklin Award.

In *Another Skin* -The He refers to the English boy Gemmy Fairley, and the She refers to the English girl Janet McIvor. Both are key characters in David Malouf's, *Remembering Babylon*- Inspired by: by the words : "another skin, and lustrous as pearl" that evoked visions of-*The Birth of Venus*, and *Primavera* by Botticelli.

"Another Skin"

She did see another skin, what was this lustrous as pearl.

Did she speak of was it mother of pearl, or was she the pearl,

A pearl or some other creature-*The Birth of Venus*-Botticelli!

The goddess Venus, and having emerged from the sea,

No longer the child but a full grown woman, arriving at the sea-shore,

Inspirations: descriptions of Pliny, Leonidas, and Antipater of Sidon, and before.

The artist drew from what he had drawn maybe- Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*.

Was it Poliziano's verse, is what is seen is that strictly pagan!

Consider this that it was made, long ago,

When most artworks depicted Christian themes,

Some what surprising that this work was spared from disapproving fires,

But what was that, and was the hundred of yards of fine spun, and seemed like glass.

Might have been that silver thread life hang upon,

What was the powdery redness of blood or did she mean,

A powdery red paint, pigment in a dream figured with flowers,

The Charities these three graces, who dance an elegant roundel,

The Grace on the right side has a famous face, on the garden of Venus.

# Paolo Scimone

22nd Nov 2008

---

I started this course in literature not knowing exactly what to expect. I was pleased to find many mature age students there, as I already knew, through previous studies, how older students contribute so much more to the learning experience because of their broader life experiences. Older students also have the ability to communicate freely with the lecturer/teacher; they're way beyond the limitations inbred during school. I am now extremely happy to have re-inserted myself into a curriculum of serious, committed study.

This course introduced on-line interaction and study to me for the first time. I have found this to be a most valuable form of expression and, with the continuous support of MG to spur us on in creative writing, I believe I have found an avenue of expression which I hope never to lose.

I am an extremely analytical person who tries to see all things from all perspectives. I have views on society, which may seem extreme to some people but I believe that as a society we still need to "grow up" especially concerning particular social and economic agendas. Studying literature helps me to follow a path, which is positively conducive to such ends, fostering (I hope) a better life for us all. It also allows me to be critical of my own writing ability. George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" continuously reminds me of the importance of examining my own writings.

Above all though I have found the spontaneous creative writing of my fellow students, and my own, to be most inspiring. Commenting on the entries of others also gives me much pleasure. As I have previously mentioned, this reciprocal process helps everyone in his or her creative expression. An inadvertent benefit of this process allows for support, especially during "tough times" in a truly constructive manner, something a chat-board doesn't really do.

I shall conclude by choosing my best entry for weeks 7-12 as my "Literature Alive" entry of Nov. 13. "Every day, every minute, every moment is an actual event". This is one of the most profound statements I feel that I have ever made. It is extremely relevant to this whole experience in literature, and life, which we are all sharing, together. To be able to see "the light" in each and every experience is a skill I believe we should persevere to foster in ourselves and others.

Paolo

Jenny  
Nielsen

Insight into literature.  
26th Apr 2010

---

Usually when I read it's for pleasure, to escape from the reality of a hum drum life – but that's all changed. Now whatever I read I can't help but wonder about the underlying meaning of the story, what the author really meant, how a word changed here or there could alter the whole meaning of the sentence or change the story. The reading we have been doing has really opened up a whole new world for me; it has made me realise that there are a lot of incredibly talented people out there, not only the famous but ordinary people who have a great deal to share with everyone. I only wish I could write meaningful poetry instead of just, as I would say "light hearted fluffy stuff" The Clemente Program has definitely brought together a group of very diverse people. There are some very talented people in this semester and I must admit I am really looking forward to the drama section of the course. It is going to be incredibly interesting and I am sure quite lively. Bring on the drama!!



H O P E



# Michael Huynh

## “A Reflection Upon Life.”

---

Maybe God wants us to meet a few wrong people before crossing our paths with the right one, so that when we finally do meet that person, we will know how to be grateful for that gift.

When the door of happiness closes, another one opens. But so often we focus on what we lost, that we don't see nor embrace the one that had been opened.

The best kinds of friends are the ones who would not abandon us in our time of need. Someone we would not have to utter a word to, but yet they'd understand.

It's true that we don't realize what we've got until we have lost it, but then, it is also true that we do not know what we are missing until we have experienced it.

Giving someone all your love is not always a guarantee, that they would love you back. Don't ever expect love in return for your own. Be patient and wait for it to grow in their heart, but if it doesn't, be content that it grew in yours.

It takes only a second to be attracted to someone, a minute to form a crush, and a day to love... but sadly, it will take a whole life time to forget that same person...

Don't go for looks, because they can deceive. Don't go for money, as wealth does not always ensure happiness. Go for someone who could bring a smile to your face, for it only takes a smile to make a dark day seem bright. Search for the one who sees you for the person that you truly are, settling for no less.

There are moments in life where you would miss someone so much that it will affect everything you do. You would see them in your dreams, where they will seem so real but yet beyond reach.

Dream what you want to dream, go where you want to go, and be what you want to be, because you only have one life and one chance to do all the things you want to do.

May you have enough joy to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human, enough love to keep you sane, and enough hope to carry on...

Being rich is not always measured by one's financial status or material belongings, but rather, one could be considered rich by the relationships within one's family. The bond held between friends, and the intimacy shared by lovers. With this we realise that money is only superficial, and true wealth can only be obtained with one's heart and mind.

In life, never look up and envy those with more but instead look at those with less, for this way you will realize just how fortunate you really are.

Happiest lies for those who cry, those who hurt, those who have searched, and those who have tried... for only they can appreciate the importance of people who have touched their lives.

Love begins with a smile, grows with a kiss and ends with a tear.

The brightest future will always be based on a forgotten past, we cannot move forward until we have let go of our past failures and heartaches.

Life's a journey everyone must take, and the right path may not always be clear, leave your fate to your heart, and follow it to where ever it may take you.

Remember this: when we arrived in this world, we were crying and everyone around us was smiling. Live life so that when we die, we're smiling and everyone is crying.

Jeanne Voisin | who am I?  
1st Apr 2015 at 6:18pm

---

Week two, exercise three

Who am I?

I am a gentle woman, originally from a gentle land.  
Madagascar it is called, in the Indian Ocean.  
Its inhabitants, mostly poor but noble and proud,  
Alike its fauna and flora, one of a kind.

Being brought up without television,  
Reading has always been my passion.  
Privileged enough then to have access  
to as many books I could process.

Words entice me, stories move me,  
sometimes to joy and at times to sadness.  
Yet, not being able to read would bring me great distress.  
Literature is all I want to know,  
The written word shapes me,  
My thoughts, my beliefs,  
All originating from expertly written words.  
teaching me everything I need to know.  
To enable me to survive my life's journey

I also like to write prose and short stories,  
The paper is my audience  
that is enough to fulfil me.  
As English is my second language,  
French being the first. I would like to explore,  
learn and understand the language of my new nation,  
the written thoughts of its common and worldly men and women.

I hope this unit in Literature will open my mind,  
provide me with the written skills,  
enable me to write confidently in another language  
and allow my pen to spell a good yarn.



.....

# E P I L O G U E

.....

# John Van Gulick : Clemente's Flourishing Student

Michael Griffith

27th Aug 2009

It is with great sadness that I have to write of John Van Gulick's passing. He was a brilliant, gifted student with great insight and enthusiasm for the things that really mattered in literature. He had a tough life but he brought his hard-won insights to every class that he participated in. I/we will miss him greatly. Last semester he had acted the part of Shakespeare's Caliban in a group performance of *The Tempest* and brought Caliban to life on the stage in an incredibly original way. He seemed to KNOW the character of Caliban from the inside. You will recognize him in this amazing blue garb, striding at the centre of this collage and in the bottom right, being persuaded by Trinculo and Stephano to join their plot against Prospero.



During John's last week I was working with him on an essay on Caliban and Post-colonialism in *The Tempest*. This was the last assignment he needed to complete in order to pass the unit on Shakespeare. His marks so far had been of a High Distinction level and his essay was also promising to be a High Distinction. I am sure John most keenly appreciated the key lines in *The Tempest* where the central character Prospero reflects on the fleeting but precious nature of existence itself, mirrored in the life of the actor on stage:

Be cheerful, sir.  
 Our revels now are ended. These our actors,  
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and  
 Are melted into air, into thin air;  
 And like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
 The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;  
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
 leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
 As dreams are made on, and our little life  
 Is rounded with a sleep.

But I think John would be best remembered - and would love to be remembered - by the lines in the Epilogue to *The Tempest* - often seen as Shakespeare's own farewell to the theatre - in which Prospero asks the audience to clap their hands in order to fill the sails of the ship that he, Prospero, plans to sail back home to Naples

Now my charms are all o'erthrown  
 And what strength I have's mine own,  
 Which is most faint. Now 'tis true  
 I must be here, confined by you  
 Or sent to Naples. Let me not,  
 Since I have my dukedom got,  
 And pardoned the deceiver, dwell  
 In this bare island by your spell  
 But release me from my bands  
 With the help of your good hands.  
 Gentle breath of yours my sails  
 Must fill, or else my project fails,  
 Which was to please.

John pleased so many of us, and his contributions to our classes and our lives continue to be sorely missed.

---

## Comments

### ” Marc De Laconzi (Fellow student, poet and artist) An Amazing Spirit

I will deeply miss John Van Gulick. The conversations I had with this man were of the deepest nature. I had no doubt that this man had the intelligence of a Professor in the area of literature. I remember those nights on the train where we would delve deeply into the realms of William Blake sharing our insights and being in a heightened state of awareness due to the profound nature of our lectures and tutorials with Professor Michael Griffith. We both lived through those afternoons and evenings contemplating the creativity and wisdom of the master himself, William Blake.

Well, John is with Blake and Shakespeare now, conversing about the angels and the demons, God and Jesus, love and truth, prophecy and fallacy. He is looking over all the people he loved also.

I am currently undertaking my internship at Liverpool All Saints Catholic School. Interestingly but not surprisingly on Reflection Day last Wednesday I saw and felt his presence in the Performance Hall while theological talks took place. I know that this was also another passion of John's. I saw him happy and pleased with my progress and work. I started to become very emotional, so he left. I think now he understands me even better when I used to say that there is very little difference between the earthly and spiritual spheres.

It's like to me that he is not gone at all. I have to admit though I have not mourned his physical loss yet. I think that will take place at the end of my internship. Thank you Michael for extending his life for I know without a shadow of a doubt you were his spiritual father and added many years to his life. You were the person who in the end granted his life meaning and depth. Your love!

I have placed a link to his incredible work in live journal to my facebook along with a tribute post, so hopefully people can spend some time embellished in his incredible insights and creativity.

You are very unique and talented John. God granted you sublime gifts and intelligence.

### “ My Brother John 2nd Dec 2009

Firstly, I would like to thank Michael for the wonderful piece above and for this page. Also, for everything you did for John. Thanks too, to Peter, Colleen, Maria, Brother Jude, Father Jack, Wendy and everybody else at the University for everything you did for him and for us. We will be forever grateful. It means so much that he had such good and inspiring people in his life. You gave him amazing things and knowledge and I'm sure that his spirit will always remain there on the campus where he found so much joy. I have not been able to do this sooner as I don't have a computer and have been grief-stricken. For this I apologise. The passing of John has left a huge hole in all our lives. We are bereft. Here is a poem that John wrote for his friend Peter Gibbs in 1994. John was in Canning Vale Prison at the time.

The sun may be clouded yet ever the sun,  
 will sweep on its course till its cycle is run  
 And when into chaos the system is hurled,  
 again shall the builder reshape a new world  
 Your path may be clouded, uncertain your goal,  
 move on for your orbit is fixed to your soul  
 And though it may lead into darkness of night,  
 the torch of the builder shall give it new light  
 You were, you will be, know this while you are  
 your spirit has travelled both long and afar  
 It came from the source, to the source it returns,  
 The spark once ignited eternally burns  
 It slept in a jewel, it leapt in a wave,  
 it roamed through the forest and rose from the grave  
 It took on strange forms for aeons of years  
 And now in the soul of yourself it appears  
 From body to body your spirit speeds on,  
 to seek a new form when the old has gone  
 And the form that it finds is the fabric you wrought  
 On the loom of the mind, from the fibre of thought  
 As dew is drawn upward in rain to descend,  
 thought drifts into destiny's blend  
 You cannot escape then, for petty or great,  
 evil or noble, the fashion, your fate  
 Somewhere on some planet, sometime and somehow  
 Your life will reflect your thought of your now.

# John Van Gulick

## BETTER DAYS



Poem written and presented by John during his enrolment in the Clemente Program at Mission Australia.

Here is my poem that Michael requested from us in class on Wednesday. It sounds really corny I think but inspiration was lacking. So here goes ...

I've lived so long as another man  
Never really knowing who I truly am.  
Through clouded horizons I never could see,  
from tumultuous storms I would ever be free.

A child of abuse and a victim of crime.  
A life on the edge and a doer of time.  
Locked into behaviour I could not repel  
Believing you make your own bed where you dwell.

From parties to prisons and pill packs and more,  
syringes and pot pipes were all I'd adore.  
And never a Searchlight and never a kiss,  
Could pierce the veneer of my protective bliss.

And now in my midlife something strange I detect,  
A shifting perspective on which I reflect.  
A new man is growing, a spirit emerging,  
Guided invisibly by a hand so encouraging.

Oh my soul now awakened Oh how I rejoice,  
I lean in, you whisper and I hear your voice.  
The elements conspire and weave in me strength,  
Building foundations that give my days length.

Now hope is a banner that covers my sky,  
Over fear and resentment I've learnt how to fly.  
Though I tremble and stumble I still find my way,  
To the centre of peace I now find in each day.

Well there you have it and I hope you all enjoy it. I look forward to reading any comments that you may have on it. I have tried to make comments on some others journals but I am doing something wrong in the email department that I cant work out so I will have to talk to Michael tomorrow.

---

## Comments

 **Tahilder**

John

I really love your poem. It doesn't lack in either inspiration or poetic qualities and I don't find it corny. Thank you for sharing it with us, it's not wasted on us.

I find it so inspiring.

I feel you are most creative and will head in a creative direction in your life and make up for lost time.

Thank you John.

Tani

 **johannes123**

Thanks Tani

I really appreciate your feedback and I'm glad that you didn't find it corny. One of the biggest obstacles I face when it comes to writing something as personal as poetry is an overcritical sense of self depreciation.

Unfortunately this has all too often stopped me in my tracks. I shall keep in mind your encouraging words. They have the power to inspire me and boost my confidence. See you in class.

Thanks again.

John

 **michaelgriffith**

John that is fantastic. It really expresses honestly and directly and with feeling the emergence of a new life force. And the fact that you have managed to express this within a very definite form with a consistent rhyme is quite extraordinary .... methinks ye are a poet... and ye don't yet know it...!!! I would certainly encourage you to continue writing in this vein. Well done!!!!

Cheers

Michael

  tizaaaaaa

wow

This is just wonderful, very inspiring, i especially like the way present the past and present. The contrast between the old days and what took your fancy then ... and how you view life now and your new delight in and positive strides. It conjures up so many images, the strongest one is of a phoenix rising through ashes ...

Your poem gives me much encouragement and strength to 'keep going', even when is so hard... T.

  johannes123

Re: wow

Thank you so much Tizaaa for your very kind words. I never know what to make of my writing and can find myself being quite unnecessarily critical. This can stop me in my tracks. Then I read a comment like yours and I am both encouraged and inspired to keep on going. I'm so glad that my poem has been an encouragement to you and that you were able to draw strength from it. I really like the idea that I might be able to be an inspiration to others just as many others were an inspiration to me. Hang in there my friend and keep going. There is an overcomer lurking in each of us. I love your thoughts on the image of the phoenix rising.

  jennibears

This is fantastic work. I love the simplicity of the images. I find with so many budding poets that they try to pack so much into their words. I think the beauty of your poem is that it is raw and honest. I especially love the last stanza. It seems to be an honest conclusion to one's search for identity.

I like the rhythm you've got going there too, the poem flows exceptionally well. Keep writing. Your work is not corny at all ... its very good



Printed below is a collection of entries from John's extensive literature blog over the period of his enrolment in the Clemente Certificate in Liberal Arts, through to his enrolment in Literature as a B.A. student at Australian Catholic University.

“ **McNeal's Life, 30th May 2016**

Have just spent some time reading the account of Jim McNeils life. Oh boy. I found myself really relating to his perceptions on life, as seen through his writing. Having spent some time in prison myself I have observed first hand the types of characters he writes about. I too was often shocked by the inability of some of these men to rise to a greater level of revelation about their lives and the roles they were playing. I find it very interesting that it was only whilst incarcerated that Jim's life actually took some direction as it was here that he was able to buckle down and find a creative outlet which led to his plays being written. This ability was lost on his release as his writing ceased and he was unable to take control of his inner demons that threw him into unpredictability and alcoholism. It says something about the function of prison life and the whole question of institutionalization.

“ **David Malouf *Remembering Babylon* Nov 7th 2006**

What impact does Gemmy appear to have on Jock and Janet?

Gemmy appears to be having a profound effect on Jock McIvor. Jock starts out as being very untrusting and wary of Gemmy. He even resents this apparent invasion into their lives by this alien being. He is frustrated by this set of circumstances that have led to this remarkable situation. Despite all this and despite his resistance, his perspective on life and on the people around him begins to change. He has been inexplicably moved to a new position. From this strange vantage point his perceptions become more acute. It is as if he were being forced, through the circumstances, to take a more honest appraisal of his emotions and his reactions. He is now beginning to define his real thoughts and find out what his principles are or should be. Throughout this challenge he also begins to develop a deeper appreciation and connection with the essence of life. He now views the landscape differently. His relationship with his wife takes on a renewal as he recognises a deeper aspect of her as a woman and as his wife. And perhaps he is even starting to like Gemmy? He is connecting with his spirit man within and is wrestling to shed the outer skin of the false and shallow self. It is Gemmy and his appearance in their lives that has been the catalyst for all this change.

### “ Graduating Clemente 7th May 2007

Have my graduation at Sydney Town Hall tomorrow. I'm very pleased and honored to have been a part of the Clemente course. It opened the door to where I am today. Although there have been times when I recognise how much easier it was doing just one subject at a time at the Mission. Unlike now where the pressure of real Uni has become very real to me.

Apparently the crew from *The 7.30 Report* are going to be filming my part as they are doing a story on the Clemente program. That means more media interviews and more publicity. Just as well I am not embarrassed or ashamed of my drug infused history. Once again I just hope that my story might encourage someone else out there who is stuck in addiction and feeling pretty hopeless. Also that people who have not got a clue about the real world and some of the current issues, may become better informed.

### “ Graduation Day 14th May 2007

What a day last Tuesday was. Went to Sydney Town Hall with all the Uni graduates to receive our certificates. I felt so weird and a bit like a fraud. All these people who had worked so hard and long to get there and what did I do? 4 subjects at Mission Australia! And there I was being held up and esteemed by all. The film crew from the *7.30 Report* were even there. It was quite a big deal. And that I suppose is the point I have to remind myself of. It is a big deal. It is something worth yelling about and telling the rest of the world that there is hope. Even if, like me, you're in your forties, you've been chronically addicted to Heroin, amongst other things, for near most of your life, done several stints inside and feel that your pretty washed up, don't give up. There are opportunities that are still open to us. There are people that are still willing to extend a hand. There is always hope and it's never too late to change course. I am still amazed at times that all this is my new reality. Not something the old me would ever have expected or believed possible. It's taken a long, long time.

### “ I can can Caliban 25th May 2009

Well our class group finally got around to performing our rendition of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* last week and what a hoot it was. I really lost myself in the role of Caliban and actually found myself relating to his existence and further to that recognising aspects of his condition and experiences to those of my own formative years. The anger, frustration and sheer powerlessness of being at the mercy of a tyrant, and a benevolent one at that; one that stands for what he believes is righteous. Prospero, his master, could well be a sympathetic look on Shakespeare's part at the role of anglo saxon influence on the world that was now expanding and the arrogant belief that our culture was superior over all others. Prospero does not even question this as it is an obvious fact that Caliban's mother was a witch and fathered by Satan himself, therefore inferior. End of story.

While it is true that many puritans who had left England in search of new lands that would eventually lead to 'the new Jerusalem', that the opinions they held of many indigenous peoples was far from flattering and the belief that their lack of intellectualism from our standpoint was evidence enough that they actually were Satan's spawn.

 Caliban Can 28th Apr 2009

Caliban can be completely at one with nature, he can be connected with the earth and like an indigenous person he can have a relationship with nature and the earth. Can Caliban be a moral person without having the influence of Prospero's morality? But Prospero's morality is not very Godly; he is rather tyrannical, certainly not being humble. So where are our sympathies in this part of the play? Is Shakespeare simply exploring all the possibilities? At the end, Prospero does change, but does he in the end befriend Caliban? This is a sad outcome. It raises the question is there a solution to indigenous problems today: can the two never come together? Is this a sad conclusion to the play?

# Index of Contributors

Anissa Chatt  
Anonymous  
Aussielatina (Candice)  
Bedsit  
Ben  
Birdman (David Price)  
Brigitte von Mergl-Grote  
Carmel\_Dobson  
Coralie Hinkley  
Damon  
Daniel Smith (Benzammitt)  
David Gillett  
Emma Sheed (ejs1)  
Erikagroshup2 (Erica Groschup)  
Frederick Hama  
Geebusd  
Ghettoman7 (Marc de Laconzi)  
Ian Herd (herdinator)  
Jenny Nielsen  
John McDonnell (John the Lawyer)  
John Van Gulick (Johannes123)  
John's brother  
jp\_justme (Justine)  
Kyme Bailey  
Michael Griffith  
Mirjana Ferkula  
Anonymous  
Necros99 (Paolo)  
Nigel  
Rosemary Astill  
Rui Cao  
Samshul Nair  
Shannon Harris  
Shayne Bowditch  
Stephanie Brown  
Suzanne Hunt-Tuzo

