

ROOMERS

#72 Winter 2023

Opposing Forces

For residents
By residents

Almost all contributors to ROOMERS are residents or former residents of rooming houses, private hotels, public housing or special accommodation in Port Phillip

The *Roomers* magazine is developed with participants from Creative Writing Workshops run by the Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre (ESNLC) with the support of the City of Port Phillip. Almost all contributors to *Roomers* are residents or former residents of rooming houses, public housing or supported residential services in the City of Port Phillip.

Discover what you can create by getting involved in our supportive workshops.
We welcome new members, mentors, and guest artists.

Please contact Janet to find out how you can get involved in this innovative project.

Email us at roomers@esnlc.org.au

Phone us on (03) 9531 1954

Write to Roomers C/O PO Box 57 Elwood 3184

#72

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Michele Newman, *The Woman in the painting*

2023

Roomers is a community arts program run by Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre with the support of the City of Port Phillip.

Back issues are available on our *Roomers* website
roomers.org.au

The articles and artwork presented in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of ESNLC and its partners.

No responsibility or liability will be accepted for any loss or damage which may result from inaccuracy or omission with respect to any of the articles contained within.

Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre respectfully acknowledges the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boon Wurrung. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

Opposing Forces

From the Editor



Phu-Linh Tran, *Here Kitty, Kitty*

In 2022–2023, we came together and found meaning in connection. We created stories in a shared space. *Roomers'* participants showcased their creativity in weekly workshops and in their contributions to our 2023 magazine.

We chose the theme of 'opposing forces' for this year's magazine. We explored hope and despair, love and hate, and lightness and darkness. This inspired some fascinating writing and artwork, including *Here Kitty, Kitty* where the artist used contrasting elements and textural overlapping.

So, hear these stories, marvel at their ingenious creativity and know that we all matter, and that the world would be a better place if more opportunity was afforded to those who have talent but not necessarily the means to develop it to its full potential.

Roomers meets weekly to share ideas, offer critique and encouragement and focus on different elements of writing techniques.

If you would like to take part in our weekly workshops or support us in our endeavours, please contact Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre to find out more.

We are grateful for the opportunity to continue these classes and to provide opportunities for people with talent. Without the support of the City of Port Phillip and Elwood St Kilda Neighbourhood Learning Centre these stories would not be shared with you today.

So, leaf through our magazine, and we invite you to ponder and wonder as you do.

Janet Donald
Editor and Tutor
Roomers

Humble Rose

Roderick Waller

Round the corner with dark bloom on my cheek
dazzling profusions of rose
envelopes me, seems to me garlands
round the girth of the earth, makes a cheerier

place. For days the foliage of green buds
Heaven's hues, unborn petals soft as
feathers. Then the morning they burst forth smile's
fairest sheen, bobbing before me, delighting

the eye, straightening my spine. Humble
choir of white roses transcending the world.
Burnishing dark bloomed cheeks, shining the alloys
of temple and lip. Unmet the hand that

tends the proliferation rising
on solemn brow as I round the corner
plagued with sad thought. Knowing each day's profusions
yet dazzled in surprise, at joy to the world,

and all that I'm asked is the receptive eye.
Round the corner of Bank Street, dark blooms
on my cheek, dazzling profusion of palest
rose greets. For days green buds hover o'er

the fence. Sap from the earth rising in mechanical
ascent. Deep mystery of cells, sex of
the rose beams codes of instruction to
petal's satin sheen which only

God's hand could have made. How much alike my
skin and yours, to divide and make whole.
Oh Rose, my dear cousin, a reminder that so
freely you enrich this bleak world

As round the corner each morning I praise
Heavens' profusion, a dazzling display.
and I dart an eye at the poor and infirm,
guide them to heal under your wondrous gaze.

I Used To Write Poetry

Emma Gell

I used to write poetry
Now I fear
necromancy, psychosis,
afraid to even think,
but, worse, to pray or
imagine.

I still write poetry.

External Forces

Emma Gell

Of all the ways it could've been,
for some reason it had to be this way.
I see where I shaped it, molded it
without thinking
and by the time I became aware of it,
it had already taken shape.
What with my feelings, your will,
fate, God, the law, the weather...
Standing back,
I don't mind the shape it's taken on —
a collaboration between my Self and
external forces

Haiku Rubbish

Emma Gell

I wait for inspiration, which often doesn't come.
The genius has left me, the muses have departed
for the mountains.
The writing's on the wall.
Haiku Rubbish.
Anyone could've written that!
Anyone just did.

Dear Existential Angst,

Phu-Linh Tran

Here I am, in this difficult position once again.
A position I am loathe to admit is grossly familiar.
The worry and anxiety about my life is eating me up from the inside,
gnawing away until it can no longer consume any life force.
I fear the imminent moment when I notice the person staring back
to be unrecognisable, transformed by the dark shadows within.
I wonder when wondering about the end will ever let up
or will the question always create
an ever brewing storm that never quite breaks
into its anticipated dramatic crescendo.
All I am seeking is mere relief from the persistent threat of non-existence,
but will you ever let me go from your firm grip over my mind?
Just when I feel you have left for good, you come back for a return visit,
like an unwelcome guest I thought I saw the last of five years ago.
Now you are back, I feel like I must roll out the welcome mat and
pour you a cup of tea because I know you are staying a while,
and I am unsure of when you are leaving.
One day, I hope to be done with our relationship but unfortunately
the reluctant familiarity draws me right back in.
It is a dependency I can't walk away from, fearing the unmanifested
consequences and blinded to the benefits everyone tells me
I will experience if I do.
For you are all I know, and you and I are in this life for the long haul.
Yours truly,
This Tortured Soul.

Phu-Linh Tran, *Woman and the Wolf*



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To Autumn

Paul Harper

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Open with a phrase or phrases c-o-n-n-ecting 1/waking to the sounds of rain \\\ on corrugated metal, 2/ Snap Crackle & Pop, & 3/ blue pixels north & east Traralgon to Cann R~iver & south ↙ a-c-r-o-s-s Bass Strait to Flinders Island; something smart-ars/ed, too clever for its own good, or clever clever, ideally deploying repetition & the full panoply of tricks by now fa+miliar yet retaining faint amusement. S6ix, s7eventy s7even, s7even, & counting. Typically, the second half is less c-onnect-e-d. Rain \\\ Today 42.4mm. The first kno*/wn use of sardonic was in 1683. Other words first r<ecord/*e-d in 1683 include atmosphere, devastate, condesc-ence, extraneous, fathomless, grout, mercantile, obviously, snarly, tabby, & talisman. MIND THE GA-P. Rain \\\ Today 43.2mm & counting. Season of m~i~s~t~s~ & mellow fruitfulness, LOL.*

My Solent Suburb

Roderick Waller

Night tends Moon, his brother; keeps track comet tailings; ledgers fallen stars. Dawn lays in deep sleep, in velvet. Sky retires, day's law covered. Night cuts wicks for cousins; lays out Moon's wardrobe, according to the lunar calendar; tunic cut, coloured orange-silver; Moon shuffled, surged the tides; paths lit strangers' lodgings, glowed romance, gleamed tired dairymen; shadowed thieves, passed doorway homeless, hedges, tramps slept. Barn owl hooted; Night, weary the shift, undressed.

Sky kissed her husband good sleep, called daughter Dawn, risen, attired in pink-green-azure skirt; light; shape formed hand in glove with mother. Sky's billowing frock brushed night-soot valleys, swept market squares, mopped Solent suburb, promenade and jetty, scrubbed white clouds; skylarks winged, drank dew from her skin. Blue Sky tossed her lazy son, scrubbed pink his cheeks, lit his tulip eyes, Sunny Sun smiled on the outer edge of suburbia; cast a shadow, blinked as Auntie Day, fresh from sleep revealed herself to Solent Town in her summer dress.

Sky was aware her sister's fickleness; sensed trouble-brewed. Soon enough frowns fell on the Solent suburb, heads raised, ran for cover, gripped black umbrellas; Pluto's cousin breathed showers; planets coughed, warned of storms; gales hammered window-panes; rattled door-latches; twirled winter chill; scudding clouds tempered the suburb, sent promenaders scurrying; boutiques dressed mannequins in woollens; ploughmen hurried to complete the fallow. Husbands and sons hauled buckets of coal; fathers explained taper and match. Sky accepted her fate, her skirts drab and grey; her sister Day's exertion, bravely faced. Sunny bounced, day-dreamed to his mother's consternation. Night braced for frost, Moon mournfully gazed; distant clamour resounded far away of imminent storms; men reinforced rigging, mastheads tied against gales. Dairymen brought herds to warming byres; straw and hay for their princesses. raincoat and fleece for children splashing in gutters. Commuters, grizzly, shivered, hurried home to fire-grates; to the pub working men filled, a rum-chaser; good cheer to sweeten the hearts of spouses; home to hot broth and mugs of tea.

Sky, sister Day, daughters Dusk and Dawn, and her son, Sunny Sun, dream the long Winter. Summer warnings too, if Day's eyes, stung, gazing too long, shed a tear, flashed fire across her mother's face: streaked lightning struck the promenade; pearly tears roused the sea; sting subsided, eyes refreshed, Day bloomed apple cheek and rosy lips. Sky and Day sent sunshine to the day's remainder, the populace promenaded, a child built sandcastles; farmers' fields mowed, baled the summer grass to hay. From the white railings of the jetty, men rowed deep, slung line and net, eyes crinkled east. Sky clipped Sunny Sun's round face; sent a ray of sunshine, warmed the duvet of grandfather; Sunny relayed blood beams; grandfather's toes warmed; he bathed his grandson in perspiration, light reflected Day's colours. Pink salmon, silver kippers, brassy cod swarmed; smoke puffed from chimneys, housewives shook children, husbands alighted trams. Sunny's tulip eyes captured furrows, haybarns, grazing fields, dew melted windowpanes. nannies prammed bawling brats, shrill fisher-wives filleted, men pushed barrows. Sky's daughter, Dusk draped; families sat for tea.

Boatsheds locked, roads reduced to children's laugh, the sleepy suburb spell of Dusk's whispering gown; lamps lit suburban streets, twinkled mansions on hillsides. Dusk's hem descended on nurseries. Songs in the bar died, working man's last rum, publicans turned down the lights. Downtown wrestled nightclubbing, frenzied honking, hawking, whoring, crammed restaurants, bars, Solent Suburb slept. Ethereal creatures sat on starry spires, privy to the clockwork of galaxies. intimate knowledge of the Milky Way; galaxies far away in the deepest forests. Earthbound creatures remained blissfully ignorant.

End

On Forgetting

Dhugal Bissett

In Africa, when the drought takes hold and the waterholes diminish into little more than muddy ponds, the animals have a pecking order. The elephants, whom, as we say, remember everything, drink first. The zebras, black and white stripes, must wait their turn.

The other day I was walking from Fairfield Station to an open house on Grange, when I passed by a house where the lady had quite some of her wares out on the nature strip for sale. I bought a bookshelf, six feet high, two and half feet wide. Fifty dollars for a solid pine case!

And on the side of the case were two animal silhouettes, side by side, placed there by, one presumes, the lady's children – an elephant and a zebra.

The zebra walks first.

Blossom

Tanya Page

In the fields where night becomes day, the wee people play tricks to frighten their neighbours. One evening, a fairy passes by a young child sleeping soundly beside her mother by the fire. He whistles as he walks. He peeks through the window and blows a kiss through an open window pane. The child weaning from her mother's breast cries as the cold breath takes her by surprise and she drops her rattle. It falls upon the wooden floor. The faery laughs and skips down the road with a light step and not a care in the world.

So, my child! Be careful! Faery folk are not of this world. The fairies are bloodless creatures and dangerous to you and me!

Pet Connector

Rank Amateur

Nice iPhone boys
What are the three lenses
On the back
Looking at?

Like touching cold fire
A telephoto for month to month hire
Break glass
In case of emergency

Wicker thin
Shattering
Are your spaces within
Brittle and transparent

Should the shit hit your fan
At point blank range
Staring into
The abyss

Take the strain
On the brain
The hang dog composure
Tail flagging

Somewhere, and there is this the lexicon
Hexagon got more sides
Than any three sets of eyes
On the backside

'Cause the thing might as well be
Right up your arsehole
The ex knew better
Than to treat the thing as bling

Play war games
With words, we me, hunchback
Beyond pales
You are all on detail.

Knight to King's Bishop Five, Check

The writing is on a wall
Paling beyond recognition
A shaken cage
And a rightly or otherwise slight

Surf on top
Of a runaway train
For a life spent in vain
Is never the same

As nor is a defensive mechanism
Whipped out of shape
Till any measure
Is not beyond it's scope

So little rope
That the knot got un-tied
And the guys breached the walls
And the moat

Skate via my place, Biko
And Grace will whip up a king's
plate, adorned
Our knights are black
You have been fore-warned.

Dhugal Bissett

Expert Help

Paul Harper

Typical opening: First Light 5:19 Sunset 8:32 Last Light 9:03,
bike, bike path, westsouthwesterly 50km/h, gusts to 55.5km/h. Tiny

birds, tiny sounds. A long sentence describing an evening walk
along the foreshore, the weight of a block of A-4 copy paper in a bag

slung over a shoulder, clouds many somewheres between cool
greys are perfect for south facing rooms & rooms with lots of natural

light, they create a crisp sophisticated look & help small spaces
appear brighter, & warm greys work best in north facing rooms,

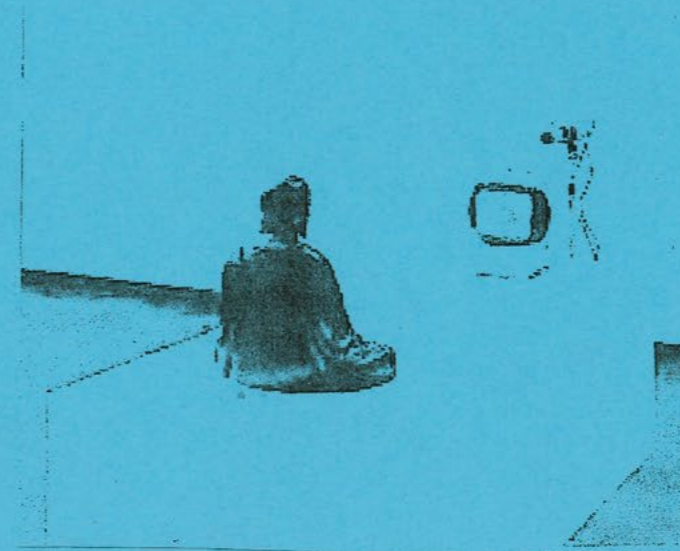
they create a relaxed cosy atmosphere & work well with wood
& natural leather. On December 5 1680 a chicken in Rome laid an egg

imprinted with the image of a great comet seen 11 days later.
Their separate ways, due north at 5ft/second, due east, at 1ft/second.

become

a

plate



Further Reading

Paul Harper

The process of taking in the sense^ or meaning of letters, symbols, etc., especially by sight or touch. Showers most likely in the afternoon & evening. > When → you approach ___ the milk cases, you hear cows & experience the scent of fresh hay~~. Clipper guards are plastic attachments that snap on to → barber clippers to prevent them cutting shorter than a certain length. Soup Of The Day Whiskey with C*ro*u*t*o*n*s. Summer quilt, single, \$19.95. Summer quilt, dubl., \$24.99. The consensus OOOO^ was that it pissed \\\\\\\ down in Balacava. Relative Humidity 65% Rain Today 3.2mm (0mm Last Hour).

DICHO

My first car was brought for me as an 18th birthday present. It was a Fiat. I was working down at a function centre nearby and all my money was chewed up by this car.

My father was gloating. At last, he might of thought, Anthony is taking adult responsibility for his possession. Putting the car aside, besides how it broke down so often, I received for my 21st \$3000 to travel the world. I sold the car and took off.

There were many countries I saw on my whole trip including the USA and Europe. When I returned I got a car from my sister. It was a Volkswagen. This car never broke down.

The only mishap was that, driving up a hill, someone came out in front of me and I wrote off the car. It wasn't my fault. My father organised the insurance and not before long I was back on the road again.

Anthony Cheshire

After about a year, saving money from the professional job I got, the car was returned to my sister and I went to live in London with my de facto. That was the end of driving for me.

You didn't need a car in London. They have an enormous Underground system. For me everything there was this train network.

When I was younger living in London as a teenager, I took a dare and with a friend decided to stop at every station on this maze called the Underground. It took a whole day.

At the moment Melbourne is extending our Underground system. I have one being built up the road from me at the Shrine. One of my possessions isn't a car. I catch transport and don't drive.

If these train networks are built it's good for the environment, less exhaust.

OTOMY

The Woman in the Painting

K.A. Newman

I have a beautiful painted woman in my room. Every morning I look to her for inspiration, she wears a dress of beige silk, gentle folds flow down her frame. Around her neck is a necklace of flowers and butterflies delicately draped. She is my confidante, my friend, she stands so still against the dark blue sky. Hovering and defying gravity she stands.

Of course, her face can't be seen against the midnight blue of the sky, nevertheless she is there. Every morning on early rising I imagine her face, dignified, defiant she stands proving that sometimes the impossible can be accomplished. My belief in her and myself proves this.

This morning she took the persona of Julia Gillard, and her speech reverberates in my mind. That dignity in speaking her truth is essential to being a woman unafraid and honest in a misogynistic world. Although we face the awful truth that politics is a dirty business, she managed to call out the truth about a man I truly despise and the culture we live in. She is one of the strongest role models for me, I find inspiration in her courage.

Tomorrow will be a new morning and I wonder what face the woman in the painting will be. I give thanks to the painter and her exquisite use of colour and texture and wait to see who the woman in the painting shall be, cancer survivor, business leader, journalist, lawyer for justice. What a wonderful painting to behold, so still, so silent, so strong.

Michele Newman, *The woman in the painting*



Q: Does the
Court Jester have
a mental illness?

A: Who cares?

Kes Weston


Psychiatry is based primarily upon catastrophe, and inquisition, thinking itself mild enough to indeed, and wizened, (whereas this is a muchly of it being accustomed to having the meek and the powerless trotted before it, and at its behest), and to think itself as (and going by this the latest series of incidents, which did and have transpired in now what is *my* clinic (and since the dear doc could not dare call a meeting, for I had to do so, and then call it off, and closed)) and as maven of sanities, when the art department is ever-silently looking in, and surveying the whole sordid and sorry messes of men whom simply *cannot* walk a talk, and whom are also near silently walking back and forth, not nearly warm, until this Jester did spring one upon them, and from behind, speaking into the face which it is now trying to save, the one it had already lost.

And I'm not joking, for the sorry flop of a man, slouched in an office chair, and telling me between bouts of checking out my shoes and the floor and stuff, and when *the* bastion of the humanities and the humane, and my act, and from which stemmed its prior and unbridled mirth, and which dwarfs the history of psychiatry, the arts, and as a discipline, is *nothing*, and *since* psychiatry *did* laugh and incandescently and at Court Jester's jokes, if not pithy. For and a supremely serene gentlemen did once opine that human kind are 'animal whom laughs' – and for thus does psychiatry via its worm like authority figure proffer, and as an antidote for my cast iron argument (which is that the *being* of joker is the one telling the jokes), that 'dolphins laugh too', can you believe? No, I said, coyotes laugh, as do kookaburras, you must be a bird brain, and words to that effect, for if you are presuming a sense of humour in a porpoise, then I say 'solong, and thanks for all the fish'.

Everyone else was Laughing

I was at my women's support group, it was a lovely sunlit afternoon and as per usual we were sharing our phobias and difficulties of facing the day. I listened with patient interest to some of the feelings, which struck a chord within me, that was deep.

It was my turn and I shared how I was running in the park when a dog came out of nowhere and blocked my path. It bared its angry teeth and growled menacingly, I stood still as I could and lowered my gaze. It was still growling and barking and there was no owner to be seen. I went to go around and suddenly he lurched forward and bit hard on my ankle. I yelled 'get off me', and the owner came out of the bushes saying 'I wondered where he had gone'. He grabbed his dog and put his leash on, furious and in pain I told him he had bitten me. This made the dog owner retreat with his dog and an 'I'm sorry' as he walked up the path.

Some of the women in my group nodded understandingly, 'I just can't stand dogs anymore, I'm scared all the time' I shared, 'they terrify me'. I covered my face with my hands and said 'AND NO I'M NOT BLOODY OK, THE BLOODY DOG WAS A DACHSHUND'.  With that revelation everyone else in the room started laughing.

K.A. Newman

Making An Impression

My favourite exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, a museum, was that of the impressionists They were all there: Monet, Renoir, Van Gough etc....

I marvelled at the paintings and how they caught the moment. It replaces the photograph which takes an exact account of a scene. With these impressionists they captured the moment but not with precise detail.

I've seen impressionism at museums all over the world: the Metropolitan in New York; the Louvre in Paris; and the Tate in London.

I've moved around the world and am lucky to see so many museums.

Anthony Cheshire

I didn't know how to live

Roderick Waller

I didn't know how to live. Now I don't know
how to die. The field that once shot dreams is now
furrowed land. Under the cloudless yellow sun
plant English oaks around the barrow. Make

hallowed ground my ashes, make a folly
that walkers may pass by. A reminder
if you don't know how to live and you don't learn
how to die, no shame, it's immaterial

to the dying of the day. Oak trees let your leaves flutter
in the summer wind and children play beneath
your boughs. Your trunk, a proud protecting parent;
Tower of strength. Let your acorns ripen and

wing to ground under the bronzed Autumn
sky. So, as for folly, wisdoms' born.

I didn't know how to live. Now I don't know
how to die. Lord carry me over the dream
-less ground. Grant me wings to fly.

Loved and beloved

Roderick Waller

Therein lies the gulf tween what the lover
would have done and what the beloved would
desire, to doze fitfully by the hearth
or take the rhino by the horn. Fear and

compassion wage war at loss and grief, fear
of loss and compassion for the sick. If
you can guide the feeble, irrational
mind in its remaining time to a course

of peace and joy then pray act. But if the
stubbornness persists, let go. But note the
beloved's tremulous mind will swing one
way and f'other, not sure the footprint where

will it go for fears are tenfold... how to
breathe precious moments, how with dignity
to let go and how in human weakness
to gaze into the crystal ball. Your loss

and grief will be no less and the dying
will no further see the peace and joy you
pave. Take heed, he will thank you all the same,
its just his errant ways have stood him true

through storm and gale since once he was a babe.
And if in a dream or some strange listening
ear you eavesdrop, may you hear him muse: there's
ease in detachment, now freedom to unfold

a parting grace, to quiet the mind, those
sinister laments, into the realm of
sweet surrender's solitude, make reparations,
converse with the innermost voice so long

shut out, make peace with yourself and with grace
be gently ferried to everlasting
rest. Now in the evening glow he cannot
assuage and when the darkest moment comes

that gulf will not feel so immense as fears
melt away, though grief must stay. But shining
through one feels the course of peace and joy you paved.

Maverick by Roderick Waller

Would I be a loose and dashing varmint
Live without a jolly care, would my fellows
Look down on me...a troubling influence
Running free the length and breadth cross

Waft and weft? I would be free of entanglement
Of rule of law, a quiet maverick perhaps
As if each minute depended as if a fuse were
Lit beneath my feet I would spill fortune

On a whim, mornings awake rely on fate
But I fancy is not within me to be so bold
To grab the devil by the tail for I have
Fallen heavily on some or other reckless spin

Lost hours in purgatory so is my lot to tread
Cautiously ...take deep breaths, hold back
Yet times I wish a dashing maverick I would be
Let the devil loose, not count the cost.

Pitchfork by Roderick Waller

Twin points of steel stab the biscuits of straw
pitching from the wagon to the eaves.
Tousled headed farm boys tossing with glee
Brimming the barn with winter bedding and

feed, the harvest cutters silent, sackful's
of grain stacked, the farmer well pleased for the

winter frosts, for the cattle to drowsily
chew cud on fresh beds of straw, for hens to
cluck content on eggs on the clean nest, for
the old sow and her piglets to grunt in

the warmth, for swallows to grip stems in their
beaks, to build nests in the eaves. On Sunday's
ladders against walls propped. while farm
lads pitchfork portions of straw to mend or

replace the year's thatch. The tractor man will
spread the soiled litter on the frosty fallows,
manuring the earth for the spring germination.
So the cycles of the land will protect

us all from famine and cold weather. The
pitchfork and farm boy in rhyme and pitch toil
with fervour and joy, harvesters sweat in
the august sun, proud and strong. The cows will

let down their milk freely, content in the
byre, the chickens happily fuss over
their chicks, the old sow grunts as her young suck
on her teats. The farm hand will doze by the

log fire under the new roof and the farmer's
friend the pitchfork leans on the barn wall, twin
points of steel on standby all the year round.

Reach Out by Roderick Waller

Reach out to fulfill a wish, share a secret
amidst the fulminating abyss, touch
the hand closest unshakeable as clay.
Transpire to draw forth blood from veins, share as

brothers will. Heads in the sun, feet stamped in
shade, clays are the same though varied in ways.
Imprints will last til the end of days when
the edifice crumbles, scatters to the

outer reaches of space. Yet the memory
of brothers remains, to be cloyed once more
to a fresh universe. So, reach out to
fulfill a wish, shake out from your clay.

The Miner by Roderick Waller

'This bout has knocked the stuffing outer me.'
He growled at Mary, sighed at the empty
chair, the walls quiet as the grave. Then took
a swill and a cough of smoke and kicked the

fire grate. 'Its come to this...in solitary.'
he spat, 'kith and kin have all jumped ship before
she ran aground.' He leant, groaned, on the hot
ash threw coal, feebly smiled at a new blue

flame, then a heart cramp doubled him quick and
tumbled him to the rug. 'Mary, my innards
are shaken up, pick up the phone, call the
doc.' But the snug, quiet as the grave, nothing

did move. In a flash his mind went back to
the Lancashire Pit where in youth he picked
the anthracite and shred his lungs to smithereens
and a bottle and a pack of fags had

sealed his fate. As blood and spit dripped from bloated
lips a faint smile illumined...thinks of sweet
Mary come to the colliery wheel each
day with pannikin and ale. At twenty

-seven she fell from the cliff to the rocks
below, left seven nippers to feed. Did
his best to raise em then one by one they
left. Then with half a lung, turned on the scrap

heap, he turned to the bottle and solitude.
His breath near finally gone sweet Mary
smiled across the hearth 'we had a strong love,
lives on in the seven childs.' He sighed...'Mary

this bout has knocked the stuffing outer me.'
Then at the flickering flame he quietly
slumped and died.

Thorn Tree by Roderick Waller

In brooding silence the thorn tree stood, shifted
the soil away to bedrock razor-sharp.
Heavy trunk pervaded, blocked a ray of sun.
Lonely in damp and cold where even the

plough-share cannot go, where the coulter cannot
cut, its proud heart doesn't flinch, love confined
to the dwellers under the roof it made.
And for this it must be said is good. As

a stamp on bedrock I can but approve
though with sad lament. My only wish its
eyes would smile on the fresh flowers that
dwell under its care and tutelage.

Port Melbourne Love Poem

Do you want to?
Go over by the tracks, to the linear park
Just before it gets dark

To watch for a tram
Or to just let it pass
Perhaps we might catch one to the depths of hearts

Or play a little game of who is in who's boat
Over dinner sometime
Or who's dream we are weaving and into who's coat

And wishing well deeply for each other's hopes
And if you're a Catholic then I'll be the Pope
And if you're a mean feat I'll be your bloke

On the menu there's rice
Feeds the world, very nice
Save on the virtue and spend on the vice

I've done this before and I'll do it again
I'm under the street light
Not flat out on the main.

Anon

Your Vast Tardis

I am pretty cruised
By the nights
And by your eyes
Emphasised

By the pitch of the light
By the strength of your sight
And to fight by your side
And in each other's rain-shadow

To and from
And the highest face in the world
And the might
That forges us onwards

And sincerely at ease
Making the kind of waves
That make
A surf holiday

Save me the day
That I lucked upon your step
And opened the door
To your vast Tardis.

Dhugal Bissett

The Mixed Metaphors Poem

Phu-Linh Tran

For Hera Lindsay Bird

Like the early bird catches the sperm

–

Like a worm eaten sock
that gets worn

until it can't remember
the shape of feet

–

Like a Wes Anderson movie
minus the vintage sweaters
and lame stilted dialogue
with no character arc

–

Like a light breeze
posing as a polite fart

–

Like an almost-orgasm
posing as your last chance
for pleasure

–

Like a pen that runs out of ink
when you really need to
write down that slippery thought

–

Like a manatee

on a margarita bender
minus the cuteness

–

Like efficient bureaucracy
that exists to serve
the greater good

–

Like celery that doesn't
snap with a freshness
that grinds your teeth

–

Like that wet spot
you want to believe is
'only water'

–

Like the sex
You wished you had
at 64

–

Like every phone conversation
you wished hadn't turned
your skin a shade of urine

–

Like the poem you hear at open mic
that should have ended
10 lines earlier

–

Like all those jokes
that should have been funny

–

Like all those times
you did nothing
when you should have been doing a
headstand
and laughing your ass off
and fucking the world off
and being you
through and through

Phu-Linh Tran, *Untitled*



Warmed with a Little Red Lake

Paul Harper

Bay & bayside in drizzle: cycle north south round of indeterm
inant to end south north, local knowledge to foreshore to uphill

to steps to jacket wet on hanger. Velocipede: collective forerunners
of the monowheel [one-wheeled single-track], the bicycle [pedal-

driven single-track two], dicycle [pedaled & motorised], tricycle
[sometimes abbrv to trike], & the quadracycle [pedaled four]. Move

& resize text boxes by dragging them around. You may have to check
enable drag/drop in More Options. Customise font & outline colour.

Further customise the font for each text box using the gear icon.
All fonts are supported, including bold & italic. Insert stickers,

other images, speech bubbles, & more. Copy/paste for quick
creation; rotate, flip, crop as desired; create chains stacked vertically.

The Big Room

Paul Harper

Evening a walk along the foreshore, a block of A-4
copy paper in a bag slung over a shoulder, clouds

many somewheres between cool greys are perfect
for south facing rooms & rooms with lots of natural

light, they create a crisp sophisticated look & help
small spaces appear brighter, & warm greys work

best in north facing rooms, they create a relaxed
cosy atmosphere & work well with wood & natural

leather. On this day in 1680 a chicken in Rome laid
an egg imprinted with the image of a Great Comet,

C/1680 V1, sighted 11 days later, & the first comet
discovered by telescope. Cloud 7 Oktas, Sunset 8:33.

The Wave

Mary Grace
Levakis

I gazed into your secret;

Heart sea green

As you hung poised, triumphant

Before thundering down

Your white mane flying

Shattering, scattering

That hidden heart

Into a froth of milky white foam

Where is it now?

That soft curve of green

Sea green?

Lost, sea changed then breathed

With a whisper, a sigh

As thin as a veil of lace

This is not Love

Juliana Banken

I am sure this is not what love is supposed to be

I am tired of hiding

I am tired of being scared

I am tired of lying

I am tired of pretending

No means No

Don't call this, in the name of love

Love is being respectful and kind

Love is being thoughtful and caring

Love is dancing together in harmony

Punching me, is not loving me

Screaming and yelling is not loving me

Surely this is not what love is supposed to be

Go away

Please stop loving me Leave me alone
where I want to be

I want to drive my own destiny

The Sea Storm

Tanya Page

We walked along the beach in Mornington. It was a cold rainy afternoon. The argument had started and I began to feel my temper rise above the crowd like a swell in the surf. He looked at me with a cheeky grin as we skipped stones and walked along the beach. Like an old photo, I cherished this time and wish I could hold him and the memory like a young child's captured bug in a jar. He climbed the beach's cliff with her hardy bush, his long stringy legs caught in her harsh scrub and venom. We were setting the scene for *Lord of the Flies*. The argument ended and the sea was calm. Finally, we reached the top of the cliff and made our way home to Frankston.



by

Box of Bones

The girl had just started working in the op shop, it was an act of service, to the community. A productive way to use her time, after all she rationised, ‘we are only on this earth for a short time’, and time is precious. She picked up the donation, a box, a simple wooden box, what is this? She thought to herself, how odd. She carefully slid the lid back and jumped back reviled. A box of bones- human bones! There were two femurs (leg bones) staring back at her. Whose were they? And more importantly what do I do with them? She hesitantly took the box to the back of the store and showed the manager, who had a very similar reaction- she slowly backed away horrified, ‘I guess we have to call the police’, the manager surmised to herself. The manager picked the phone and called the police, unsure of her next step.

The Police came in a car marked CSI, an acronym for crime scene investigation. There were three police officers, one male and two females, they took the young trembling girl into the back office for an interview. She sat down at the table and asked questions, such as, ‘who was the person who gave the donation? What did they look like? A blank stare came over her face as she tried to remember, there had been so many donations that morning and so many people dropping off bags of clothes, bric a brac. It was hard to hold on to her memory, as her mind fogged over. “I think he was 6 feet” 1 with light brown hair”, as she furrowed her brow trying to think.

There was no flesh on the bones, you could tell they were very old, maybe they came from a doctor’s office, she thought privately. The police made their report and took the box of bones away. The girl was left to wonder a little sadly, at the box of bones. And how a person could come to such an end, all that was left was a box of discarded bones; no name or identity and no-one left to mourn them. She said a quick prayer the box of bones; while the police took the bones to be filed with the other people, lost in the basement of Police Headquarters.

Fire and Ice

The arctic ice slowly melted and broke into small islands, crackling as it did so. The enormous ice bergs broke off into small floating and bobbing in the sea. A polar bear slowly sniffed the ice looking for seals, its foot breaking the ice. The seal hearing the snap quickly swam to safety. The polar bear had not eaten for many days, trudged back the way it came, hungry, its food supply dwindling.

On the other side of the hemisphere large swathes of land were being burnt to the ground as wildfires consumed the dried, tinder leaves from the drought. The small koala had burnt paws as it limped across the road, it desperately sought trees to climb for protection- all the eucalyptus trees burnt easily with their rich laden leaves of oil. A car stopped slowly, and a wildlife volunteer scooped up the koala for help at a nearby sanctuary- there were many animals with burns to their bodies.

The huge truck shoveled with massive jaws scooping up the coal then depositing it for transport. Large circles of dirt surrounded the open cut mine and it descended further and further to the bottom. The amounts of coal astounding, Australia is the second largest exporting of coal to the world with billions at stake.

Global warming is destroying our world and our lives. We are responsible for our own demise. Strange one side of the earth melting ice and the other consumed with fire.

Homeless during the Pandemic

The council worker showered the filth off Chapel Street in long slow sweeps, he carefully avoided David, as he tried to sleep, it was impossible to get any sleep day or night. The rising smell of disinfectant made him feel dirty and stung his eyes, the flimsy cardboard sign read; “My name is David, I’m homeless, PLEASE HELP ME”.

David had to leave the Duna and free food that had been given by compassionate outreach workers because he had nothing to carry it in. He walked down to High Street, the pandemic was rife and at its frightening height, there were no people on the streets or cars on the road just an unnatural silence on a Monday morning at 9am.

David walked down Chapel Street to High Street to the phone box to ring Launch Housing for the 10th time, the wheels of his suitcase broken as he dragged it along behind him, just as broken as he was. He opened his suitcase to find the leaflet that had the phone number he needed, and clothes exploded out as he rifled through to find it. He had lost his phone and wallet a long time ago and now just was given a white debit card for his pension from Centrelink each fortnight, he was mentally and physically exhausted.

Finally, he found the pamphlet and a dollar coin he carefully put the coin in the slot, but nothing happened, the phone was broken and there was no dial tone. “I’M SICK OF THIS” he shouted. Two female police officers were on the corner of Chapel Street and High Street they looked in his direction and slowly started to walk towards him, they were enforcing lockdown restrictions from the government. They approached him as he hurriedly tried to get all his clothes back in the broken suitcase.

“I’m just trying to make a phone call” he said, as they approached but they had heard him shouting. “Where’s your mask?” the hefty, grim policewoman demanded. Of course, he didn’t have one or if he did it was lost in the jumble of items in his suitcase. They were harassing him and where was he supposed to go, the streets were his home.

The female policewomen were unsympathetic and unkind they herded and harassed him down High Street, “You are only picking on me because I’m vulnerable” he shouted back over his shoulder. They didn’t care, he was out of sight and off Chapel Street they were satisfied. He made his way to the Housing Commission towers on Malvern Road completely defeated he hid behind the concrete pylons and laid his burden, his life and his broken suitcase down.

K.A. Newman

The Birth and Death of the Monarch

Autumn the monarch fly’s home
To breed the next generation
Its epic journey over
The final fluttering of wings

It has travelled for so long
From far distant places
With dignity and grace
It comes home to rest

The next generation born
Take over her place
And it begins again
With her secret beauty and death

Light and Dark

The familiar cocoon of darkness
Wrapping around me in its warmth
I take solace in the comfort of darkness
It is my friend, my confidant, my peace

Then the light awakens me
With its searing spectrum warning
The light can be deadly dangerous
Creating illness and disease
I will shelter from the light

I roll again into darkness
One night after another, stillness
I am at peace and hold myself
Embracing the comfort of night

I awaken again into the brightness
And remember luminosity
I accept the vision and break free
Into the shining infinity of light

Love and Hate

How quickly our fickle hearts
Turn sublime love and passion
Into hate and vitriolic eyes shaded
Love and hate into equal measures

Words of love and kindness lost
Passion rises like tides in the summer
Then recedes just as quickly into contempt
Ego’s shattered erosion of tenderness

The mind and heart despising and contracting
Small acts of fondness and quirkiness
Become tiresome and vexing to love
Slowly time erodes our passion, and we hate

Floods in our hearts mixed in mud
We look at the whirlpool of thoughts
Looking through the murky water
Then remember the clear stream of love

Metamorphosis

Dan slipped easily into his new job at Prahran Library, he had a degree from the University of Queensland and had relocated. He wore heavy glasses to emphasize his intellectual façade, a plain man with light brown hair and no distinguishing features. He was a sour, dry man whose mouth drooped into a downward cast, when no-one was looking but reverted into a charming smile when interacting with others, but the smile never really reached his eyes.

He was restocking the shelves when a man in a wheelchair asked for his assistance in reaching a John Grisham novel which was on the top shelf. He smiled condescendingly and looked down on the man who obviously had an intellectual disability. “You should be able to reach that”, he said in an oily voice. “You’re not trying hard enough” he said with a slight smile. “It’s only a pulp fiction novel anyway” and he half laughed when the man reached up only to be several inches away from the book.

He was not well liked for his abrupt manner and lack of empathy by his colleagues. His ego demanded recognition. The man in the wheelchair complained to the other staff member that he would not get a book for him, and an ugly scowl came over Dan’s face. He took a stance that disconcerted the man in the wheelchair, and he backed down with an element of fear and pervasiveness and quickly wheeled himself out of the library.

At the back of the library a man was injecting drugs into his arm and Dan saw him. He had no reservations about calling the police knowing he was far cleverer than them. A smile of satisfaction came over his face when the addict was dragged off by the police and he even thanked them.

His wife applied for a divorce, but he could never allow that to happen. He never really wanted children or a wife and considered them resentfully, him working all day to provide for them a life. Of course, she was dead now and so were the children gassed to death in the car, and so easily he slipped away. He was far, far away now and had a new life and identity.

A black-haired man was casually looking through the shelves and looked every now and then up at Dan, Dan smiled back with his condescending smile, and the man nodded to himself. He walked up with a copy of Franz Kafka’s novel Metamorphosis, and asked if this was a good book to read? Dan being intellectually superior said “it’s a great book, one of the best”. The man nodded again and walked out not looking back.

Dan was not a spontaneous man he usually planned things down to the last detail, and his new life was carefully constructed. He needed that control for he thought he was far superior to anyone else in most things.

The black-haired man returned with two other men they casually looked through the shelves every now and then texting. Dan saw them and furtively scurried away like an insect. The black-haired man asked Dan for his ID and Dan handed it over with a vicious look. The black-haired man was Detective Simpson he nodded. “Actually, your real name is Anthony Johnson, and I am now placing you under arrest for the murder of Dan Taylor and also your wife and two children”, the Detective said flatly. “You’re the cockroach we have been looking for”.

The Good Samaritan

Simon laid down the terms of the bet for \$100 bucks he would ride down the Monash Freeway on his scooter and exit off without a scratch. His friends would be in the car behind him filming the daring escapade, this would go viral on the internet.

Simon was prepping himself up...” I can do this; I can do this” he kept repeating. He took one final look I the mirror and went out to his friends all cheering and whooping he jumped in the car with his scooter in the back. His friends streaming live footage. He was halfway there when he knew...he knew he shouldn’t have agreed to this. This queasy feeling came over him and his self confidence began to fade to real terror. His friends were still yelling and cheering him on as he tried to reset his confidence.

Suddenly they were there, and he reluctantly got out of the car in the emergency lane. He started to scooter along the side with his friends filming live. His stubborn pride wouldn’t allow him to stop risking his life. He was doing fine for a while exhilarated by the danger.

Abbey slammed on the brakes, but it was too late. The kid on scooter went bouncing off her windscreen she hadn’t even seen him, just a quick glimpse of the shocked horror – a grimace on his face as he bounced off. What was this kid doing on the freeway?

Abbey pulled over to see if she could help, she called the ambulance, and got out of her car when the car collided with her, this shouldn’t be happening. The Police made it there within 10 minutes and the ambulance in 15 minutes, they stretchered the kid away he only had a broken ankle and a few broken ribs. The ambulance went to check on Abbey, they found her dead- the impact of the car breaking her neck she had died instantly- the good Samaritan. The Police arrested all the kids involved in the prank and they would pay for their misadventure.

The Letter

I was suffering from depression and was in real trouble emotionally when my husband died. My friend sent me a short message about writing letters to those you resent or who are troubling you. I thought this was a fantastic idea at the time. So, I began writing letters, the first to my brother, the second to my mother-in-law, and the third to the police.

The first I wrote to my brother and spoke of my disappointment at his lack of concern for me, a virulent letter full of profanities and spite. The second one I wrote to my former mother-in-law about her not supporting me and leaving me in the gutter after the death of my husband. Again, a virulent letter full of spite, disappointment and grief. The third was to the police regarding antique firearms as we were robbed and again a nasty letter about my disappointment at their apparent disregard at investigating the robbery.

So, I wrote these three letters and sent them. Once again rang my friend telling her of my letter writing- I told her I had sent the letters and there was an awkward silence at the other end of the phone. Finally, she exploded and said you didn’t read the rest of my message. “No”, I replied, “you weren’t supposed to send the letters but burn them instead”!

A day or two later there was a knock at the door- two burly policemen came into our home. They grabbed me and put me in handcuffs and were sectioning me under the 352 mental health acts for medical evaluation and took me to the psychiatric ward at the Alfred Hospital.

While I still speak to my friend, I strongly urge the readers of this story to read the whole message not just part of it. My best editing is always done after I send the letters.

The Life of Hilda

A plaque for appreciation for Hilda’s service in cryptography during World War 2 was outside her door. When her family had first viewed the Aged Care facility it appeared to be an excellent place with caring staff and efficient administration. She was wheeled into the breakfast area the personal care assistant did her best to encourage her to eat. With this she clamped her mouth shut and refused to open it. The co-ordinator came bolting over and shouted in her ear, “YOU MUST EAT HILDA!”. She reluctantly opened her mouth and was spoon fed weetbix. She had always hated weetbix.

She tried to open her rheumy eyes but thy were glued shut with conjunctivitis. The nurses ignored this, all she needed was some simple medication and an eye flush to see again. The personal care assistant wiped her eyes with a towel which was scratchy on her eyelids- it hurt.

Dignity what a sick joke she thought there was no dignity in death and growing old. Her purpose for living was gone and a stab of pain went straight to her heart. Her family rarely visited thinking she was beyond communication. This was far from the truth she often tapped on the edge of the table; it was morse code always the same message...HELP.

This place was a façade she now realised and felt cheated the air was stale and sick. Once upon a time she was an important person, she had worked as a cypher in World War 2 being secretly recruited and trained during the War to become a code breaker providing critical intelligence information essential to the War effort.

After breakfast she was wheeled into her room as the staff changed her incontinence pad, the smell of shit overwhelmed her senses. It stank and a little bit more hopelessness settled in her body, mind and heart. If only I could tell them how I feel but her mouth was dry and who would care anyway. Every now and then she had the compulsion to scream but when she opened her dry, dusty mouth nothing came out.

What God would allow this tortuous existence? A mind imprisoned in a useless body. In her heart of hearts, the only real regret she had was that she had not been true to herself through her life. She had once been a vibrant brunette who had studied at the University of Melbourne and had successfully completed a degree with honours. During the War she was sought after for work in the field of cryptography, to secure communications from Australia’s adversaries, she was brilliant.

After the War Hilda had chosen marriage and family a conventional choice for a woman in the 1950’s and had three beautiful children. Really the truth was she got pregnant to a man she didn’t love, she did the expected and got married, her heart breaking apart as she walked down the aisle. Her true love was in the church, and she feared to look through the crowd and to meet his eyes, the memory pricked her eyes, but she could not cry for the decision was hers.

She had started a clandestine affair with him while they both worked in intelligence their meetings secret and passionate. She loved him, her heart beating a little faster these were exquisite memories. As she lost herself in her dreams, she smelt his aftershave in her mind. The gentle way he stroked her hair whilst kissing her and the way he repeated her name whilst making love. Her heart racing now she remembered and savoured every touch and movement he made loving her.

Oh, what did they want now? She heard an unfamiliar voice and someone leaning over her opening her eyes; gruffly the voice said, “nurse why hasn’t this been reported?” The nurse didn’t reply, “this lady must have antibiotics once a day and an eye flush daily”. The Doctor stood to one side shaking his head at the inefficiency of the Registered Nurse, “I have a good mind to report you to AHPRA and have your registration for this”.

The nurse gave Hilda her medication daily and flush. This continued for weeks, then Hilda fluttered her eyelids like a butterfly and opened them, but it was too late, Hilda was blind.

The One Shoe Bandit

I was working in an Op Shop from 10 am when it opened. Although I was just a volunteer, I loved the touch of old things and imagined the lives of the people donating their items. The store received many donations from all types of people and anything and everything came through the door. Especially shoes all different styles, sneakers, boots, sandals and high heels almost any you could imagine.

I was asked by the staff to tidy up the clothes and the shoes, I noticed something odd; there was one shoe missing. I looked everywhere up on the shelves and changerooms, but still no shoe. I walked in to tell the manager, but she knew all about it. Apparently, it had been happening for the last year or so, a person had been stealing just one shoe. They could never catch the person behind it, I watched and waited but could never catch the one shoe bandit.

I was walking home from my shift and happened to walk over a bridge; I looked down and to my shock and surprise I saw a man surrounded by shoes. I stood for a moment watching as he was sniffing the shoes with a look of complete ecstasy on his face. It was the one shoe bandit, he had a shoe fetish, finally I found the one shoe bandit.

The Seeing Eye

I was once given a gift of great importance it was a silver oval pendant. In the middle there was a blue eye and a Hebrew prayer on the back. The pendant was heavy around my neck. The blue eye had been cracked down the middle. The crack had been there for many years. An old Jewish woman gave it to me, her wrinkled face and kind demeanour shone through. She explained the eye had been cracked in Israel when a car bomb exploded. A fragment of metal had struck it and saved the woman’s life.

She had given it to me as my husband was dying of cancer. A beautiful and touching gift I wore the pendant every day, but one day I forgot with oncologists appointments and treatments my husband was going through distracted me.

Whilst I was at hospital, a thief had broken into my apartment and stolen all my jewellery including the seeing eye. I know he didn’t think twice about stealing it. I looked in a few pawn shops but realised it was futile. As the eye gives good fortune it also gives bad luck. This thief will have bad luck for the rest of his life.

What I Have Always Wanted

I have always wanted a driver’s license not because I like cars, but because I have always wanted the freedom of just getting in a car and going somewhere anywhere. I asked my friends, and they are surprised by my answer, that although I have had my learners license many times, but I have never gotten a full license.

The last time at the DMV licensing test was memorable, the license tester didn’t seem happy and I whilst doing my test I accidentally went over the line at a stop sign, this is an automatic failure. I turned to him and asked if I had failed, and he rolled his eyes at me. Great I had only been in the car approximately two minutes and had already failed. I lost the plot and put my foot on the accelerator The look on the driving instructor’s face is something I will always remember, I smelt his fear. He tried to get me under control gently he said, ‘turning left’ my heart rate started settled down and in a side street he said, ‘left again’. I was somewhat under control now.

That white hot-temper had revealed itself. He asked me to turn right, and we were back at the testing station. I got out of the car and went into the office for the final verdict. I looked down on the sheet and there were multiple crosses and a fail at the bottom. Perhaps it is a good thing I don’t have a license. I think it would be a disaster, or even death, from my white-hot temper and road rage.

Life is good and I am happy I don’t drive.

Solstice in Peanut Park

Every year we walk in the shadows of the homeless to Peanut Farm, on the winter solstice to pay homage to the easily forgotten. I walked slowly this year, for this year I lost Susan, she was one of my drinking buddies, we drank in St. Kilda together, we were goon heads drinking warm white wine by the cask. She had been ill with liver failure, her yellow eyes shone in the dark caught by the overhead streetlights. She rarely spoke about herself preferring to numb her memory by drinking, she was my friend, and I didn’t ask her why she was always so sad, I just accepted her as she was. I walked up to the small circle that was gathering with my lighter and candle. Pete the unofficial spokesman began, ‘we gather here on the winter solstice the longest night of the year to remember our friends who spent every night homeless’. People murmured yes around him, ‘I invite all of you family and friends to light a candle for the person you have lost’. Pete picked up his candle and lit it, he walked to the centre of the circle and said, ‘this is for you Sam, I still miss you mate’, tears running down his cheek into his beard. Another person walked up and lit a candle and said, ‘this is for my sister Lisa, who I lost to the streets, I love you Lisa’. I was bawling my eyes out and couldn’t contain myself from the bitterness of the cold and the bitterness of the world. Frank walked up and laid a candle and said, ‘this is for Daniel whose demons terrorised him day and night’. Another walked up, ‘this is for Greg who couldn’t stop the voices in his head and died thinking he was a bad person, I loved you Greg even though you couldn’t love yourself’. Dave walked up slightly swaying, ‘I am an alcoholic and soon will be one of the dead you are remembering, I am what I am a person who is broken, but people see me as an object to be gotten rid of like garbage on the street. They don’t see me and look away when my suffering is real and I need help, I can’t stop drinking. So, this candle is for me, so you remember, I was once here a living and breathing person.’

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Thanks for reading Roomers.

**These articles were written by the people
of the City of Port Phillip.**

Roomers Creative Writing Workshops run every Tuesday at ESNLC and we welcome new members. The classes are free to attend and support people who have experienced insecure housing and/or financial or social hardship. Please reach out to find out more.

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