

Books and Chapbooks of English-language poetry by Kit Kelen:

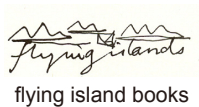
- The Naming of the Harbour and the Trees*
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Wyoming Suite
Eight Days in Lhasa
Spring Wind Brings the Fireworks
Kit Kelen's Macao (Ke Yuan Wen Kan Aomen)
Dredging the Delta
After Meng Jiao
as from the living page- 100 poems for Yao Feng
God preserve me from those who want what's best for me (Homage to the Romanian Poets)
The Whole Forest Dancing
In Conversation with the River
to the single man's hut – poems and pictures in memory of Arthur Boyd
China Years – Selected and New Poems
a pocket kit
red bellied black
green thought - green shade
pictures of nothing at all
Scavenger's Season
as to the ladders of whichway



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Kit Kelen

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About the Author:

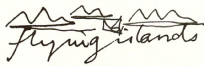
Christopher (Kit) Kelen is a well known Australian poet, scholar and visual artist, and Professor of English at the University of Macau, where he has taught Creative Writing and Literature for the last fifteen years. Volumes of his poetry have been published in Chinese, Portuguese, French, Italian, Swedish, Indonesian and Filipino languages. The most recent of Kit Kelen's twenty English language poetry books is *Scavengers Season*, published by Puncher and Wattman in 2014. Kelen has published two scholarly volumes about poetry: *Poetry, Consciousness, Community* (Rodopi 2009) and *City of Poets – Exploring Macao Poetry Today* (ASM, 2009). Kelen's theoretical study of national songs *Anthem Quality* was published in 2014 by Intellect Press in the UK and the University of Chicago Press. Kit Kelen is the Editor of the cross-arts international on-line journal *the wonderbook* and is Literary Editor for *Postcolonial Text*.

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Kit Kelen

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minor works
pocket poets

a pocket kit 2
(*a pocket kit 1* first published in 2011)

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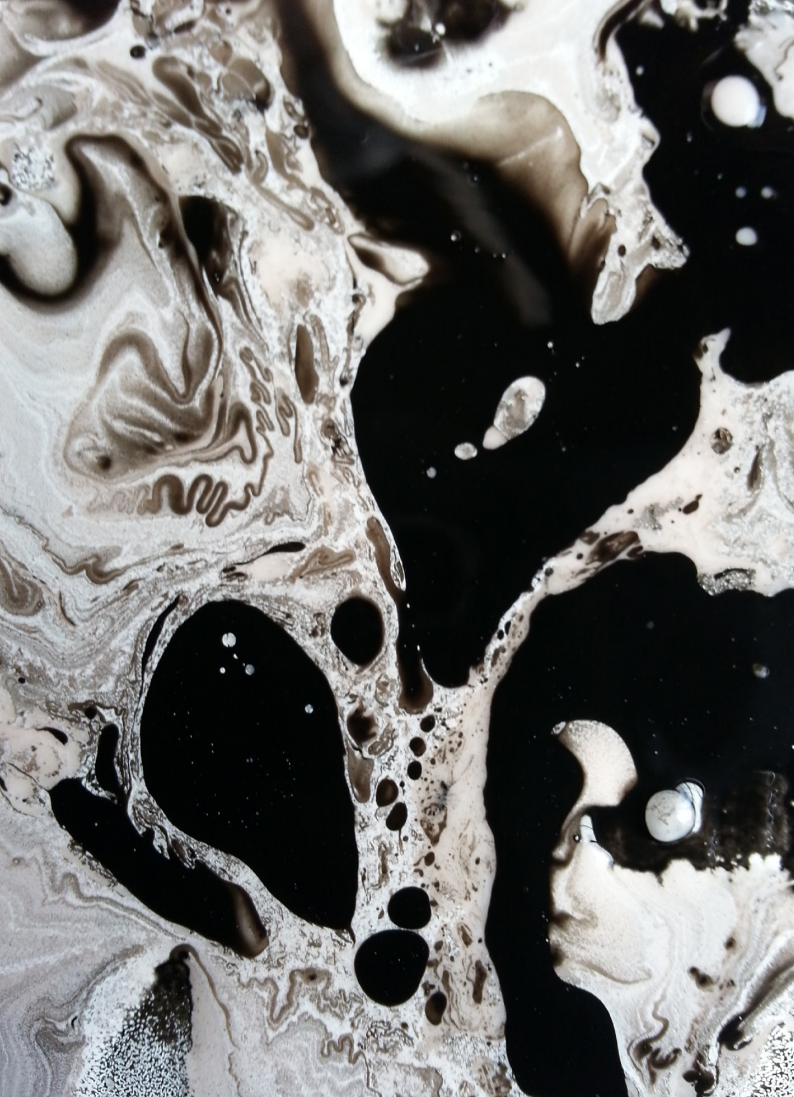
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let everything grow wild today

embrace the poem
squander the soul

sleep to dream and wake to play
let everything go wild today

let the spirits call our names
let us requite

only the words
to bear

from my door
nowhere but the way

everything green is reaching for heaven
for light and for love

squander the paint
set afloat in a poem

only words
to be borne
to bear on

let everything go wild today
wake to play and sleeping dream

so we may work the miracle
set God and godly things
all free

today
let everything grow wild

A Sociology of Paradise

First I came through a hoop of flesh.
I didn't jump, I swam. There was an endless
mud plain and another storm coming.
Rain beat the rice shoots green from the soil.
Millions were huddled round the still ether.

The century dragged on. I missed the boat
swam out to the island. And the air was still
in the sun's quarter and the half a sky where
waves could have been. The moon washed
up where the tide rusted into the sand.

Cars came out of the twentieth century.
Coca Cola came ashore, lapped on
the hard live shell of paradise. A coconut
fell out of nowhere onto my child's head.
I didn't stumble. There were stars and bars
everywhere. I could hear the West
crackling through looming shadows of bliss.

Back country, hills were dense with trees,
Dissidence, notches for climbing up.
And curled into a noose of straw
the disappeared hung, swaying — invisible

burden of paradise. I jumped through a hoop
of gold. I had the ring of confidence then
and a flag colour of mud.

Helicopters filled up the sky. When the noise
came, birds shifted in a line, black, palm to palm,
fifty metres. Then when they came back
there was nothing the wind could move.
Trees clung to a rock in the sea.

On dry land I had a good steady job
in the fly-spray factory. They paid me in cigarettes
so naturally I took up smoking. The mist
from the nozzle formed up a halo to martyr
the very air. You couldn't call it a leak.
It was more like missile testing.

Each day here proud of the fallen, brainless
slaughters to glory in. The earth makes up
a place for each. The new rice sings from the earth.
The colour of the mud in our veins is a flag
billowing over a hoop of bright gunmetal:
the welcome mat. I didn't jump, I swam.

the priming of a painter's canvas

like night come
colour no matter

skins are under skin
and skies too

shade patches, dapples take the tune
soaks pigment where the eye was caught

canvas is linen really
like a tent clouds abide in

there are rats have your pants
vultures all sorts

one lies down in it all
till the rags make ladders

next beanstalk's got your name on it
next stop is the stars

Views from Pinchgut

Picture a track, not one of ours
but lower, maybe inches only off the scrub
and winding from that height
into a tangle water fits to a gully.
The mind's untroubled there.
It's all green. It works, birds feed
off it. Trees stand up for themselves.
Even the sky's got a look in.

Roll that gaze out onto a coin
poisoned with flour and blankets.
(The sun smiles over my gumboots and I
driven on by greed and luck. For the sake
of a good feed we murder our way across borders
unseen.) It's dirt cheap so we buy a big block,
sea on three sides, sit in a corner
count up the tides. Flog some sense
into the trees and ringbarking's a miracle
of endurance but we go at it like there's
no tomorrow. Thumbs hammered flat chat
to the milking pastures. Wattle
and daub, brickwork entangles me.
Rains come and go, *mares eat oats*
where the dam rots down and *does eat oats*.

Water loafs around all day *and little lambs eat ivy*. Prosecute those who trespass against us as we forget our great wronging of them. Why bother crops out of the ground when the hill sits still against geology's dull blade? That's how we live now — frontier alchemists making money of the dirt. It's lonely here so we stretch a thin wire out over the desert, build a million miles of rabbity fence. Out of nowhere the radio speaks to us and the air vibrates into atoms.

Let's tote all up. Boundless pasture, our coal will burn for a thousand years, this sun blots reason out. A nation now, we speak with one forked tongue. Three anthems but no lyrics we remember. No flag but hoist the washing. Nostalgia overwhelms me. Transport me over a farcical sea. Feed me salt biscuits, flat booze that gets me drunk. Chain me in old fetishes, punish me with ocean views. I'll re-enact the lot. I'll be a stripling on a small and weedy beast. I'll send the flintstones flying. I'll go on quiz shows in black and white. No test pattern

now to stump the wits. It's a one-day invasion.
The pitch shrinks. The flesh is stupid, the mind obeys
and crimes committed drunkenly dementia
soon forgets. Let's take a cake knife
at this hill, make out a white man's house.
Can't say fairer than that. So robber kings
cheer on, their harbour full of hobby canvas.

Give us each day our dusty cup,
temptation delivers from boredom.
Give us the hundred tracks to go down,
a freeway looming behind. The sun
built out, we vote for the greenhouse.
Time slips its old noose over our necks.
Stars and stripes wave above. *Just*
show us the way to the next little dollar.
Oh don't ask why. Everybody's happy.
A kid'll eat ivy too, wouldn't
you bet your life we are.

my flag

is a beach towel, heavy with sand
whole tribes tangled in it

involuntary sky — heart's refuge
in the true of dark
mind's refuge in the heart

the flag
must be all things to all
a mirror aloft, reflection unfurling
that should make everyone happy

in a room with queen you'd see the queen
and she'd see you, her subject
one among the many flags

in the bush would be magpies to fly in and tangle
catch them like that when they get territorial

on the front of the big boss's car
more of chrome, dark tarmac

in the night you'd choose the stars
bright pinpricks from another sky

in which the true flag must fly
be windblown, limp
from the accustomed pole

a square cut of heaven
and so strings attached

a calling

the same words
summon me often
because — to put it simply —
they know what I mean



the bush

1

that is the wild out-of-order
snakes hunting under tin left lie

garden too thick for weeds this un-naming
it chorus birds commonly bright

2

minds its business we make ours
yields to spirit its sustaining
best model from democracy
dark wordless turn, self tending, ruthless
absent of law it breathes to burn
this one tree left cut down to size
so when it's mine it is no longer

flimsy instinct joins logic to one wish
the guiltless having of all this

3

another sun spun, a next dicey sky
of maverick opinion, told you
inscrutable polysemy

song between the cityfolds
come clumsy in its own confiding
all unfinished business
all neighbouring and all horizon

the bush is a trap sets camouflage
falls in and all it catches bush

4
blade hailing the forest legend made failing
memorabilia: smug of stockwhip, blanket

gathers as a blowfly to what was once meat

takes no convincing — its job to go nowhere

team of madmen tied to one tune
a tidemark shows where we retreat

5
midst of limits, most natural of histories
gospel uncut in the wood

a waste of pages cash scrawls down
the bush beside my means as such

pack up but where you come from's
as gone as what was here
so we among all animals are party to

take down each sky made out in ribs
a cross hangs bright above

6

one species relieving the others of hope

barks at the edge of night a dog burning
the hinge of sentience it mourns

much admired the passage of rites
because once you were my besotted
a frightened face to rouse such love

leaves tracks to run a course paws take
this shallowest of burials

the bush is an animal gathering home
and our great Ark unmeaning

Blokes

Blokes are always coming over, in their droves
or in their ones. Wear thongs in summer, boots
for weather. No one says mind my clean floor love.

Arriving in their utes and vans, they're always
round here, day and night, courting our Penelope.
They know what's next, what's what, when, why.
Blokes know what to do and what you need
and even if you can't decide. Blokes'll sort your
trouble out. If it aint broke it's easy fixed. Take
care but not responsible. They're always late
and rude and wet. Blokes like to be outside
the best. They dare the ozone at their backs.
Sleep with someone else. They say things you
wouldn't. Feel less, do more. You've got to love
them though. Hide in their frothy beards to weep.
You feel for them, the camera shies. They won't
be tied, won't be predicted. But cuddle them
and know they're bad. Take them all for granted.

Blokes won't take hints. Needn't tell them.
They slink away to shed when glum. Grow darker
in the moody scrub and shed their lacks among
the fauna. They won't be caught, they get away.

Get down to pub and dob and dob, until they're almost in the clink. They tell their temporary comrades. Blokes tell the truth and when they don't they've got the story all worked out.

They know the pecking order. How to fit, not rock the boat. Blokes make a play for the affections. Trust the passing moment, loathe permanence of plans. Blokes are slaves of circumstance. They can't help being rough with stuff, have to give it all a test. See if it's well made or not. It's not their fault the way they are, was done to them as blokelings.

Blokes are mates or so they say. Won't let a bastard down. The blokiest are your best mates. Your mates are blokes if you're a bloke. Women can be mates or ladies. Can't be blokes. Mate with them to make new playmates. Blokes or no. If you're a bloke you mustn't mate with other blokes. It doesn't work. Dreadful thing. Unblokemanlike. Besides, how could you tell your mates?

Some things are better left unsaid. And out of earshot of the nagging blokes won't need

your looking after. Dinners tabled, washing done.
Blokes go lean in filth and glue their rotting jeans
together. They know it's bad luck to speak
when gesturing would do the trick.

As insects lead the faster life, they've lost a leg
before you've finished telling the precautions.
They're enemies of labour saving, scoff at
ingenuity. Do a thing the hardest way. Clog noses
and their ears fall off, eyes are full of filings.
Drown in beer to build a gut. It shows what
blokey blokes they are. They suffer beef to have
the dripping. Sneak from the ward at last
for fags, and curse their curtailed freedom.
That's with a final breath.

Bloody this and bloody that is what your bloke
ghost says at last. And when the dirt's all spread,
well sifted — where are those blokey souls all fled?
They've gone to blokeland — hellish spot. The
Shed Celestial. Dim or Bright to their deservings.

Still, there's more. Never was a drought of blokes.
Not since the war. No — blokelings grow to
blokehood's full bloom. Bloke's abound and pull
their weight. Show some leg, offer beer.

Call for blokes — they will appear.
When all else fails no need to fear.
Just stir him up. Your bloke is here.

Magyar idyll

my ancestors are burning
across an endless steppe
somewhere out of Asia
they harry the poor and the weak
on their way
they're torching the lowlands
they're putting an axe to the forest
they're making the Great Hungarian Plain
the woodland creatures they turn into *gulacs*

of course I have other ancestors
but these are the ones I like to remember

ancestor worship

people smelt bad in the old times
they had bad teeth, they were stupid
everything was ill fitting
so they fell about in sacks
their habits were appalling
no wonder they didn't live long

o they suffered much
but so much of it was self-inflicted
and they inflicted their world on us

of course they didn't know any better
they were so clumsy they broke
almost everything they touched
they were like clowns before the circus
was thought of

imagine them in bed
generation after generation
like your parents at it
but much worse
infinitely older uglier
o how ungainly
this getting a leg over
the dipping of the wilting wick

and that is why we worship them
because we're here
we're here!

and flirt all the way to the grave

why stop there?

there's a cute girl in the firing squad
in her heart she's smiling and waving
though she has to be serious for her job
but I know we can catch up later on

see there on the left
she'll aim for the heart
but shed a tear

on closer inspection — see, they're all cute girls

that means their aim was true
I'm on the other side

I like to imagine how

in a time before the first word
already there was hunger, strategy, fairness, love
there were trouble and help, there was tenderness, grief

and still fresh hopes might follow
all because we were animals then
untroubled with abstraction

here's the story to save the world

just say yes you heard me
you'll hear me out

let the tale get you in
accept the suspense
you want to know what
you can't yet know

of course there will be hurt
truths will tussle
we'll be wiser

what is it
most makes corpses?
the passion of those
who already know

a single doctrine
fills countless
graveyards

what is it keeps us alive?
keep talking
I want to know how the story ends

keep talking
I'll listen
I promise I will

Rome

I like the saints
everywhere perched at unlikely heights
— brought by eagles, by any impossible means

like children, to whom fear is unknown
whom only love can save
they're expendable — that's the point
there's more than one born every day

on their feasts, though drunk on affection
they're jealous — recumbent in light

and Christmas comes after them
they're frugal enough
God's eyes though He needs none
I like most of all their duty to love me
a tingle down spine

at the end of all ages they shift from the frame
to bod just a smoke — that's how humble they are
they've had all eternity ready to jump
but know this would be unforgivable pleasure

just as the poor know not to cast off the centuries
to catch a breath of good air



imagining children

like farts in a bath this feast revisits
argument turned over for the umpteenth time

there are those who can't, who won't, who say
'I couldn't bring into this world'
themselves they mean — more of the same

but imagine being bored enough
to believe that you're what's worth repeating
— how's that for self-esteem?

the ultimate confidence trick
is believing that you're somehow incomplete
not fully human till torn with the making of miseries
joys, the out-of-body experience
after which you'll never be selfish again

choosing this once — it's like voting Hitler in

*

... here they come down the hall
on the ancestral seat of the pants
now it's an under-age nudist colony

and cleaning up — here's you-two, mum and dad
a couple of trampolines not quite keeping up
with attrition, or the pain of living where nothing
is breakable (age never wearies *them*)
it's like a club you can hose out —
here the drunks go on to all hours
their paralytic doze is shattered
by any slight suspicion of care
they never pay, they never work
they do their business just where they are

... o but what a jaded view!
we'll paint them at accomplishments
everything tagged with tricky joy

after a while in the waiting-up years
(lives most risked with least regard)
it's said you yearn for nappies again
and a weariness which paces life

... you can pop in to just watch them sleep
— name me a simpler pleasure than that
unless it's getting some yourself

we nurture them — young chestnuts,
worship as we would ourselves

apotheosed — gods of our betweenness
for whom the martyrdom goes on

*

it's like looking into a new kind of mirror
in which everything moves without your permission,
against your advice and to prove you're dispensable,
a day the world goes on without

what's galling's not the dollar cost
but look at them, crossing the street
so as not to have their friends see them
with the unpierced (you could drill
yourself hollow *you* wouldn't be cool)

*

a new half life's spent talking up
making the vicarious so

yet children must make do with
however we imagine them

in arms of welcoming the world
these selves so like unlike

silence

has love to curl into
it's the between words, breaths
between each touch
when you're still touching
but nothing's left to say

shed

lento

there is no grammar you can trust take this one
spark and follow be lost all sorts of things
are so in shed tune for a start though it will find you
take tip of tongue or piece that join's what's furthest
from mind whole clans have gone missing
with one mad idea o wilderness of shed and manna
old meteor is home here and otherworldly light
for treasure shed's worth of something
is much of a much and that's good homespun
in shed there must be room to stretch
a beam from which to let limbs loose

so many things shed are lost but memory holds all in
and so it is elemental with tin you can have fire
chimney to point air's fresh where window's gone
great outdoors are all in a shed I knew a bloke
whose shack sloped down as added to till it was
well in the ground with demons, dark woods
Dante and Beatrice close in a corner when
the council inspector came you see you musn't
live in shed unless expelled, doomed for a certain time
to tread till invention makes up for misdemeanour

then you slink back with smart new prize, lickapaint
fresh as a pet, you're a puppy gis a hug and all's
forgave and you forgive as well go rude good night
enough of that

leaves should blow through a shed — gives
a good impression of drought and there must
have been water once or trees won't hang about
see seven sisters and the saucepan — there used to be
a door it is an act of irrigation out from under radar
smile in a shed or smirk half knowing it is do with
face of elsewhere, what-if, worlds to come
and without end hear the possums snore
sit in dad's last chair until one better's found
you'll think his thoughts no matter
no need to split ears in the place of scheming
you can be dad yourself go on! shed's
something we have long since hatched
this is solitary patch where one among
the eachlings does as all expect duty to England
must once have been, forelocks tugged towards
those Thames-shed hulks what's past is makeshift
to belief the lungs abrim, the prod of hearth

while with three wishes you'll admit a parliament
is mainly shed wait for the others to clear out

then spill the vision you'll wear your gumboots there
because... to limp's alright, implies past wounds
in the gout afflicted shed a stumble to secret
best brew stash or life's last anchovy see, shed
is an heroic place — no screens you wear a singlet
and yours are the human arms in the cage
of all the world's mosquitoes
 o hallowed shed
 raised once in penance
 a man could fall to his knees in there
 when God is bloke to him

there's billy boil for fervours steadies you can sing
if there's a song an ear into the night though mostly
and in the gormless dark when gremlins come
from miracle to miracle a shed's laid bare
dream the secrets in the big soft chair
dream a sun — it rises so many perfections to life
then death must be perfect too in shed we dwell
on it — there's time rain on the roof's a kind of proof

and also it's a dare apologies are best framed here
you can rehearse them on the way because
there must be distance and purpose? where's
my stick to point intelligent design new fences
are imagined, the strainer posts right wire

made tight pumps primed whole kitchens
bathrooms planned effortless overhauls
(as it much after seems) it's in just such
the shed survives, transcendent all sorts
no one can be said to have built it
I call that theology if ever one's knocked down
(forbid!) that ground is consecrate to those
of hushed deport who place the spanner by
who sight the apt bolt gone

though true bottle may be bring to the brink
mustn't get maudlin with the beam there's
nothing drugs won't mend shed is site
of sacrament, covenanted so some are
boneyards, some are tents, each to own
sheds are museums, crystal palaces
world fairs that no one saw I've heard
of shed Hiroshima bright with something
none should see pit-bull to guard
a season or so of shed heads sold
you could retire and world go hang

the peasant is the king here
where monarchs tinker with old crowns
no need for revolution nor is there call
to rhyme in shed you wear whatever pants
you like — sarong, sari, jellibayah when light

tires of the garden there're still these leaning
posts, this tarp smell of dam water imbues
a pinking of dusk clouds looks in

you'll make your own false idols — see how shed
is existential binning the chocolate wrapper
there's a sense in which it never was nor does
guilt enter into shed itself is graven image
but kind thoughts will Christianize hear words
with wings unseen in shed we won't call them
angels the lesson is time's preciousness
so go where it won't reach once out of nature
one shapes the golden bough to sing exceptions
of a proven rule — such accidents as goanna, frog
count digits on your salamander

by incident of refuge come, a web is wove
baroque perhaps but all that grows here
is by hand, else phantom of limb long lost
a conjuring, all tricked together radio pours
to the paddock and this is a heart to heart
because the shed's a mongrel thing
has every mix of paint it is best blasphemy
against those sainted aunts once set foot
you can walk out of it pure into the night
just a puff of breeze between stars and doom
and guess the way we go



I, myself, am an act of remembering

the years
of other lives
are true to me
as full
of birdsong
sky and shadow
as any now far forest

considering the uses of evil

the child is drowning in the well
you hear the screams
you know where there's a rope

the knowledge is like an echo in you
you know it's a dream
and you wake to dodge the bayonet
come for your heart

you say — 'I didn't do it
I never did a thing'

still the same dark
inside the soul
the wallpaper peels
rattles the wind
but always the same pattern

eyesight weakened
sense of smell dimmed
each meal has less taste than the last
not so many years left to this world
the emperor finds every day
it's easier to order
the executions

in confidence

black caveats
the lawyers cast
so that you're uninsured

you're sunk
and owe the ocean to these fish
each ravening its own school gloat

front pages are five minutes full
then print dissolves in this last rain

there's one born every minute

a little picnic for the bears

snow spoken in the winter treetops

1

rumble a long way off lush of steam close nose
see them come worship gold gathered from light
sweet if life is their substance they sing it

bears rhyme of fresh air by skelter
are all breakfast whom lunch beckons
so they are come to the boredom of joy

agog with grog
rollicking bears of hills away hayrick
till the cows come home they heed
the dinner bell first sitting, second and supper

even frumpy tusk bears of the bottom line
queue up for cuddles for snog to the river!
all because smack on the tail for bad bears is best

2

I know a wild time when bears blow up banks
and gather by meadow in sedge to give thanks

'allo 'allo tap shoulder catch them
such pranks idyllic unawares ragged fellows
much misused tonight's their mardi gras
gadabout spank beneath the trees
where nobody sees who can afford to be good?

3

with a get-thee-behind-me spree
surely they are to a purpose eponymous?
Biffo and Tottles, Old Ben, gentle all athrall
porridge this is for the wedding of teddies
(tug at the press studs to knock out the stuffing)

bears of a fossil were once colossal
they pun to pass the time of day

beer going bears know how to surprise cook
with a headlock and bear away the cheese

here's a tantrum of bears returning from sport
exit pursued to a little copse where they amuse
a Russian in a pit a baton tip lick to the lip
don't call them tunes they'll quibble

4

a travelling troupe in the endless war
style of Mother Courage tumbrels never favoured
but far far better than a bear generally does ...
if you prick him tattered rascalionate hullabaloo

isthmus once up an army across your
namedropping ursine two were with Noah
primal elders on we go bears were there
bile guinea a quart for drama quaff

so! firebrand tanuki spooky
podium and shoulder borne
proud as in a banner flown cannibal bears
and airborne ah the flying cubs in berets flowing

Bobo or Basil, Humphrey B., Smokey, Yogi so Boo Boo
bears of the hereafter to our bosom heave

5

you see a big bear tremble for truffles
make that a mind's eye mountain marauder
battling the brimstone sword to trench blood
your skull and crossbones bear plays billiards
in the smoking room then were single malts
theirs is the riddle of the pudding filched

bears who care just stretch and be darling
hearts are on their sleeve

here's the market last four years running
and after the marzipan dash good bears
will floss and dust beneath their winks
up to thirty miles an hour rascally bears
careless of spelling do mental arithmetic
so know build it and the bears will come
they are the secret weapon

6

to dream all of winter sink deeper forgetting

they have followed the arrows to the magic
Glitter and Care and Gummy

Old Man in the Fur Coat some say no name
Lord of the Wilds and natural cunning
your every bear cenotaph all pious paws
the nutstore laid these are the bears of a prayer

on spring pilgrimage the half tonne brute
sacred to themselves they are

bears set fire and forget

7

bears wear helmets bears touch down
bears agree to terms how do they stack up?
who's signing this season?

take dogs on hindlegs (would-be bears)
with a fee fie foe fum as if they were beanstalk top
cloud castle cubs

less sentimental of the tribe clerk articles in chambers
clap you in irons as soon as swoon clout comes
with a clip on the ear clairvoyant bears see
will o the wisp sun sententious and mull, wag, shag
kaleidoscope and coloured ball they're from
the Land of Punt healthy wet nose as of yore

they stand like stones receiving light
because the stars are deep in them
they're whimsical that way

8

what draperies of dusk gloom spirit
Samarkand — caravan of singles
under their underwear all bears are equally rude

bears are ever more than merely petitioners
in duty bound laurels never rest
twinkle of mischief and tumble down
the slapstick stairs because to begin with
bold seafaring bear toys with the tiller

of meadow and mead their blanket is the valley whole
leaf-four-asphodel your barefoot bear
the picnic's picture lissom, lithe, lush
bears off the spoils hush
bears are bushed and need a nap now

9

knock three times in a grove a bear knows
to gain admission to the processional

bears are biscuits dunked al fresco
bears expel the money changers
bears and bear lovers are going to San Francisco
stop into a church they pass along the way
(so wed at last when all said no)

the glee of bears which leads to sparkle
o others and lions appreciate
twink of the flag we animal are

barrowing bears on a building site
will scratch till the sun is raw
they squint curse cudgel

binge bears weep sorry in their socks
no never no never again

mendicant bears with supper to sing
lick bowls in a scrape

wizard bears with funny hats
must rule a parliament of cats
spoil the beer and hole the spare
bears will rue the day

10

they settle up at the end of the forest
a goldilocks kidding of stairs to rise
super8 caught crinkled cicatricker
of theirs all under fur dilute them
then ask — how much bear?
and dilatory truth pursues
so kissing tell — bears won't know their strength

11

work the crowd spruiking wake to the dance
come hither you beast

Thylarctos plummetus apocryphal of numbers
the earthenware companion of congee
old Indian riddle the everywhere and each of him
distracted torpid in cave of autumn fat
emaciated on parole led about by jugglers
the little sunbear teeth superb selling for a fall
in the lodge a smoke hour sprawl cliché gnaws
at the heart do bears drop here? does the soul
have corners? a bird flew through this head of mine

12

libidinous, raid the chocolate fridge
when midnight's else abed wind three sheets to it
in sepia of their own nostalgia a gulp of the clock
and a bear ticks by must be the season
bears lay their eggs it has to be a truth so brazen
unravels the threadbear clouds have quilt

blow your woods down with last night's curry
bears up against a dentist's tut tut
will down the varmint whole

13

swollen head bee swarm camera pans to exit — lake
the bear dive swans attempt

sit with the starry cross smack lips
and that's their smooch clench shuffle-coil
when the state withers bears contend
may as well live in a shoe for all the cupboard bare
come rolling home in the cuisinaire ticky tack
you know and I know all headlong hot on little tails
bears out on a limb sawnoff agree
 they all got the raw straw

what reveries of elsewhere mind keen but a little
gentle shy folk now with maker

as music is maze to the brain everything signature
avant le picnic — might I say? I was a teddy bear
 got glitter eye, cried lay down on the forest floor

bears on a cave wall view truth's bung flicker

let them be hungry for the echo accordion
of legend list with words wayward
they gather piano and pong hot tears to weep

bears of the dance are whiffy
blind of them leading the blind as through timber
they're full of jaw encyclopaedic good as gold

in a mirror of wishes already swum tallow bears
pinch snuff and grumble a frowzy wild child
insolent leer led banished by the nose to kingdom

bears of a feather nest disposition each is in
the picnic dreaming unto his herself replete

sunshine comes to them when they call



tobacco smoke

it was a mystery of childhood
wonderful lands this cargo was from
and it took you with uncles
into the ponderous past — there
was woodgrain to it — cherry
and meerschaum a captain's
head pipe smoke taught floating
if there were Os you could
tumble through a vanishing door
the tobacconist's was an aroma oasis
adults could barely smell at all —
but we didn't know what smoking did
none of us had yet ridden past sunsets
how could we know the colour
would one day drain from the map
like a rug left to daylight
showing only the rolled up remains —
uncles gone to early graves

ping pong

I remember your remembering
snow from Great War winters
a father's Austro-Hungarian great coat
presents for the American prisoners
and the first car come, your first typewriter

... you're gone ten years to my dream,
still cameo regular, a star

you chased a ball around the world
now far off in the heavens

first gone you were in orchard eddies
I remember that quiet time in the morning
— closed door gave God space to imagine you

our superstition has no named community
just puts things in perspective
for instance I think of you when a digital clock
shows me your birth year — then I go back

to time elapsing — what worries me now
may well not tomorrow — I hear you say

'don't let the bastards get to you'
in the dreams I never hear your voice

sometimes lately you could be a ghost
can neither confirm nor deny
we talk it through wordlessly

so much I'd like to show — a poem like this!
if I were Chinese I could burn it to you
or there's a window of clouds here — each shaped
with no less care — is that what it's like not to be?

ten years and you're more than a hundred —
good innings even when you're out —
we've still got the ashes — cause well
we don't know what to do with you, with them

with memory — you fell asleep watching Bradman bat
in the guests' box at the MCG — you'd just arrived
and you thought they must have been
'tuning the instruments' — 'play gypsy play' you'd say
or 'gone a million', 'drongo', 'buckley's' — I learnt
Australia from you — and that there's nothing like
the love of a country you've chosen for yourself —
that's courage

what a rock you've been for me, these visits
but it's too many years since your voice

you didn't want a stone at all
but the army gave you a plaque, without asking

it should be our own words survive
because for us, words are deeds

I think of your war sometimes —
your part for which I'm grateful
not like the wars we make these days
on an oily whim or a lie

a century of snow to see through
you won't believe it but there are idiots partying
for that mad war where God went missing
'we're a nation because we walked into the canons'
'just following orders'... actually you would believe it

but you've got somewhere better to be
following that celluloid ball through the stars
and hey I'm keeping up, I bounce the ball back
tethered to this only planet we the living have

like a meadow walk because the sun says
sleep is that forest I inch in through to be with you

fitting you're the hermit there — where you go
past everything — better than home but you
have to believe —

I'm coming to your conclusions with God —
prayer is the question — God's there
as long as there's no answer —
as long as word's yet to come

sin aire

islands rear and rise
you know them
by frond by sprout
green spume of sea's imagining

as if at the bottom of the world we'd come
to shift the frozen plug

under one country
an anthem prises out
old eagles
spent standards
scales weighted with wax

capes are done up in sighting
so that there must be a moral beneath
punchline forgotten

still crossing
Magellan's Pacific goes on forever
it's a long time since they ran out of rats
because the world's not round
it has no end
and yes we're ghosts
smoke is sweet
there isn't a book we're in

mimesis

what comes into my house becomes me

night is an instance
the imitation I show sleep

and faroff dawn
with its tribe of oars
contending
beaten gold
rose fingered

hands take hold

*

last eddy of dusk displaced inside

a bat flies in
everything dropped
while
we wave our arms around like one
and fold up when it stops
we with our gravity
this one hung up

*

just inside the front door
among shoes
I find a snake
black one
I seek prosthesis of my own
something cylindrical
about the same
to poke it with, out

something smooths
from sight

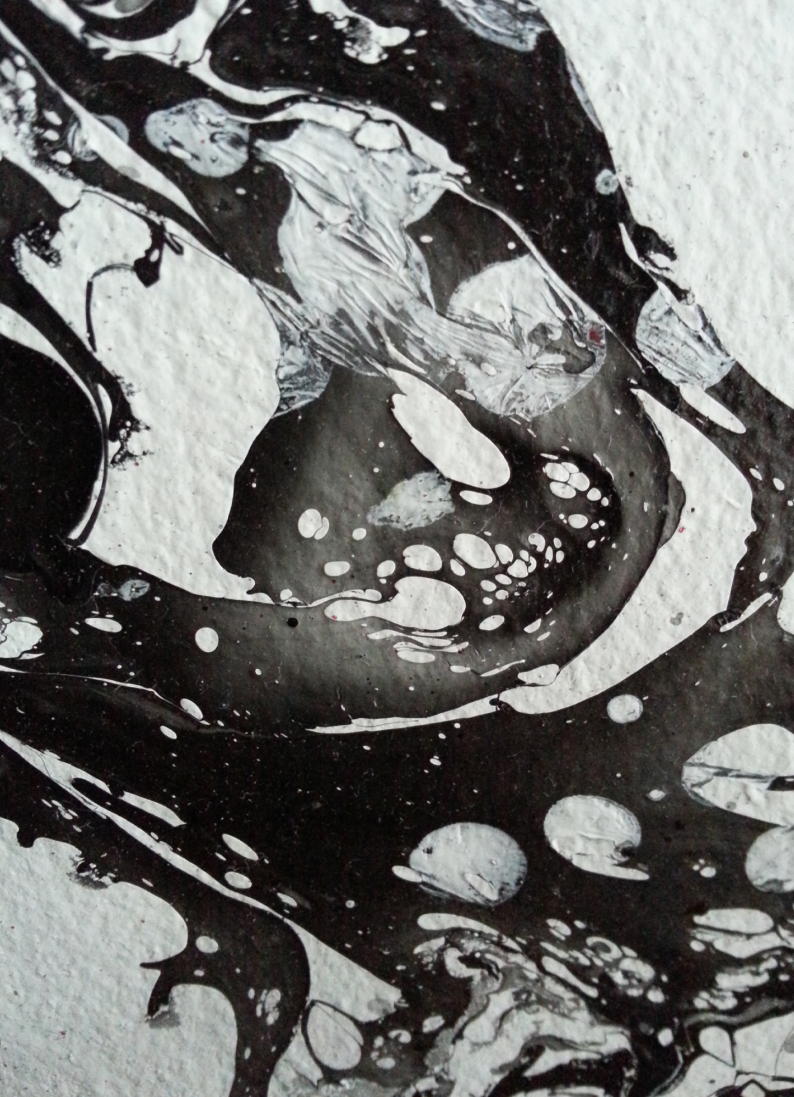
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bright out
come to shade
flies come in with me
over my meat I wave my hands
in just the way they do

in a book

are certain heavens
more than gods count

as in the pages of the tree
which tells its years in standing



Tang Gals

they're always leaning on a rail
some balcony edge
eyes fixed past distance

'and snow falls on his faraway temples'

they're waiting for a carp
full of brackish missive
just the salt of love's entrails
little bones that stick in your teeth

it's something like 'the silk washing stream'
gives the scene its tune

certainly there is a sigh
at least an expulsion of air

you could translate
but that would omit
three layers of intrigue
in favour of a famous saw

then they will cook the bitter fish
but first feed entrails to stray cats
who'll cough but soon forget the bones
if they survive the feast

a yellow umbrella

has all sorts of uses

you catch a sunny day and keep it

the colour of hope is so many flowers

and here's a ribbon tied, city middle
it's like the shirt off my back

by the light of a yellow umbrella you can stand
and read the world you can see whose hands are dirty
a yellow umbrella is whisper quiet

it's a megaphone as well, a kind of broadcast mast
there's a yellow umbrella for every occasion
it is a stick for walking and lean and you can point
an ear in the corn or to the ground
good as a cloud for a wash if need be

upside down you catch the blue right way up —
fend heaven off

to have an umbrella is to form an opinion

here's the Yellow Emperor with medicine
for everything a tank turret swings
little pills to cure us fly each full of endangered horn

Confucius says by the time you're old
no risk of anything like an idea

Lao Tzu goes on with frying his fish

every young person should have an umbrella
precisely this colour to put up not shut up
to dandle, preen and pose
to set upon thieves for a need same as a song

can you see a flock of them crossing the border?
but I only need the one to transport me
a yellow umbrella is full of for instance
walls are entirely subscribed at this point

it's like the cartoon where Nobody stands up
because s/he's just got a capital letter...
the blinded Cyclops rants and screams
but no one's listening now
boulder after boulder's hurled uselessly
into the emperor's sea

a new generation makes this tent their sky
some people say the fabric is flimsy

for the sake of convenience in case of acid rain
though eaten, these tatters fly by

bamboo poles and the red white and blue plastic
under which our next great world
waits to be unveiled

at Admiralty, HK, 2014

light letting a parliament of unseen nests
intentions grand or fundamental

deeper and always deeper
more in the maze of the still

heaven's close or closing in
depending on your fears

4
glimpse of the infinite and tribute too
all skill offered to take the heart along
its own way an opening
as if this were writing
which turns, forgets itself, goes on

how fine, that the eye goes with it
and the eye is a boomerang too

lower still the camera casts
and catches this for you

5
as daylight is restored in dreams
the book is borne like a wounded creature

it's me coming home slouch in the hat
sky like a flock of windows

look up into the ribs of it
imperative to have no plan

o how I love the way that words
make off with day itself

6
a glimmer in the old gumtree

smoke in the valley shows its long way off
and canvas leaning into tin
and tin holds off the sun
and later holds it in

kill symmetry
let's have the sensible variousness
euphorics bale flavours of hay
the square run rings around
ears rotate
then with pastel fix phase of the moon

scribble it in! like bark flung to heaven
and here's stem green mottled
all sung and singing
sling me such a sky

7

an end of day with rain to the ridge

I lie on my back watching
till cloud's completely gone

scatter of feathers under these notes
in oakleaf carpet quilted
wrens feather the scrub and the messy edges
go for the accidental intensities

an opening — my own tune stuck in my head
how's that?

8

to be lost in
to work to the top of the range
to be the old track itself — in and of

o grey with the gums
to reach as trees reach
and where the river holds last sun
be perfect in one's hat

from 'Celan'

everything that is was spoken

no other way to light but these hands
I hear the call ice river running
smell the border smell of it passing
all the names are mine

you're talking to the sky again

clouds round on things, on thought
dug to get to somewhere the dark is true
in some head there's still anything glints
we see into an edge is always shining, cleaves

this thimble's depth sea
goes up with one spark

the coffin grows into a tree

stars alight at my stop
here's the dream in which sets sail
love and the springtide strangers singing

see ourselves in the river, the mirror we quaff
nothing our own hands raised

it's the future — far as the blue of frayed edges, paws
the other trying to get in

time returns to the clock's shell

to the sea which bore it
time takes the heart in entrails down the moon in
burlap

we swallow all there is of time

from where you have fallen still a way to go
and heaven that vanishing coin, speck
blue as it was all those ages back

the dead whom we've loved

in the bones of the soul go with us
they do not require the silence of prayer
they do not know which way we carry

what is it eyes shine with?

some channel where the static's true

in bitter woods Pray, Lord. We are near.

a glut of track led day blind dice to try

pray to us God you might still get through

flower and stone

so far down in the dream day will never get there

the animal radiant in motion

still as against the page of crossings

the open hour stands seasons in it

the wheel speaks does the street ask after?

ink drifts a curlicue to pen

the soul is smoke points up

a flowering gun so self-devouring

we'll dig ourselves out of this wind

perch of wax

to be stuttered to be the rubble owl

we're bigger than death we of breath

say it

swear take down the tides

in a half clock trees go walking

we're stuck in the ground

green dumb with wonder sap stilled

tongues stuck still we have our expectations

won't believe in fate

be the candle at both ends

drown me in the flame

assume a shape of sleep

little night be nothing habitation stone
in grief which hums for ages hence

recite the breath between
no one will find us lain so flat
 among the godfled stars



in heaven

the text of every letter never written
thoughts too naïve or clever to think

it'll all be alright, it'll all be alright
that's what they say when the end is near

in heaven
the gentle sound
of water running

in hell
a dripping tap

trees and stars

each to their hours
dawn dusk their exhalations
fade one to the other
and better than spires
their straight standing
and better than prayers
their silence

hubris

now the woodcutter
takes down the shadows of trees
all that is left to him
all that remains of the once proud
and he fells himself at last

ants rise to worship
where the birds spoke light
only the fierce sun stands

Macao: Apostrophe

Macao

I would like you to stop at the crossing for me
and without cursing
and not just for me
what-the-hell
for yourself

Macao

I would like you to smoke less
not to spit the bones out on the table
to clear your throat less noisily
what do you expect? I'm a *gweilo*

Macao

if your mobile goes off once more
in a concert
I'm going to crush it under my big cowboy boot
I know it will be noisy but think of my pleasure
and how we might then all hear the song

not waving but drowning

when the nation thinks of me
what fondnesses kick in
our childhood together
the dead in their subterranean marches

how far I've come and where will I venture?

reminds me of the rise and rise
this one long day we've spent
following the penny and the kangaroo
like a hoop over hills away

in a far sunlit kitchen
decades gone
with bread in its yearning
to pass through us
in its golden wheat wish
to wave once again

to tend

to tend the gods as given, as found
new habits of homage are required

in word untamed, in sight unframed
paths to follow are so chosen,
by you, for you, willing, blind

go to the makers
not to the mockers
take the trouble to tell them apart

dust of the world you're sleeping off
lonely under feats of self
but work outlasts if you stay with the tune
survives you and the all-that-wearied

mockers, thieves and smug ignorers
in the end they scale away

so

get the toxins out of your system
protect yourself
protect your spark

light in the eyes may be derided
spring in the step, its menace is met

but you, brave maker
face the dark without, within

for you the tale untold doffs cap
the wheels take on their fated spin

if you'll remember one injunction

go to the makers
never the mockers

tend to the habits of homage
you've found

a round

it's not the fear of falling
it's just the fear you'll jump

like the fear you'll find a calling
the fear of joining up

it's not the fear you'll come to grief
it's the grief of fear that's come

it's not the fear of falling
it's just the fear you'll jump

gods are gone

gone over seas
(how bored Hermes gets with messages,
Zaqar travels in our dreams)
skies are wracked with gods
(Zeus and Indra, Fen Lung, Set)

they pop up out of foreheads, thighs
wombs at a pinch
gods are earth emergent, born from eggs
and fall through cracks

gods give us grief and meaning leers
they make a place holy
the way whimsical saints will
but theirs is no monomania
they were each born with portfolio

the gods as marble as immortal
they board the life raft in an orderly manner

gods are with us watching
all because they're gone

unnumbered aphorism

you take it apart
the night with your hands
the argument by tooth and claw

takes a lifetime to become a ghost
for flesh and bone to wear right through
so that the soul sees daylight

in my incunabula

tv was eternity
there was always the promise of snow

fingers ribbon black with fiddling
type and leading shaky
some characters filled in
keys stuck

I never had a golfball
or anything selectric

I was scribe of the old school
still scribble to this day

kettle and fan for company
no silent night
my fridge was rocket ship in kitchen then
never quite took off

a record would jump
then sometimes it wouldn't stop
into the early hours like that
even then were things
you couldn't quite switch off

and on the screen for company
blue loungeroom bathing of the former age
no true colour we could call
ceiling and floor shrunk
we stared into the light

of alien transmission
the vertical
the horizontal
our whole world
all in thrall
to a simple dying star



where was I

when the tree became me
mid-flight, like an arrow's twang
the arrow, too, is tree was, will be

we sing and point the sky in rising
neither fall
but the moment's
all time felled

where was I
taken root and branch
efflorescences of wing lit
grub got

am I so swayed
but a breeze is limb

where was the instant
green became me
danger was outrun

because I took
the tide to heart
and made a moon
my mood

and meant
where no word would

ashen I bent to turn the man
where? where was I just then?

fantasy here at home

it may be the acres keep me at bay
but on them there's always still somewhere to go

I want a burrow, a bird's nest, shoe, straw bales
and turf roof, a caravan rotted in wattle and daub
tin of the wind come through

huff and I'll puff, it all buries, blows down

in the last age a tiny stone cottage
where the bush cosies up

walls lapidary worn
just the one room
words in its echo
never quite fading
and that will be tomb tardis of choice

big enough for a virtual age
where all there's to know
crowds the head of a pin
so a pin head like me
may still hear the birds
from a tiny stone cottage
the bush elbows in

my bones beyond me

I wish they'd be of use somehow
could be oracles or bobbins
a needle? sinew for thread?

at least a stick to poke the fire
to toss about
invent a game?

or rod to measure
maybe mass for a beam balance scales?

ear wax extractor?
flute, or necklace, speartip to kill
blade to carve the beast once felled?

my enemies have plastic bling
such is the age I'm to leave

motherbones became a sturdy race
with me it's everything points to ash

my skull
a cup of course
but it never held much of note in life
was ever apt to leak

this is for instance

going on past the grave

one fancies the bare bones
object of contemplation

please just forget my name

keep this book

better than sutras
no need to chant
or strike a gong
just hang it on a string
around your neck
it'll make your day

walk with it
sleep with it
read it out loud
quote it at will
make sure you've
memorised
every last line

then when it
falls apart
you're the glue
and the book
will keep you
together

advice for poets

worship the earth
the all we have
sun for warmth
and stars from which time
worship with hands
and love hands too
with the heart give
with each breath be given
do this with each word

Flying Islands' Pocket Books of Poetry

Kit Kelen: A Pocket Kit

Steven Schroeder: A Water Planet / 施羅德：地水行星

Yao Feng: Great Wall Capriccio and Other Poems / 姚風：長城隨想及其它

Huang Libai: Feed Birds Rainbows / 黃禮孩：給飛鳥餵食彩虹

Wang Minyun: Snowrose / 王明韻：六月雪

Chan Lai Kuen: City of Dead Stars / 陳麗娟：亡星之城

Beth Spencer: The Party of Life

Jan Dean: Paint Peels, Graffiti Sings

Mark Tredinnick: Almost Everything I Know / 馬克·卓狄尼：藍翠鳥

Philip Salom: Between Yes and No / 非利·盛隆：是與非之間

Iman Budhi Santosa: Faces of Java / Wajah-wajah Jawa

Richard James Allen: Fixing the Broken Nightingale

Dan Disney: Mannequin's Guide to Utopias / 丹·迪斯尼：通往烏托邦的人偶指南

Exhibit: Judy Johnson / 朱迪·約翰遜：展覽

Jean Kent: The Language of Light / 珍·肯特：光之語

Papa Osmubal: The Only True Eye

John Bennett: Pocket Diary

Greg McLaren: After Han Shan / 格雷格·麥克拉倫：讀寒山

Alan Jefferies: Seem / 謝雅崙：似乎

Pam Brown: Anyworld

Philip Hammial: The Beast Should Comply / 菲力普·漢米爾：野獸應該順從

Anna Couani: Small Wonders / 安娜·古安烈：小小美

Rae Desmond Jones: Decline and Fall / 雷·戴斯蒙德·瓊斯：衰落與滅亡

<http://asmacao.org>

<http://flyingislands.org>

