

# NEW POETS

In Emma Rooksby's *Time Will Tell* we enter a realm both distinctly physical and gesturing beyond the here and now. These poems, matter-of-fact as they seem, feel the silence and darkness pressing against our material world, where all is subject to time and change. Rooksby's is a new voice of impressive poise and restraint.

Scott-Patrick Mitchell's *{where n equals}* a *determinacy of poetry* draws us into the sensuous and playful side of language, unafraid of experiment and suggestion, willing to go where words, intellect and emotion lead. This is an intense and exuberant work, charged with bodily and erotic energy, the power of scent, taste and the visual, as well as joyful contemplation of love and connection. Mitchell's poetry is confident, assured, and opens new ground.

J.P. Quinton's *Little River* introduces an individual and exciting talent to Australian poetry. Quirky, ironic, informed, the poems are passionately engaged with the human and natural in their evocations of life around the Swan River. There is humour in the poems, tinged with a sense of the absurd and the need to look mortality directly in its ever-present face. Surprising, confronting, colloquial — there is nothing else quite like *Little River*.

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## Drink

The papasan was big enough for two  
but only if we were intimate.  
You, flagon in one hand, patted the embrasure  
left by your shunted bum with the other.  
I settled right on the lip, only a short slide  
to your lap, your loose embrace  
and your reeking divagations on local girls  
lying down, offering *droit de seigneur*,  
blent with your one true love, she of  
raven tresses (mine blonde), and your failure  
ever to tear her mouth from the wineskin  
long enough to put three words together.  
Struggling up I apologised, to have heard  
such confessions from a stranger.  
Eyes glazed, you declared that  
you loved me, and fell asleep, curled  
in the papasan like a puppy, clutching your flagon.

## Flood

The water's bobbing higher against the markers;  
it's no longer safe to drive the underpass  
where we'd disturb the drowned body of a fox.

Having always dreamed the ocean would rise  
and infiltrate the city by the cuttings  
you hang steadily on the wheel, undiverted,  
winging the car through to our house on the hill  
where neglect gives the world high colours,  
and lives decay with the weight of creation.

There we wait, you and I and the troupe  
of motley players, doubting the fine skies,  
expecting the flood to make us an island,  
preceded perhaps by a long stream of beasts  
seeking higher ground; at last a golden light  
shone on corpses, debris and the open sea.

### **Blakely's red gums**

Despite decades of drought  
red gums are somehow holding on  
in the paddocks, left for the cattle  
to cluster by: grey cattle-trees,  
skin furred and mottled;  
long angular limbs,  
and a round low belly.

We're only passing, don't pause  
like the cattle would, to rest,  
flicking flies from their flanks.  
A glance out the window's enough  
to register everything:  
the sparse bundled branches,  
patched green crowns  
and the empty earth around.

## Summer

Summer's coming in and cockatoos  
are arriving by the busload, their raucous shrieks  
so many calls for rain. Salmon gums  
are splitting their sides in the heat; new skin  
gleams in the fissures, an invitation  
to wasp and spider, pardalote.

Summer weeds turn unnatural reds,  
fill the air with loose seed, with flailings,  
lift-offs, winged landings on swards  
fed unstintingly from stout barrels.  
Run-off's a saviour sought by birds  
perched on withered hakea, tinderbox wattle,  
behind leaves turned parallel to the sun,  
under vast conveyor belts of cloud.

**pillow book.**

1.

have collected

: dew from a  
white rose

: the wet aftertaste  
of a weekend  
come Monday morning

: the train station, a  
background clip  
clop of  
coordinates, where an  
old shanty rattling the  
tracks pulls a carriage  
off

.

2.

have memorised

: the freefall flutter imprint  
tanned autumn leaves  
make as they draw diagrams  
on pavement

: a moment complete with  
crunch & whipped circles

: rain, redundant as  
brittle thin brown  
basks in decomposition

: self as composer  
, dotting staves in reverse  
, admiring winter's baton

3.

flourish segued season

. minuets scatter the sidewalk  
as constant orchestral prelude

. the double bar double  
dot of repeat one finds  
at the end of a sheet

4.

tree as clef

, month as score

5.

human paths are where  
notes roll along

6.

have walked & sung  
each syllable of this  
, thinking perhaps to extend  
  
, & then some  
  
. some other phrase tucked away  
behind all this wide-eyed sleeping  
  
, mind as pillow book  
  
, each poem a sheath with which  
to origami the scent of lotus, jasmine  
.

7.

an ivory comb straightening hair  
  
. making sense to make untangle  
  
.

8.

as patient as blossom  
unfurling to recognise  
its own smell  
  
.

9.

leaf,  
, tasting surging sap,  
, knowing it has a place,  
construction language makes

.

10.

a petal seduced  
with dew

.

11.

the notes  
in-between echo  
while  
ten thousand words  
pillow

.

12.

reading work  
moths  
kiss the light

.

**from HERE on in, cranes...**

have long legs  
, glide gazelle-like

, fish as though  
casting

strange shapes  
across a lake

. coy rocks  
ripple

, rake arousal as  
flock

slipstreams up, their  
wait startled

...

**everyone knows what pelicans look like**

these pelicans appear evenly  
, sitting on lampposts  
along the Kwinana  
heading north, toward the city  
  
. these pelicans look at heaven  
& all they can muster is a yawn  
  
. they have no interest  
in the myth & astrology  
humans have wedged  
into the dawning night sky  
  
. the unmerging bumper exhaust  
sloth chaos beneath them  
is also a human distraction  
  
. occasionally a car crash  
sparkling glass bitumen  
diamond glints their attention  
  
, but they do not dive  
  
. instead they eye  
, are engrossed by  
the algae-blossoming swan  
rivering fishes to swim  
the indian sun  
  
.

## **Field Inversion**

All of our vases  
Struggle to keep the flowers;  
So we invent fields.

## Epistemology

Twenty years is nothing in contrast to a daylong heat wave  
Experience three similar dark  
The traveller thinks a sublime expert.  
Poles restrict sight lines,  
Of a chair, some pretty young ladies  
Listen to words written by Wordsworth  
Knowing he does not own them  
Like a stolen poem.

Forget all the boring details  
People get fussy, settle down, κ-9  
Lying on the road as if it were a goner.  
Matted oily hair, wettish.  
Picked up like a wig  
Clung to earth

Separatists.

In middle-class suburbs  
There is a hesitancy to analyse music.  
All music.

In late September a young, average-looking woman  
Separates from the man she thought she'd marry.

Tiny whisperings in the back of your mind  
Amount to diffidence, you wouldn't  
Notice unless you took the time.

Plastic novelty-sized blow-up hammers  
Tributary their way  
Meta discourse entered:

Each cryptic crossword puzzle designer  
Maintains a balanced exercise regime,  
Any deviation may spell ocean.

Discourse ends.

Sacrosanct.

At the party, new friends, new words  
Time making metaphors objects  
Young boy considers being old.  
Selects a Redskin out of a plethora of show bags  
Thirteen years later chooses one girl.

At night the night may as well be the river  
Which is verily a car park.

Elastic tricks the eye. The walk home precarious.  
Fill the Olympic swimming pool with concrete  
Change seats, five more stops.....

## Moving Powerlines

Above the flaking 30s building  
Splays a strato-cloud-dotted sky  
That, when combined, mark the  
Border for our ephemeris powerlines.

Some stand on the street, staring  
For hours, stopping traffic,  
Some want to look  
Further along.

Some, in the airconditioned bus  
Slouch their bodies  
With their necks leering,  
With or without sentiment.

Not a festoon of golf flags  
Or a trellis of party lights  
The long line of our lives  
Sees no end, only splices.

## The Opposite of Spring

makenosense the opposite of spring  
 surfing in a plane—up there—want to  
 say lots / little time / just sit / a picture  
 in our minds shared with the mouth

airport smiles and trials / luggage  
 what music / have you been listening?  
 whatever works ... the sun is hot  
 itglistensharshlikestrobe scarsleavesbrown

the landscape is open airport arms  
 the unground north house full  
 of machines, numbers, hands he  
 jumped, rested on a kerb walkers

peel frustration off backs as if scales  
 two eyes are one when open  
 —youidnthavetogoawaytoknowthat—  
 the ones that go out look in