

Jennifer Maiden

Drones and Phantoms

Giramondo Poets



Jennifer Maiden

## Drones and Phantoms

*Drones and Phantoms* is a powerful successor to Jennifer Maiden's prize-winning book *Liquid Nitrogen*, with her characteristic interweaving of personal and public forms of address evident in each poem, and through the collection as a whole. The poems may be thought of as conversations, not only between the poet and the reader, but in a quite literal way, between historical and political figures such as Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, Jane Austen and Tanya Plibersek, Queen Victoria and Tony Abbott, Mandela and Obama, who are called to appear in the world of poetry to discuss their anxieties and ethical insecurities with each other. There are also poems on the Cypriot financial crisis, the refugees on Manus Island, Judith Wright, Julia Gillard, the Copenhagen giraffe killing and Russian power in the Crimea. Maiden's writing is remarkable both for its interrogative power, and its expression of vulnerability, in her subjects, and in the poet herself.

Jennifer Maiden's three most recent books with Giramondo have all won major prizes. *Friendly Fire* won the Age Book of the Year Award and was shortlisted for the Judith Wright Calanthe Award; *Pirate Rain* won the Age Book of the Year Award and the NSW Premier's Prize for Poetry; and *Liquid Nitrogen* was shortlisted for the international Griffin Poetry Prize and won both the Victorian Premier's Award for Poetry and the Victorian Premier's Literature Award. She is a recipient of the Christopher Brennan Award for lifetime achievement.

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GIRAMONDO

**Jennifer Maiden** | Drones and Phantoms

*New Poems*



**GIRAMONDO POETS**

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**Jennifer Maiden** | Drones and Phantoms

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**For Katharine**

## **Other poetry books by Jennifer Maiden**

*Tactics*

*The Problem of Evil*

*The Occupying Forces*

*Mortal Details* (includes short stories)

*Birthstones*

*The Border Loss*

*For the Left Hand*

*The Trust*

*Bastille Day*

*Selected Poems*

*The Winter Baby*

*Acoustic Shadow*

*Mines*

*Friendly Fire*

*Pirate Rain*

*Intimate Geography*

*Liquid Nitrogen*

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'Diary Poem: Uses of Cosiness', 'Hillary and Eleanor 10: The Coppice', 'So That's Who Those Motorbikes Were', 'George Jeffreys 15: The Fourth Terrace', 'The Reflection' and 'Maps in the Mind' were published in the chapbook *The Violence of Waiting* (Vagabond). 'George Jeffreys 15: The Fourth Terrace' was commissioned by The Poet's Voice for their project on Dante's *Purgatorio*. 'Diary Poem: Uses of Silence' was commissioned by *Cordite* for their issue on 'Silence'.

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**Australian Government**



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## Diary Poem: Uses of Live Odds

When I was young, I wrote that poor men  
do not belong in rich men's houses, thinking  
of Forbes visiting more comfortable  
poets who were into Real Estate, but  
there is also the memory of a sanguine  
real Real Estate mogul saying  
privately that they liked it when  
the Labor Party was in power, as  
Labor cost less to bribe. When I  
was even younger than that, and  
scrutineering for the Labor Party  
in Penrith, I remember the Council  
room for scrutineering was a recently  
vacated illegal casino, complete  
with roulette tables on which we  
carefully watched the spread and check  
of electoral tallies: a wealth  
of emerald, furry velvet and those little  
merry-go-rounds in the middle.  
In Sydney, of course,  
the same establishments remained  
functional where many won and lost  
knighthoods and rewards from  
'Run-Over-the-Bastards' Askin. What  
I remember most, though, about  
gambling is the superbly lovely face

of a female croupier on the transponder  
of a Chinese gambling satellite, flicked  
past when I had the satellite  
receiver. I returned to it,  
just to see her sometimes: one  
of the most beautiful things you'd ever  
see in the sky, despite the utter  
mystery of how the gambling worked,  
the Chinese having a special  
binary genius for it: a rich  
man's house for all poor men on earth.

## Offshore

Sappho did call  
her 'Cypriot', after all.  
If I were Hope, I'd write Aphrodite  
birthing on a Cyprus Beach, in  
sapphires of ejaculatory foam,  
to wonder how much she could still  
withdraw from her savings, to scoff  
she wasn't a Russian launderer, but  
about to extinguish it all, just  
a native coming home.

## Diary Poem: Uses of Cosiness

Emboldened by sharing, briefly, the same publisher as Frieda Hughes, I looked up an article on her latest collection, found a photo of her living room, which seemed welcoming, well-ordered, English-cosy, complete with three Maltesers and a live rehabilitating owl, like something utterly seductive from Alison Uttley. I thought of Plath describing ‘owl-talons’ of depression ‘clenching’ her heart, remembered my view that Plath’s writing is political, its context the savage U.S. Empire of the 50s and 60s, hence its citing the execution of the Rosenbergs at the start of *The Bell Jar*, the fears of U.S. expansion in her diaries. The metaphors about Nazis in her poems are more about Nazis than about those who she compared the Nazis to. In balance, she is often housey and cosy, which out of context seems Not-Feminist, but in context is sane microcosming amidst punitive systems of power. She painted furniture, did craft and decorated cottages and rooms,  
bright like

the make-up in *The Bell Jar*, desperate  
for humanity and control. If you  
slid out of line they electrocuted you  
like Julius and Ethel, if you tried to  
appease them with neat suicide, save  
anything,  
they burned out your nerves with power,  
if  
they spied that your heart misgave.

## **The Day of Atonement**

Out in the bush in the night, alive  
eyes glow with insecurity. I wrote  
a novel, *Complicity*, loved by  
some feminists, hated by others, the  
ones who need a tone made hard  
by ethical security, the ones  
who love that tone in Gillard. I wrote  
many things which all, like me,  
are ethically insecure. I cloak  
an affinity with some Christians  
like Rudd or sometimes Abbott, whose  
eyes glow with their insecurity  
about ethics, born unsure. I wrote  
one manuscript *Complicity*, destroyed  
by the ethically secure, but out  
in the still bush in the soft night eyes  
glow with insecurity, survive  
complicit with the dark.

## **Drones and Phantoms**

Gillard said her hair would look uncontrollable if she made a Disc Jockey's Rolls Royce phantom convertible her work car. McTernan ordered her shaking PR team to emulate General Patton, shoot the opposition first. Obama says his drones are needed to destroy the opposition overseas, includes Americans who are a direct threat but adds other target threats can be less direct. Gillard said her hair would go wild in a Rolls, that she would look like 'Cousin It'. Obama says use of drones will be now under more control, in case he lost the power to use them, as Bush lost torture and rendition, stray sop to public opinion, while some other indirect country considers surrender and its teasing leader's unlucky hairdresser gives up.

## Diary Poem: Uses of Ethiopia

This art likes doves:

Ethiopian art: stylised starry pastels  
stylised flowers, graceful faces, medieval  
icons realistic about slender-naped  
pastel madonnas with vaguely  
self-conscious peaceful visages like  
mother doves and like them, too,  
aware of complex peripheries,  
well-mannered with watchfulness,  
still.

Two doves touch beaks like a crest  
above a profuse painting.

Having observed that the unorthodox  
feminists who liked my *Complicity*  
manuscript did not object to works  
being ethically insecure – as is  
all my work – and that  
some offended feminists who hated  
the manuscript were well in favour  
of ethical security, well radiated,  
hence their fandom for Gillard later,  
and having offended a usually  
calm editor by trying  
to inhabit Abbott interestedly,

I do believe it time  
to discuss the difference between Pankhursts.

Although feminists,  
Emmeline and Christabel supported  
World War One and were socially  
orthodox. Sylvia, although feminist,  
hated World War One,  
had a thing with Keir Hardie  
and a son with someone Italian,  
whom she refused to marry,  
to the horror of Emmeline, her mother.

The boy  
was enthusiastic about his mother  
and they survived happily  
in Ethiopia after Sylvia supported  
that country against Mussolini. Sylvia  
was an Ethiopian hero. The feminism  
obviously part of that but not  
expressed to the point of aborting  
a valuable number: her son, or having  
too much truck about his father. No wonder  
Gillard cut the Single Mothers's money:  
anything  
to separate a hero from the numbers.

A priori,  
one knows women's right to abortion, but  
men in my observation urge women  
to abort somewhat more often than they'd rather.  
And with whom, then, will we stand  
up for Ethiopia? We

are discussing Ethiopia, not famine. Sylvia  
wrote a history of Ethiopian art. No doubt  
her son in Ethiopia keeps copies. My daughter  
the fire tiger just defended me  
on a hostile magazine site now given  
to ethical self-security. We should not  
surrender too many numbers to the need  
for perfect independence, perfect time.  
I have noticed that dove-chicks feed  
differently to some other birds, pecking  
open the parental beak for milk,  
not waiting gape-mouthed. Ethiopian  
art crowds back to me again,  
not radiating security smugly, lines  
profuse as anxious doves.

## **Digging for Hoffa**

The FBI gave up again,  
left a field in Michigan  
ploughed by front end loaders, but  
the body wasn't there, perhaps  
compacted to tinkerbelle size  
in a car boot, still alive  
on the Amazon, who knows?  
As you do, he used  
each bureaucracy to fight  
another bureaucracy, the Mafia  
against Big Money, the Teamsters  
pro and con the Mafia, a Kennedy  
or two, each viewed  
by all the rest as traitors. The  
FBI gave up again. His children –  
a judge and a legitimate  
trade union leader – were long ago  
reconciled to the emptiness  
of air and field and car park  
where he was, or like  
the FBI gave up again: a field  
in Michigan as if a thousand trucks  
had revved up there at dawn.

## **Hillary and Eleanor: The Coppice**

*(Hillary Clinton has said that she talks to Eleanor Roosevelt when stressed)*

Hillary Clinton woke up on Wimbledon Common  
in the late nineteenth century in a deep  
warm coppice of evergreens just like  
the one she'd drowsed off in at home  
when she'd walked to her own fence,

waiting

for Bill to come back from campaigning  
out of habit in the town. The partner  
here, however, wasn't Bill but Eleanor  
who sat on an ancient wood bench,  
patting the space beside her, with  
the round guileless smile of a pet  
or lover. Hillary ran through a golden glade  
to her in case she vanished somehow, but  
somehow Eleanor never vanished: 'Dear,'  
she exclaimed as they sat, 'I've been so  
concerned about you, I thought  
for a long time where would be best  
to bring you and this place  
was the one I most remembered  
as medicinal and beautiful. Near here,  
I went to school and was happy. There  
is a handsome old house built for  
the Spencers and a fine lake made

huge and tranquil from many  
half-hearted little brooks, I believe  
by Capability Brown...’  
‘Yes, all lovely,’  
broke in Hillary, just impatient  
for the rhythmic pat of that old palm  
on her relaxing fingers, ‘Very lovely,  
but Eleanor...’  
‘You know, for a bit  
I thought the Headmistress must have been  
American because we had so many  
easy conversations but then I recalled she  
was actually French and that it was in  
that language we spoke. Oh, dear, I  
was such a clever girl, so full of promise...’  
‘You must,’ said Hillary, ‘have been very  
worried about me to bring me here...’  
‘Well, yes: the way you fainted  
and hit your head and the blood clot  
and outside the hospital, leaving  
and clutching Chelsea’s fingers...’ ‘And  
the drones and that Bin Laden episode  
of Reality TV,’ added Hillary, before  
the old lady added them herself. ‘Yes,’  
said Eleanor without variation, ‘I thought  
watching live assassinations, some of them  
involving children wouldn’t be all that  
helpful for your health, dear, whether  
we speak of the arteries or soul, indeed  
to have trapped oneself as an audience

to prove oneself an actor isn't what  
I would ever want for you, but let's sit  
and watch that tiny incandescent rain  
fall on those shivering leaves. I've not  
seen them for over a century.' Her hand  
seemed much larger than Hillary's now, had  
stilled and covered it all like the pod  
around a seed. The golden head  
no longer felt tight or weary, but  
she suddenly said, as if in confession:  
'His tongue hung out after they shot him,  
and, Eleanor, he didn't have a gun.'  
'Yes, everyone knows, dear, Bin Laden  
had no gun at that time. And  
the drones...' 'Were the C.I.A., not me.  
It was supposed to be because they  
could no longer practise torture. Eleanor...!'  
The rainlight dusked in the coppice:  
'You know, Franklin did some awful things  
with power. I told him he just sat  
back and watched Pearl Harbour, and  
he never could quite justify  
all things in the name of war. We  
weren't the right people for excuses.  
And neither, dear, are you. Come along,  
now, you're not so tired. We can  
stroll down to the lovely lake and see  
the old house and Princess Diana, maybe.

She comes here, too, I'm told. 'I  
wouldn't know what to say to her,'  
worried Hillary, but Eleanor: 'She  
doesn't talk much here, just sings.  
The old Spencer House was gone before  
her time, indeed her century, but  
she comes back to see it and the water,  
just as  
I wanted to see my school.' The song  
when they heard it was lazily full  
of mischief, pretending at the half-  
remembered: 'The Wombles of Wimbledon  
Common are we...' as the singer  
sat by the lake with her arms  
around her knees and her strong chin  
sharply upon them, a small smile, the words  
murmured in daisy cotton, but  
as resonant as the breeze. 'This  
was a deer park with many hundreds  
of deer,' said Eleanor, and Hillary  
knew that if she spoke the fawn might fly,  
but she had to say, 'You were very brave  
about the landmines and the AIDS.'  
The head as shiny as a rainy coppice  
rose and the smile was just like Eleanor's  
in its quick self-forgetful pleasure.  
They walked on to the mansion, which  
to Hillary seemed American, as if

translated from her town or Boston, all  
wooden lines and half-natural planning,  
thrown at last on the mercy of trees. When they  
returned, there was no sign of the princess,  
but they found the bench again, were overarched  
by the thirstless tongues of forest in the rain.  
'They seem too volitional, too living, as  
if trapped in fever,' she complained to Eleanor,  
but the old lady clasped her hand, and the prison  
calmed slowly back to sleep's peaceful garden.

## **‘So That’s Who Those Motorbikes Were’**

Mother Teresa woke up near Princess Diana in a particularly beautiful part of Wimbledon Common near where the old Spencer House had stood.

Diana did not usually brood, however now she was wistfully, stilly alone and Teresa sat beside her. Diana did not often talk of her murder, except at the inquest and occasionally laughing she’d been ‘topped’, but she seemed serious now and finally said, ‘So that’s who those motorbikes were...I remember the Fiat that hit the car and the huge light that flashed and how long I was kept bleeding in the ambulance, and thought the press had only cars, except one, so who were the motorbikes, but that it was the SAS as such seems so crude somehow.’ Teresa understood Diana’s fear of crudity, they both the most vulnerable of creatures, but she felt in herself a flinching away from the idea of Diana dying, Diana still the most living thing for her, Teresa who had been so compelled to deathbeds in her life. She knew that she should pay heed

to this deathbed again, but fought a compulsion to cheer Diana up, did say, ‘My darling, it is wonderful news about William giving up his uniform to be more with his baby and to rescue elephants.’

Elephants –

and a baby, of course – were exactly what Diana had wanted for that son, but she still worried about Harry, who had killed so many in Afghanistan that she’s had to urge him back to her landmine charity, although in truth that odd discrepancy had never been sorted out. But ‘elephants’: her eyes were like stars at sea again at Teresa’s comfort. She knew the last thing Teresa needed psychologically was to process another deathbed, but with no one could she converse more easily, and the old brown hand was so practised at soothing any doubt except her own. Diana asked, ‘It surely wasn’t Dodi who made them paranoid, it must have been the landmines and the fact that I was aiming for all their other salesmen after that? The landmines were just the start?’ Teresa laughed, ‘You did not do pacifism by halves, my dearest princess. But, yes, I think Dodi

was the least of their worries. Perhaps he was an excuse to make the murder seem less plausible, or just what they call “collateral damage”, but we must mourn for all who love us, as’ – at last she found the words – hand in hand in the wildflower garden – ‘We will now mourn for ourself.’ They clung together for a long time, nodded to and fro until a revived Diana asked Teresa what she knew of elephants.

## **'I've done this wrongly before'**

All is as it should be in the winter  
gold of the Canberra morning, light  
needing aid from the ceiling lamps, light  
shining in gold air, gold hair, the Governor  
General golden with grace. Dietrich  
Bonhoeffer quiet at the back, except  
to smile at the fretting baby. All  
is as it should be as Rudd signs  
serious with trepidation, eager  
to find the line correctly: 'I've  
done this wrongly before,' he explains  
to the Governor General, but all  
is as it should be now. The light  
is steady gold, the low bowl of flowers  
hints practical continuity, beauty  
of the gold growing day which catches  
them on the steps as it should, his grin  
glows at last like his wife's, whose hand  
Bonhoeffer only saw him grasp for power.

## **The reflection**

*(Kevin Rudd has named Dietrich Bonhoeffer as his inspiration)*

Kevin Rudd woke up on a plane from New Guinea.  
These days he relied on Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
to awake him from his nightmares. Sure  
enough, the kindly face was there. 'This  
nightmare,' confessed Kevin, 'was a corker:  
a young girl sobbed at a terminal, held  
her husband's shrunken head on a stick. Why  
are all nightmares so racist, Dietrich?'  
In the window, his reflection looked  
older now, as Bonhoeffer's was younger:  
like a parent who died long before,  
but Dietrich was still there, afraid for him  
but a dispeller still of fears. 'From my culture,'  
soothed Bonhoeffer indirectly, 'you've explained  
that torture does not discourage murder, even  
if you import thousands in planes, export  
thousands of suffering cattle, deport  
bewildered seafarers violent with waiting.  
Have you become violent with waiting?  
In prison I began myself to calculate  
some very odd equations. Numbers  
you know are always deadly.' Kevin's  
hand was small, soft, hyper  
in his grasp. They sat together, as  
cold clouds of Sydney locked around their sleep.

## Victoria and Tony 1: A Useful Fan

Queen Victoria woke up near the embers of a burnt-out gum, where Tony Abbott dozed lightly in his capacity as Volunteer Firefighter. Her copy of his publication, *The Minimal Monarchy* proved a useful fan for her. Active charity work always seemed to her odd, like Mr. Gladstone combing the streets for ladies to reform, but she supposed being Leader of her Opposition was still the cause of great frustration. Abbott seeing her at last felt huge relief that she wasn't Santamaria, Mannix or Loyola, with all of whom he'd grown deeply tired of conversation. 'Mam,' he implored, 'I do not despise women,' since she looked motherly not minimal and seemed to understand him with her owlet gaze. She saw the genuine stillness of hurt, did not point out that electorally it would not matter, said 'Some woman has flirted with you, then attacked you and you expected goodness, just as my dear Mr. Disraeli required Mr. Gladstone to provide him a radical context. But one cannot always rely on the enemy's rightness, a flirt not to attack one after flirting. That is what

the flirtatious always do. Concern yourself, as Mr. Gladstone would, with the single mothers she impoverished on that very day.' 'As Mr. Disraeli also would,' he added, for the mercy from her fierce woman's eyes.

## Victoria and Tony 2: The Blackburn

Queen Victoria woke up at another backburn, still  
fanning herself with the copy of The Minimal  
Monarchy Tony Abbott had signed for her, and still  
scrutinising him anything but minimally, with  
shrewd fierce woman's eyes he'd chosen  
instead of predictable Santamaria,  
old Loyola. 'Albert and Mr. Disraeli,'  
she observed, 'Would not have advised gunboats  
to re-deliver those seeking refuge  
on an earlier shore.' He wiped the black  
fine fire sweat from his face, 'I know it  
seems expensive melodrama, but  
there is a faction within my party,  
Ma'am, which would have me gone  
unless I do something symbolic. I have  
already thrown them sops about  
the unions and a charge for public health.  
My own view is Santamaria's: wealth  
is agrarian and equal for all,  
and the all should be made of many.' She  
nodded, 'I see some wisdom there,  
but to exclude the most eager  
seems wasteful and those gunboats have  
what my dear Albert would have seen

as extravagance of a similar nature  
to that of real war.' He sighed  
like fire lost in the branchtops, said  
'But, Ma'am, inside me everything is war.'

### **Victoria and Tony 3: Woods and Feathers**

Queen Victoria woke up in Port Moresby where Tony Abbott was subject to welcome by a chorus of tribesmen fully dressed in woods and feathers. She had a soft spot for loud highlanders, waited entertained for him to come and sit beside her on the dais. He did sit beside her, shyly, and she felt again for him a most enormous pity, smiled, 'Good afternoon, Sir Anthony Abbott,' knowing it would please him heartbreakingly, although truly she'd never have attempted 'Lord Beaconsfield' with her dear Mr. Disraeli. This Mr. Abbott surprisingly lacked the grain of salt. Seated in his sitting room politely, she had watched Downton Abbey with him and family, but his need for that would certainly bewilder one more confused than she.

Indeed,  
it seemed at odds with his religion:  
not Papal: more a rival monarchy  
with aristocrats not earned by rites  
and oaths, and he seemed more  
a Protestant praying grace than a Confucian.

She thought: his private revolution  
yearns to be a British not a Papal Knight.  
It no doubt in his own mind kept him safe.

He smiled,

‘Good afternoon, Ma’am,’ as if to some manor  
born, explained, ‘I have inherited a gaol  
now, and wish the inmates to be  
settled here, if any refugee  
be genuine. I do not lack compassion,’  
but she felt his desperation. ‘We Victorians,’  
she reminded him, ‘Sir Anthony, still  
are not sanguine about prisons.’ He  
studied her uneasily, knew she’d see  
how much of the refugee was real.

## **Victoria and Tony 4: The Minimal Monarch**

Tony Abbott woke up but Queen  
Victoria had left him. He knew  
he was not Albert the Peacemaker,  
not Brown the useful Ghillie, not  
Disraeli distressed at Two Nations, not  
Gladstone saving whores, but  
he'd thought she saw goodness in him,  
though his room was just emptily  
marbled by the moon, her merry  
judging gaze quite gone. He  
could only summon now Santamaria,  
Loyola maybe – to whom all budgets  
would mean less than their wars – however  
tragic for a light-lost Knight alone.

## **Diary Poem: Uses of Judith Wright**

After a couple of reviewers who decided I was not Judith Wright's successor, I began to recall my encounters with Judith herself: the first when I was twenty-one at uni and she was Guest of Honour at a lecture about 'Writing in the Pacific'. Both of us were late and they had locked her out, her hands patting not too enthusiastically at the closed doors for entrance, when I arrived, I guess, at the same time as Skryznecki, who was reportedly at that time her protege. He requested that I take care of her, which, anyway, although a beginning student, I would have done, so she and I headed off to the Union Building, ending up outside at a lone table on a concrete balcony, having a mock debate I started to keep her amused about whether poetry should be about politics, her later work being so political. I argued that the poet's voice should serve the poet not the poet's politics – in fact, a strange position since I'd just finished my *The Problem of Evil* about Vietnam

and other wars – and she maintained  
the importance of the poet’s political  
involvement with a cause. Later that week,  
at a party where she was Guest of Honour,  
she was lost and found in the kitchen  
quietly washing up, which seemed to me  
at the time admirably superior  
if irritating perhaps to her hosts. Of course,  
there was a mountain range of washing up.  
Less I suppose than a decade later,  
she and I were asked together  
to read at the Goethe Institute in Canberra.  
Each lacked confidence, therefore  
conferring, I went first, explaining  
‘the star always goes last’, and we read  
in two relays, twice she second, we each  
reassuring the other about our ability, aided  
oddly  
by an audience of serious Swedes. I never  
I think saw her again, but mutual  
friends described her as cooking omelettes  
with her own mushrooms in Braidwood  
cheerfully. It was good to read  
of her affair with Nugget Coombs, as if  
she would always be a little AWOL,  
always slip the net. I would have liked  
to discuss Braidwood with her,  
where my father was born, where my  
grandfather and grandmother married, he

a half-Indian wide-read young schoolmaster, she  
a wild Feeney daughter with a talent  
for sewing, painting, love and coping.  
Braidwood seemed just right for Judith, but  
the only night I spent there was restless  
in a combi van next to the graveyard. My  
father was pleased I'd seen it, though. No  
doubt Judith and I would both  
be astonished were I successor  
to her, but it's still pleasing to believe  
she likes that she's won our 'war' on politics.  
I'd add, however, that the politics  
is overpowered if empowered by poetry, its  
successor, and which always slips the net.

## The Sweet Sheep Gone

At first  
touched by being sent an editor's  
photo of his charming, cheerful rams  
in their paddock, I realised  
he was about to print a review  
packed with eccentric grammar and very  
centred libel about my book: that my book  
was in league with right ring powers.  
When I complained, he scotched  
the libel but kept the rancour  
and the ghastly grammar and would never  
balance the review more sensibly  
in his introduction, therefore  
I snatched from his clutches  
a perfectly good Eleanor and Hillary, and  
he refused to speak to me further,  
so I suppose  
I'll never see those gorgeous sheep again.  
One could do a diary poem, explore  
the uses of sheep, but the matter  
of discourse on animal welfare is more  
dangerous, as Katharine points out.

At least  
one girl on the internet died for it,  
meeting  
a murderer who arranged to rescue

animals in the bush with her. Women  
fall for the animal lurk all the time.  
One woman kidnapped lengthily in Cleveland  
went to his house to see a puppy  
he offered for her son. Katharine  
ironises surprise that men so often  
on the internet are vegetarian.  
In general, she's too quick and free  
to bother much with irony. I  
listen though when the fire-tiger's eyes  
widen even lucider in focus  
at the first crackle of menace.

Gorgeous eyes  
which first thought that the sheep  
were also gorgeous. We decide to stick  
to the Humane Society, which never did indulge  
in perilous seductions. It is only  
animals who should kidnap the heart.

## Diary Poem: Uses of Frank O'Hara

Years ago when John Forbes praised my later work, he said my *Problem of Evil* was influenced by Tranter's *Red Movie*, and being younger and fiercer, I rang Forbes and explained *P. of E.* was actually written first. The paper printed an apology but wicked Forbes started at once to speculate that Tranter had based *Red Movie* on *P. of E.*, a claim of which I thought I'd better warn Tranter, who laughed:

'Anxieties of Influence,' and that phrase came back to me recently when a reviewer said I'd learned a lot from Frank O'Hara. I explained to my daughter I'd never read O'Hara and she, the Fire Tiger, defended me on those grounds, so the reviewer professed shock that I had never read O'Hara. I wondered: am I shocked myself really that I've never read O'Hara? I do not miss O'Hara, but I said I would write a poem called Frank and I about us. The imaginary O'Hara would confess of course that he has not read me either, despite which we would feel quite at home.

I see us relaxed on a gritty tenement balcony  
on a star-chilled American evening  
with drinks in our numb hands speculating  
why poetry is so much about denying  
what one is not, and why anxiety  
about influence is stubbornly so scary.  
'I've heard you use long lines,' I  
would say, and explain, 'The longer  
lines in my last book were two typos I  
just missed and not an urge to run  
some novel verbal marathon.' He might  
reply, 'My long lines were a try  
at showing poetry is still not prose, however  
long the line and to avoid the slashes  
which Olsen thought pauses for breath.'  
I nod, 'I've used slashes, too, but not  
for that, just to intensify  
and quicken the pace.' We would  
be getting on quite well by then. 'Someday,'  
I'd say, 'I would like to read you, but  
of course now there is my current worry  
that influence might be retrospective,  
and that I'll recognise your hand  
in everything I've written, anyway.' He'd say,  
'I don't think it's likely – aren't  
you more into the lyrical? You look  
sort of more lyrical but that

might be the light.' I would wonder: have I  
aged back to O'Hara's age? He died  
before he turned forty and maybe  
one ages to the time and company.  
Or maybe there are such lost creatures  
as poets and each meeting each at first  
in any place is nervous and newborn,  
under erudite, angry cover. My daughter  
thought the critic was doing the haka. I  
might have done the haka with O'Hara  
had I read him, but in the ever  
new American night I would rather we  
still sat there still, regaining self-  
sense outside the great archives of torture.

## Getting Anne Back

Lucy Maud Montgomery woke up  
on Prince Edward Island in the tourist  
version of Green Gables, as spruce  
with green edges as spring spruces, filled  
with Japanese as joyous as spring birds,  
their syllables as sweet, their passion  
for Anne as pure as treetop dawn,  
while hers was always like the ground  
at the tree's feet, patchworked by rain,  
snow and sun as if all the elements  
were needed to make Anne respectable.  
Her affinity with Anne was often  
intermittent and awkward: its start  
a photo she had clipped of Evelyn Nesbit  
from a magazine: a girl of spirit  
and fine features later to be known  
for causing a crime passionel, and velvet  
swing seat indoors, and a pose  
spreadeagled on white bearskin: teeth,  
head, eyes and all, while in her own  
bedroom Maud had always chosen  
to undress behind a screen. Left  
to her own devices, Anne's swift, sharp spirit  
could have femme fatale in it. These  
Japanese were starving for her traces.  
Maud perched thoughtfully on the quilt

in the little gable room: at least everything was still kept clean. She had always explained that Emily of New Moon with her writing and sense of direction was more like her than Anne. Anne was meant to be a restless soul, rewarded with a True Romance ending, to win over readers calculatedly, even the story of an adopted orphan child having an unexpected gender current at that time in Maude's family, not Maude's own. Remembering Emily Dickinson's 'I like a look of agony because I know it's true' again, and despite amusing readers with Anne's tale of My Graves with wryness, the truest thing in Anne, she thought, was anguish, trembling at the edges not of womanhood but trauma, Anne almost losing the power to grieve which Marilla and Green Gables re-gave the poor, practical, accidental, prattling orphan. Despite Anne's drift into evenness and poised convention in the later books, Maud's patriotic brief bombast in Rilla of Ingleside, Maud didn't quite despair of Anne's ability to despair. 'Did I kill myself for Anne?', she asked a young tourist who photographed her on the bed

thinking her an actress like the young Anne  
downstairs greeting others. Maud was pleased  
the nose on that one was more chiselled  
than the unsuitable nose in the TV version.  
'Pardon?' asked the Japanese, and Maud  
said, 'I took an overdose the night  
I gave my publisher the last Anne, which  
gave her back to grief, and in it  
Anne wrote poems about her son's death  
in World War One and called  
a second war 'abominable'. It was not  
published for decades because  
the second war was on and after then  
it did not fit the role the world  
had concocted for Anne as a kind  
of poetical Pollyanna, even if  
I acknowledge she was conceived so.' The man  
with the camera, retreated, thought  
there must be something here he'd forgotten  
about Marilla: or was this Rachel Lynde?  
Maud looked down at the actress Anne  
graceful as a larch beneath the gable.  
'One dies,' she thought, 'because one's heart is freed  
or because the other half of one  
behind the screen is angered and unstable  
at that freedom, or indeed  
just because the need for justice  
is achieved at such a cost one can

fight no longer. My own  
sons did not receive the reasonable  
love that Anne did from the Cuthberts.  
I gave her what I could and at the last  
I let her write poetry – my best –  
as young as the grief which only lets one sleep.’  
She rubbed her spectacles with peace,  
and the setting sun danced like the Northern Lights  
on all the island and the farm,  
the tourists and the other Anne, now not  
lost at all within the mellow dusk.

## George Jeffreys 15: The Fourth Terrace

George Jeffreys woke up in hyper Australia,  
searched his laptop numbly for reviews  
of his Haunted Brothel work (about  
some of his relationship with Clare)  
in this local Western Suburbs

Poker Machine Palace to the noise  
of a hundred rattling pokies and the voice  
of a transvestite rapper named Matilda  
from the Eden Room upstairs.

The review compared George and Clare to Dante  
and Virgil. 'But,' Clare pointed out, 'they  
don't say who is who. I'd rather be  
Beatrice, but I think I'm Dante, and  
that means Virgil is you.' George said, 'Yes,  
I think I'm classical. And you do  
have a pilgrim spirit and a refusal  
to believe in easy mercy, at least  
for yourself.'

'I'd never  
want easy mercy for me', said Clare,  
'I only  
manage to live because I'm unforgiven'.

'So,  
Purgatory does seem the best for you',  
observed George, 'what Terrace do  
you think this is?' She answered promptly,  
'The Fourth. All this activity

is meant to compensate for their inaction  
earlier, is present distraction  
from lack of love and lack of passion, surely?’  
The pokies roared. The patrons’ sweat  
gummed the handles. The falling coins  
clattered like bullets. A waiter  
hurried drinks to their table, gasped:  
‘Ever since the last P.M.’s visit,  
a sprinting red-haired figure  
speeds to and fro to a private dinner  
across the public dining room, never  
looking at the diners, but  
rehearsing in a whisper. I swear  
to you, I’ve seen her.’ ‘Don’t worry –  
we believe you’, steadied George. The waiter  
grabbed the clinking tip and bolted grinning  
to whoever swore at him most loudly.  
On a huge TV, the newly extra-lively  
Bob Carr and Morris Iemma argued  
which of them did least to prevent  
the power of immeasurable Arbibs.  
In the local paper, grimacing Abbott  
strained to hand-wrestle some giant.  
George relaxed and watched a quick  
twitchy mating dance in an alcove  
full of frenetic, fractured shadows:  
a lean boy and a grandfatherly  
small businessman shared powder

from a flimsy packet, racked  
by erotic sneezes, left together  
briskly, not too close, but neither  
too far apart. 'He'll break his heart,'  
murmured Clare to her house spumante.  
The air in here swirled that colour,  
she thought, like aerated wine, all  
restless, tired pearls, a hiss  
of penitential moonlight, love  
that was not enough at the start becoming  
overwrought and angry at the last, but  
this was not the last, apparently. She  
who had once killed what she loved in some  
excess of ownership which sprang a bit  
from unbearable childhood boredom, not  
different in kind from punishment, neither  
the act nor the cause, did not permit  
herself hope but sat with George  
who evidently hoped for her, again  
in many different senses. Upstairs,  
Matilda offered some cold, flaked  
forgetfulness and sublime  
selective memory, but Clare  
remained steeled to remember,  
and George knew his own knowledge  
of her history itself a steel anchor. The waiter  
ran through multi-screens of Carr and Iemma  
to clear their table suddenly. A post-Branch Labor

Party party left the table  
nearest for the Pokies, teasing each  
other how to work at 'A9', which  
George remembered was the rule for  
juggling most candidates to the right,  
compulsively. Many others here  
jostled angrily for tables. Clare  
and George walked up, careful, to fresh night.

## **George Jeffreys 16: George Jeffreys Woke Up in South Iceland**

George Jeffreys woke up in south Iceland, whistling 'The Girl on the Police Gazette' to keep warm in a glacial swamp, and thinking of murder. Clare was in Reykjavik, trying to stop the newly renewed murder of whales, butchery public in the harbour. She would not come further inland with him, uneasy about Icelandic executions, since they'd watched Edvardsson's movie about the lady who killed her master and was beheaded in 1830, that subject revived differently lately by a young Australian author. George rather liked the weak scene in the earlier strong film where the heroine and her tricky lover splash nude in a spring of sulphur, but Clare shuddered at all snuff about those awaiting capital punishment, however lyrical it might be, and however delectable the scenery, and authentic the myth. He'd argued, 'You don't really have a monopoly, dear, on murder,' and, anyway, that they'd only be in the south and not the bitter northern mountains, but

she stayed put in the shambles she knew:  
'If I'd been executed, who then  
would suffer for my murders, how  
would anyone try to compensate  
always and always know they never  
can?' So he'd left her to the chunks  
of ex-trusting whale and stood  
freshly from a tourist bus  
on a road between waterfalls, hills  
and the odd volcano. He recognised  
Eyjafjallajokull from its pictures on  
the news for stopping planes. Right now  
there was one small whiff of smoke,  
but maybe later. He awaited an  
appointment with a dissident  
from Washington, who sought  
asylum after cyber revelations. In  
the meantime he stood in the open  
on the lonely, lovely roadside  
miming impatience like someone from  
the classic Hitchcock movie, to which  
he knew most intelligence agencies  
were devoted. 'But my search will never  
cease for the girl on the police  
gazette... Ponies in a small fat flock  
gave him polite attention, eyes like  
enduring rain. And then the plane  
too far away but the time to groan

at an assassin's lack of novelty  
has cost many a grown man his life,  
thought George. He found a valley  
close by as vivid green  
as meltwater could make it, rich  
with rivulets and ancient falling water.  
Planes sound much too much like waterfalls,  
thought George, but it was closer: a tiny  
plane with skis on it, its weapon  
sharp as a harpoon, retractable  
on a sinewy metal cable. Streams,  
thought George, crouching in one, are sinuous.

The giant knife  
splashed beside him as he ducked.  
They hauled it up for a better shot:  
clearly he was meant to retract  
back up with it when they hit him.  
Theirs was a slow process, but must work  
eventually, he thought, his boots on moss  
steadier than he expected, though, under  
a glacial ledge they decided to bash  
to bits with the harpoon thing. Jeffreys  
had never liked the use of film noir  
in later Hitchcock, agreed with Clare  
that film noir was a cop-out, in fact  
when there was briefly a film script  
of part of his memoirs, he stipulated  
in the contract that neither he nor she

would die in it, since the first version  
had her leaping from a fiery building: not  
her usual style at all. What would Cary  
Grant do now, he wondered, huddled  
tighter in frosty water like a kitten  
deeper in the drain. Quick water cut at  
his skin like a diamond drill, the real  
drill loud above with its echo  
of liberated ice. ‘And my longing  
will increase for the girl on the police  
gazette...’ The murderess in the movie  
was the victim of misogyny  
and the Danish occupation. Noir  
is noir, though, doesn’t offer answers.  
Rocks fell in mossy stabs at terror  
around him, meant to impress. He sidled  
to another ledge while they were at it,  
and the huge harpoon swung after. Then  
they pulled back up, surprisingly, and he saw  
the reason: volcanic lava  
trickling from Eyjafjallajokull in  
a summit-steamy hiss of snow:  
    the vapour not quite  
an eruption but good enough, thought George,  
the mist and smoke smearing up  
their windscreen and their engines. He realised  
he’d continued to whistle and sing, and unlike  
Cary Grant, to cry.           They



## **Tanya and Jane**

*(Tanya Plibersek has expressed her great enthusiasm for Jane Austen)*

Jane Austen woke up in smoky Sydney.  
Tanya Plibersek was on TV, and in  
her lounge room watching herself, a form  
of self-consciousness Jane thought might  
always prove promising for wisdom.  
Tanya brightened to see Jane again.  
Tanya indeed was a bright person, thought  
Jane, who inspected the clothes  
approvingly as a sign of character: loose  
Nehru collared shirt inside  
brown suit tailored to powerful perfection,  
and she tall as a daffodil, gold crowned  
with its hint perhaps still of wildflower.  
'Jane!' exclaimed Tanya warmly, ample  
white hand outstretched in welcome. At first,  
Tanya had called Jane, 'Miss Austen',  
but Jane explained that the title  
belonged to her sister Cassandra  
who was older. They'd speedily settled  
comfortably for the correctly informal.  
'I must congratulate you, dear Tanya,  
on being Shadow Foreign Minister.'  
Jane had always relished politics,  
if her family had cut that from her letters.

She felt free to express herself here, with her most recent friend: ‘I can see why you did wish for that romantic portfolio. It combines quite elegant formal procedures with respect for peasant land hunger.’ Jane, thought Tanya, still had that knack of constructing sleekly then inserting something plain and sharp in her diction. She could still talk truth to her, though: ‘Jane, sometimes the need for tact disconcerts me so much that I grin like a guilty schoolgirl, then try to make it seem deliberately charming. I always remember you dedicated *Emma*, on request, to the Prince Regent.’ ‘Yes,’ agreed Jane, ‘An awful person: his wife was lost in misery. But she adored my work and so – oddly – did he: either a point of communion or rivalry for them, or perhaps both. I never did decide.’ Tanya brought in teaset tea in thin white china. She said, ‘I was really delighted by your approval when I built so much public housing. The press brought up the way I criticised risky Israel when I opposed the Iraq War. So I said

I believe in the Two-state solution. I thought your spirit was helpful there. You never argued like a girl as they expected by becoming embroiled in any direct historic accusation.’ The tea was strangely smooth but pungent: Jane had enjoyed it here before. ‘I know,’ smiled Tanya, ‘how much you enjoy this tea that Kevin invented. It must be different from that you drank in England, but of course I do like novelty myself, inside proper norms. I was shocked so much by his New Guinea solution, but it was too terrible to be denounced because that would have been too serious.’ ‘Denunciation must be playful to some degree in politics,’ nodded Jane, ‘I had two ambitious brothers in the navy, but I actually admired Fox’s speeches against the Napoleonic War: so stylish and passionate but never stylised, so clever to shelter under a royal umbrella: His Majesty’s Opposition.’ Tanya agreed: ‘I must seem newly rounded and ambitious to survive at all politically, but I fear what Mailer said of Hubert Humphrey: that he’d given so much away he had to give away the rest so as not

to acknowledge what was lost.’ The strong smoky tea saddened as well as comforted, like chocolate. She and Jane often enjoyed chocolates together, the author made Tanya feel that her choice to cautiously love a persuasive Public Servant who once had been a rogue was worthy of a neat plot by Austen. Jane was so sympathetic too about her children. From her shrewd Slovenian family, Tanya respected this property of an aunty, grateful when Jane admired her new baby. Skilful of old at praising babies, Jane said the practised things to thrill and reassure the tired mother, at last relaxing to feel that now indeed she had done something special.

## Diary Poem: Uses of the Politician's Wife

I noticed early in my life that others describing poets would acknowledge that some were vicious villains but the trick of saying so was to praise their poetry at the same time, just as politicians can be reviled providing you exempt their martyred gracious wives from the condemnation process. This shows you are fair-minded, builds the strength of your other criticisms. When I described the process to Bruce Beaver in discussing an especially obnoxious right-wing poet, he grew enthusiastic, declared 'Yes, we should be able to say he's an utter bastard and that's why his poetry's so lousy!' but I didn't take the observation further. Now having just read a newspaper review which attacked a poet's prose by praising parts of his verse, I see the saintly wife is still in use, although the poet's prose and poetry seemed great to me, if not in tune quite with that editor's thought. The policy of the belittling alternative

is so entrenched that when I wrote  
a Plibersek Austen poem the assumption  
from one practised reader was that I meant  
by describing their relationships with babies  
to recommend that over  
their professions, although in fact  
I was suggesting that a lack  
of critical confidence in both areas  
was unwarranted and socially defined,  
all similes on creation intertwined. Jane's  
family of course would stress her  
gifts as an aunt as they destroyed  
her letters, but perhaps that did  
help her work charm the Victorians,  
make others defend her as an author, and  
Plibersek's husband's heroin abuse  
as a youth has been open to use  
to emphasise her strengths, but  
we carry the politician's wife within  
sometimes as a skilled survivor. She  
undermines the bad as well as good  
for fear in Conrad's terms the world  
seem too dark: just too dark altogether.

## White Cyclamen

Nothing is whiter,  
like clouds with the sun inside them.  
Nothing is smoother,  
like clouds and the moon beside them.  
But they aren't pure either.  
There is lily-green underside them.  
This is the start of an ASIO poem.  
Borges said living under dictators  
made him expert at metaphors.  
But lyricism is direct, adores  
the physical, the real. When young,  
one knew to recognise a worker  
for an intelligence agency because  
they knew thorough Marxist-Leninism,  
either in favour, or in *Encounter*,  
analysing it at length as if it were  
a present threat or promise. No one  
else cared about it too much, even  
Ho Chi Minh. All our revolutions  
were agrarian, unorthodox: Nimbin  
or Saigon. So being under fire  
from new Marxist-Leninists again  
I naturally think: ASIO. However,  
I like much post-colonial anger,  
although it dates with colonial power.  
Nothing is whiter

than post-colonial angers,  
like clouds with the sun inside them.  
Nothing is smoother,  
like clouds and the moon beside them.  
The anti-lyricism of the Leninists  
and their Amish dislike of fiction  
seems more like that of the occupation  
of Prague than of Wall Street later.  
I laugh: they're Diego without Frida,  
but that assumes the ASIO position  
is not as it always was: too solemn.  
And what stories do I know  
talking to you of ASIO?  
There is lily-green underside them.  
When I tutored at uni, the lecturer  
asked a guest to speak on poetry, a man  
I'd not heard of much, but the explanation  
was that he directed ASIO. He came  
to talk on his verse, which was pure  
no-experiment representation. She wanted him,  
being journo, on account of his other function.  
I wished her luck, let it go. Another  
spy was a young man courting a writer  
at an early literary Festival, so certain  
to be ASIO that a dinner party giver  
asked him politely, 'And you work for  
ASIO, do you?' He blushed to murmur,  
'Yes', no doubt had prepared a lecture

on the need for Marxist-Leninism  
in bookish, demure Melbourne. White cyclamen  
are like clouds and the moon beside them,  
and seem to survive forever. Here  
is the last of an ASIO poem.

economy

In what seems neither simile  
nor metaphor but maybe economy  
of a proud if whimsical nature  
the Good Spirit of the Universe will re-use  
sounds and patterns. Consider  
the grunt of the male koala  
which is the same gritty bass –  
too profound for melody –  
as a chanter in the Russian Church,  
repetitive and clearly hard to master.  
Stretched on a chaise, Dame Creation  
daubs black on white on kittens:  
ours has always sported Woodstock  
in a trencher, someone else's was given  
a profile of Alfred Hitchcock, many  
of course have ballet dancers. Poetry  
making always involves the fear  
that what whistles in from the ether  
has been given to someone other  
simultaneously, but indeed  
the Good Spirit seems to avoid  
anything so obvious and some aspect  
of one's work will surely reappear  
but in cloud-code on a mountain  
or the labrador grin of a dolphin,  
so neat  
and so deceptively elsewhere.

## The live grey cell

Nelson Mandela woke up in Soweto Stadium at his memorial service, sitting behind Obama (who sunned at a selfie with a blonde) and Michelle Obama, scowling sad, whom Mandela had already met and would far rather have addressed than her husband, but it was Obama who'd called him, touring Robben Island, the live grey cell. Obama seemed to know to look behind, and asked Mandela: 'You used capitalism over slaughter, but with the drone that is my brain, whenever can I relax into reconciliation?' Nelson – not feeling at that moment like Madiba – remembered how Winnie had accused him of turning into the Dalai Lama – thought of grotesquely imaginative murders in Central Africa, Winnie's necklaces, Obama's missiles – suggested: 'Reconciliation is a deep guilt need, not hell one wills on any country in the name of diplomacy, peace or completion. I said Blair was Bush's Foreign Minister, but equally you have none except for a drone in the dark.' 'My brain?' repeated Obama, expecting direct answer, but Nelson smiled like sun through bars: uncertain to condemn a brain's ache to use direction.

## Diary Poem: Uses of Sparrows

Like my daughter,  
baby sparrows have Indian eyes:  
round with lids a delicate pod  
right around the brilliant iris. My  
great-grandmother from India  
in her photo has eyes like those.  
The baby sparrow under the window  
is still egg-round and fluffs  
herself up and quivers to be fed  
and is fed by at least two busy,  
more streamlined sparrows. I've seen  
that all baby birds feed  
differently: sparrows open  
their beak but baby doves open  
the beak of their sleek parent, or  
older dove sister. I'm not  
sure how the bulbuls feed, as  
they form a pyramid of defence  
as stiffly alert as meercats, and if  
necessary fly at you. That need  
for privacy is odd when one  
considers how vivid their red  
splash is. 'Red splash' and 'delicate  
pod' so far have betrayed  
my denial mechanism, writing  
this poem to escape imagining

the Japanese dolphin massacre.  
A late American Professor –  
Bill Davidson from Wisconsin –  
who loved my work wrote to me  
how pleased he was to have talked  
with Caroline Kennedy. I had reserve, but now  
admire her newly for protesting  
the dolphin slaughter. My great-grandmother  
brought with her from India a pet  
tortoise which outlived her  
for a long time, went to live  
at last with one of her children, still  
blinking sometimes in baby fashion –  
babies don't blink often – with  
softly circled Indian eyes.

## Diary Poem: Uses of Dismemberment

The flat red mess on the ground fingered by trolls  
in white coats was the end of the ‘autopsy’  
of the giraffe – a picture apparently  
rejected by the zoo’s search engine site, while  
they accepted one of a dissector  
holding high the severed hoof with a look  
of strange affection. Looking up ‘Bestiality  
in Denmark’ on the search engine  
I found that there are really many  
successful working brothels which provide  
animals for the customers: the beasts  
practised and supposed to pleasure  
in their work, since the law says cruelty  
must not be part of the function. The Marquis  
de Sade was into amputation: of Justine  
in pretty particular, but all her members  
were usually restored by the next section. Indeed,  
Lawrence Durrell in the *Quartet* revered  
the Marquis but when Clea’s hand is severed  
felt obliged to give a timid rationale  
that it stopped her from drowning and with a metal  
fist her painting skill was better.

So the mutilation  
oddly lasts but the cop-out tries sound moral. In  
Copenhagen the cop-out tries sound moral: conservation  
requiring that the gene pool be diverse,

as the giraffe calf had been bred to be common stock and therefore bred for death when no longer a lucrative baby. In the same days the Danish Parliament passed a bill against religious slaughter of animals by Jews and Muslims, maybe needing a monopoly on torture, or that Marquis de Sade thing that he refused to pass death sentences when a Magistrate, against the wishes of the Terror, preferred the story to the reality, made himself in a novel way more ethical: but the Danes are not recommending fiction. They stab real dolphins dead in the Faroes as a rite de passage for young villagers, hunt whales every bit as coolly proudly as does any cutting Japan.

You should remember, too: the powerful prestige in all dissection. Only the best med students carve cadavers, only the best professors show them how. My father a blind physiotherapist who achieved real cures often was still elated to remember having been one of the four people in med school who dissected bodies because of his HD in Anatomy, even though he was blind at the time and his professor made him a touchable human model

including a labyrinth of veins and sinews  
with a specially invented glue with which later  
the professor's children glued their shoes  
to their feet for a long period. That irony  
made the history more relatable for longer.  
The team dissecting Marius look as proud  
as nurses at the arm of a fine surgeon. I  
said 'You should' to you a while ago,  
which I don't usually do, as you and I do  
not communicate by imperative or injunction.

On the internet,  
Danes attack those mourning Marius  
saying their priorities should be human  
or the improvement of animal species. Katharine  
replies that for such eugenicists life  
is an unnecessary constant Sophie's Choice. She  
reassures those needing to defend their protest  
that a love for Marius enhances  
one's use to other sufferers. Why,  
I wonder do all grievors feel so guilty?  
And why are the Danes employing that so early?  
The planned target seems not just Marius  
but all the petitioning protests for his life: hence  
the video dismemberment, the stress  
that zoos are 'not Disneyland', as if  
innocent Americans at the mercy  
of Henry James's cold Europeans were  
to be taught the brothel lesson of their lives.

It is in fact very cold in Denmark  
now. Their blooded tribe in social snow  
huddle at the internet like a fire. Marius  
never having been to Africa and never  
designed genetically for freedom, must have been  
used to the icy mornings, been relieved  
at the offer of rye bread so early. That  
is as close as I will go to grief in this. You and I,  
I think do want to build a process  
here for analysis: shared symposium.  
I can't remember who said of Socrates:  
he talked so much in order not to cry.  
The subject is dismemberment, its uses.

## Something Rotten

But what is rotten in the state of Denmark?  
Decades ago I visited my aunt, who was a real  
darling, but a headhunter, and met  
the then Danish Consul and his wife and golden  
baby daughter, his first wife being dead  
and the son from the first marriage safely  
in a Dickensian boarding school, where only  
my aunt visited him, shocked  
at finding him hungry and lonely, clinging  
wistfully to the gate when she left. The new  
mother said he made her 'nervous'. Perhaps  
when he grew up he worked for a Program  
in Denmark for Preserving Endangered Species –  
which really meant devout Eugenics –  
and it was he who held the bolt gun  
to the head of the young giraffe, the white  
uniform making him feel safe, the women  
assisting him obedient as nurses. He  
made sure he fed the lions the meat.  
They were so hungry. How dare anyone  
tell him he was wrong? The small  
giraffe might prevent the perfect future  
for all giraffes left alive. He couldn't  
give it to another home: that would mean  
He still couldn't protect it. He'd fed it

some rye bread first: a treat. It  
was happy: you could see, and now the eyes  
in its dead body looked at him like love.

## Clare and Manus

Clare and George woke up on top of trees  
on Manus Island by grumbling seas  
swelling in the dark and were uncertain  
whether it would be the police  
or camp guards who killed them,  
and whether by guns or machetes.

Clare was wet, uncomfortable and obsessed  
by hollow-point bullets, on which she  
had just written a report for the amnesty  
rights bureau that employed them:  
police bullets because they split in  
the victim, not passing through to enter  
bystanders, so it was that ammunition  
they used to shoot de Menezes on  
the London Underground, and also which Oscar  
Pistorius used to shoot his lover, however  
'unlikely bystanders were in his lavatory',  
added George, and attempting comfort: 'I  
doubt if Manus police use dumdums.

Black Talons are expensive. When the Mobile Patrol  
killed that drunk kid in the Market Place,  
a few months ago, I think they kicked and bashed him...'

'I suppose you're right,' she shrugged –  
or as much as one can shrug between  
dank branches soft with spiders – 'they like  
their violence to be obvious: the kind that

terrifies children: hence those rubber whips  
from tires that they carry on their cars.’  
Above the salty rainforest grew another, fiery  
rainforest of stars. There was a road nearby,  
built for logging, and an engine  
shrieked and spat in it, as sudden  
as the coming of a storm. Clare whispered,  
‘They’re used to these roads. They were sent here  
at first to protect the logging companies.’ They  
could see the monster headlights blink below them.  
George said, ‘I didn’t think they’d be so fast.  
Do they talk to the camp guards, or do you suppose  
we can expect them after us as well, and from  
another direction?’ Clare wanted to feel angry,  
not wet and possibly bitten, so she thought  
of the lion family killed in Copenhagen, soon  
after the slaughtered giraffe, and so decided:  
‘I’ll just pretend the whole patrol is Danish,  
if any confrontation does arise.’ George  
found cruelty to animals too unhinging  
to fuel cool strategic deliberation. He  
concentrated simply on the drunken boy  
turned dead destroyed vegetable in cell,  
and on the asylum seeker beaten  
to death by catering staff and the Australian  
camp guards while the watching fuzz still  
waved their clammy guns around, although  
Clare’d just been told by his fellow inmates how

the asylum seeker had loved animals, defended moths from being fed in sport to lizards. George thought it was probably true: they weren't the sort of men who tell animal snuff to impress women, and the beguiling victim deserved that one survive and tell his story. The patrol fanned out beneath them, not apparently guessing that long pig climb, since the phantoms of torchlight wove around bushes and rocks low down. George realised the cigarette smoke was still Indonesian contraband, not Australian: odd, considering how much the Australians paid them. The one guard behind at the vehicle smoked the most - and most promisingly, considering that full tank necessary for the jungle, plotted Clare. They needed a distraction, just to reach the boat they'd hired before, escape to the floating hotel at the harbour, where stopping them would be too obvious. The trees weren't huge, but they were closely packed and when the patrol was far enough away towards safe sea, Clare clambered gently towards the sentinel, grateful that all forests are loud as playlunch, and just after dusk. Clare had lost the appetite for violence decades past, but thought of Copenhagen and needed to torch a truck. The guard

was dropping stubs on the ground, anyway,  
where fuel dripped.

She'd reached in George's pocket for his lighter:  
he didn't smoke but acted a cigarette-  
lighting routine to make people relax. It  
always made her nervous. He'd thought:  
if anyone was throwing fire, she would  
be much more accurate than he was. She lit  
a big twig and over-armed it. The explosion  
was quicker than he expected and the guard  
leapt into the screaming trees without  
catching fire too much. They moved back to sea  
as the Patrol beat out the vehicle and tinder  
before all lost their exit. 'And trees,'  
grinned George, 'are money, more than  
slippery Australian prison games.' She  
nodded calmly, remembering prison.

The Manus boatman  
as they sailed quietly off was quietly pleased  
by the unexplained small dawn on the horizon.

## Maps in the Mind

The isle of the dead is always sand  
and a lump of trees with a strand  
as wide as grief away,  
as quarantined as cholera, a day  
away from any port, like Manus Island,  
away like Manus Island.

The isle of the dead is always rock  
and piled rock huts with a block  
for proclaiming sorrow,  
impatient as rape, tomorrow  
too hot, too late, too cold  
like maps-in-the-mind of Manus Island,  
like maps of Manus Island.

The isle of the dead is never solved  
by jungle fast last answers, planned  
sensitive-isolate like species evolved  
in feral fight and fear on Manus Island,  
in fear on Manus Island.

## Diary Poem: Uses of Silence

The great basso profundo Vladimir Miller explained that the reason Russia loves the bass voice is that there are no musical instruments in Church so that the profoundly resonant singer holds the sound of the choir together. When I mention this to Katharine, she adds that one real cause of the Russian shock at Pussy Riot was that they played a guitar in Church, and I remember again that quote from Argentinian Borges that one use of having written under a dictatorship was his knack at metaphor. When asked to write this poem, one of the first pictures I saw on the internet was a bright primary monastery garden in South America with the sign 'Silencio' prominent and no doubt the sounds of a thousand bright winged things all around it. Meditation requires some subliminal noise. Silence is never whole, as Hamlet, declaring 'the rest is silence', perhaps realised as he heard the military din

of Fortinbras arriving at the last.  
And speaking of military din, the Government  
has just declared silence, at least  
on a weekly basis about arriving boats  
of asylum seekers. Outcry ensued  
and everyone on Christmas Island  
said they would speak out whenever  
any boats arrived. General Schwarzkopf in  
the first U.S. Gulf War would explain  
delay was the very best form  
of censorship. Perhaps we should explore  
if all silences are tactile with what  
I've called 'the violence of waiting', first  
when writing of Winnie Mandela, later  
of things like Manus Island. Silence  
is well-populated, whether as a choice  
or as an imposition. In the 60s,  
pop songs protested silence as cancer,  
saw it as lack of care. Chesterton  
earlier saw it as virtue, but with limits, as  
the ordinary people of England, who hadn't  
'spoken yet', but he seemed to hope  
would speak if the time was right. That  
of course was before many *Coronation Streets*  
like boxes of human chocolates  
and commercial football wistfully conceived  
by Flash Harry as a military endeavour.  
At football matches, the English often

observe minutes of silence for those  
crowds who weren't heard dying, some  
crush or other, marked by silent  
teddy bears and flowers. The silence  
of teddy bears is overpowering, like  
the silence of mouthless stuffed cat  
dolls scattered from people's houses  
near Fukushima. Yeats wrote  
'we have nought for death but toys', but  
he meant playthings for a sick person, not  
helpless soldiers at a quiet tomb,  
where the winged light still plays strange. I am  
wondering now if snow country quietness  
isn't full of pied eucalypts  
breathing out air and what we hear  
as a silent blanket is just how the ear  
classifies that needed intrusive, hence  
actually hearing the silence. I often  
value my lack of audience (except  
for you, of course) in that one  
can speak freely in a poem because  
no one will read it, which is like  
being silent, but with almost none  
of the corollary frustration. Prose  
is self-conscious with inhibition. Hopkins  
begged his 'elected silence' to speak  
for him and explain his reasons  
to him and his readers, but

like Nye Bevan who used to laugh, ‘That  
is my truth, now tell me yours,’  
without waiting much to listen, I doubt  
Hopkins paused from writing, nor  
should he have. The human always is  
the best song for the divine. Bergman  
used God’s silence as a subject  
allowing for his best fine images  
like manse as wilderness in the black  
light from trees or the helicopter-  
spider overwhelming distraught Karen.  
Silence illustrates well. However,  
the silence of Pussy Riot in prison –  
even if politically well-planned – is  
a problem as that provocative guitar  
is as profound as all pleas for attention:  
ipso facto innocent. They objected  
to the Church hierarchy being state-appointed  
mostly K.G.B. like Putin, and  
as in any Russian Church the human voice  
was the first and last thing they heard. Putin  
having silenced Chechnya, however, can  
luxuriate loudly in peace, outwit  
the silent-as-a-drone-in-air Obama  
on all from Syria to Snowden. Russia  
has profound snow forests of silence, versts  
vast enough to exhale resurrection. I like  
that Vladimir Miller was born

somewhere in Siberia, whose silence  
has uses other than prison. Silence  
is a silent stage for the alive, can  
not exist except as metaphor.

## **My heart has a Deep Water Harbour**

My heart has a deep water harbour  
at Sevastopol where I hope that freedom  
becomes finally physical, where my ships  
sail anywhere unimpeded  
by ancient versts of snow. My heart  
has a deep water harbour  
in sword-scarred Crimea, outside  
the garden chess of nations, where  
the globe itself is thawing out  
to uncorrupt my way, and where  
my heart meets icy mazes, without  
catching in decay. My heart has a deep  
water harbour where the summer  
at Sevastopol beats like sea birds  
in the windy wings of sun, and there  
righted beyond history, I will know  
each fathom freed horizon where  
my landlocked heart can go.

## **In Proportion**

The Director of a Writers' Society tweets flatly that my book is not her 'thing' because it is too political with only a 'niche' of poetry: my proportions aren't correct. In Copenhagen an animal is fed and its brain destroyed by a steel bolt before flat 'autopsy'. On Manus a man is fed and his brain destroyed by a steel bolt before a real autopsy, the usual criticism of the animal death grief that it is 'out of proportion', and the human that it is out of proportion with split universal grief. Not cut up, the politics is still poetry, the giraffe the man, and there is no part less which we can save from the flat jigsaw death.