

## The New Look Upwards

A wet morning, and  
I have to wonder just  
how much of this is real.  
The skyline, look  
like the crooked smile of first love  
shows through the window  
and diamonds of wild geese, dripping  
cool voices like dew  
trade time for distance  
in a degree of life where  
only the cardinal points are changing  
all else remains the same...

...Then be thou such a one  
yellow grass and white water  
a woman running  
at dawn  
with the geese  
at dawn  
the wild geese.



## Nightingale

Ahya, nightingale,  
You may pass it by, forget it  
Yellow evening, let it sing,  
Let it glow yet be behind you.  
Manna, ah mañana, ah goodnight ye golden angels,  
In the morning I am going  
In my silence I am gone.

The past, the stolen future,  
The art of going home  
I have traded them for land-speed,  
For a portrait of the world.  
While behind me on the highway  
On a thousand burning bridges  
Are my father, are my future, my poor memory  
Unfurled...



## The Sky Over Eden

Under quite skies I loved your eyes  
Looking up through yellow leaves, spring flowers,  
A thousand voices aching out, out...Space/  
Time...Oppressed us; coerced, we drew lines, families,  
Were *knew*...So, because of day, and night.  
You, your face, moved with the hours,  
Deduced from the days, and from the days,  
Came lives, lifetimes, mortal concrete stuff,  
A garden of blamed, blaming flesh,  
And always above you new eyes glowed,  
New voices lost their feet and drifted...

Tonight, sky, perhaps, you die,  
Or tomorrow, or not at all, and so with I.  
But sky, blue sky, grey sky, white, white,  
White sky...I loved you. I loved you  
When the hour and the year were not brothers,  
When eternity and infinity were not (cough) Husband; Wife  
Husband; Wife  
Husband; Wife.





## A Love Between Strangers

No, again, you don't know: Is it, is it  
Only the strangeness, this strangeness in the dark,  
As if by will held upright, to face  
To face her with your eyes and be unafraid?  
Say something and touch, only touch, you don't know.  
To stumble down in the darkness  
To the mattress on the floor  
To the grated window half-light  
The stains on the walls;  
To the fuck...the love-fuck,  
The life-fuck, the life,  
To the total stranger and her magical mouth,  
To the innocent heresy,  
To the strangest of cities,  
To the dirt and the sweat of a mutual skin...

Behind closed eyes y'are  
    One person  
Like a cup drained and dried and filled again,  
A sweetness you have neither  
Lived in any way.  
Look up O mirror! A stone from the sky  
On satin and stubble in the glancing light,  
On limbs and pearls and adoration,  
On white and yellow and the blinding of sight.  
Look up O mirror!  
O sweet red light!  
O shattering mirror, I love you!



## Timothy Barrett's Splendid Laughter!

As if in the perfect distillation  
Of another morning, there could be a wine  
So tired, so dry:  
Then let out the bird-song,  
The weeping sky, the yellow cloud, yea,  
For those who died in their sleep!  
The sunrise! Christ!  
Who's got the sunrise?!

## Haiku Questions

I'm looking under  
The bath is full to the brim  
Do I see drownings?

Whose haiku do you  
Feebly wriggling pin down  
Settling dust-words?



## Alisong

Love's sleep dreaming then  
When the words with which we frame caresses  
Come only in dreams, or hidden  
    In the solid forms of ghosts,  
    Fragile as glass, and clean as the heart of a shell.

Dreaming then  
When I kneel before this empty bed  
The clean, white, night breeze-head drifting  
    Through the spaces where you've lain...

This then, the season of seeding,  
In a dream I've had of watching you flower  
Forever into shapes to approximate  
The shape of the words I love you  
    And love you  
    And love you,  
And for this is the cause I live.



## The Passage Home

So, we dream on regardless,  
To say, we never met  
Although through your eyes I saw, in many,  
The things that are gone from this Earth.  
I had forgotten so much  
I forget still more now  
And never, I see, all so far and clear  
The passage home...Impossible.

A desperate man  
A desperate woman  
If I could,  
If I only could.

I have taken age, my girl,  
And I cannot turn back any more pages.  
I have taken heart, at least,  
And joy is to be a little alone.  
I have taken heed, somehow,  
And understand: This is the road  
And the road is my own  
And there is no longer any road behind me;  
There is only the door through which you left.



## A Day on Mars

A light face  
Lifts up the day  
Like the eye of the sun  
In the sea of the sky  
In times that are gone.  
The end of silence  
Meets the horizon  
Under deepening shade  
And passes through awakening  
As time in a wave  
Builds up all around...

I see the night  
In a blaze of light  
And paint it white!



## The Maps of my Thirst

Lifted up from the muddy river  
A handful of sparkling water  
Filled with reflections, dancing light  
A mystery of clarity  
When I do not know my way.  
There is no certainty  
But for this thirst which brings us  
To stare close into our reflections.

I see your eyes in my face  
In this handful of clean water  
They close when I lift them  
To my lips.



## Because I Love You

for Jody

"Because I love you", he spoke in the darkness.  
"What?", she mumbled, waking up.  
"You asked me a silent question -"  
"I did?"  
"- Yes, and I've just answered you."  
"What did I say? What did you say", she asked, sitting up.  
"Because I love you. Do you know  
what a silent question is?"  
"No, er..."  
"It's a question that is made up  
entirely of silent letters. You know,  
silent P's, silent Q's"  
"Silent B's..."  
"Yeah."  
"Like dumb..."  
"Yeah." They lay down again, together.

"What did you mean?", she asked later.  
"It means, there is a single answer  
to any question you might ask me,  
even the questions you don't ask:  
Why does the rain fall?  
Because I love you.  
Why does the sun shine?  
Because I love you.  
That's what it means."  
"Oh," she said, "That's lovely, thank you."  
"You're welcome.", he smiled.  
They fell asleep  
Because he loved her.



## Flying Machines for Joanna

Do you know, I've heard that in a far-off place  
men have lifted themselves  
(with the aid of apparatus)  
from the apron-strings of Mother Earth  
and have flown! Each mile reducing the dimensions  
until men are mice, and houses cheese  
and the moon a new-cut loaf of bread!  
...Do I become too prosaic for you?

Sorry.

But is it true?

Oh Christ yes; I thought so.

And I'm told that you yourself have seen these things,  
great winged shearing scissors, cutting the sky in half,  
objects of such beauty that to stand and watch  
is to sense some of the rumoured greatness of mankind  
and to have your fear stripped away. Am I right?  
I'm told that you have stood with your head thrown back  
as far as it would go for, oh, hours, watching them  
and that the tears trickled unashamedly down your face.  
Am I right? Am I?

- Then why in God's name did you come back?





## The Weather Man

a wing of corrugated iron  
flapped in an empty shed  
(Bruce Dawe: "*The Town of Yeah*")

The wings flailing today  
due to predictions of light inland breezes  
from the North or South.  
And in westerly districts,  
good cheer and prosperity  
to the weather-man!  
(Though he's more often wrong. Still,  
give the poor misguided bugger a go,  
speculation being as yet untamed you know.)  
for tomorrow in calmer weather  
those rusting iron wings may be still.  
Hats will be tilted, wonderingly,  
onto the backs of weather-beaten heads  
and while localised showers threaten  
this year's trappings of toil with an unpleasant muddy end,  
God himself may grant the empty shearing sheds  
with the more reasonable of their yearnings  
to be free in this blue August sky. Goodnight.



## Washday

The child is on the corner, leaves surround her,  
the go-cart is on the road filled with berries.  
The dog is gambolling on the grass, snuffling  
excitement and near-at-hand mysteries, neither struggling  
nor at ease with a close to the ground world.  
The mother is further off, watching, but with trust,  
as she waters the season's first flowers and fills  
the clay basins with rain. It is a summer's day.  
The two brothers have their shirts off, intent over the car,  
while across a fence or two the neighbours shuffle cards  
in the shade, cool glasses at their elbows and on  
the bridges of their noses, thoughtfully. High overhead,  
drunken rosellas sing bawdy gaming ballads in the trees,  
with dreams of African tulip dancing wetly  
through their minds...

Surely,

you think, this is somewhere to begin,  
a place to grow strong in forsaking time, you and your brothers.  
But without warning the years give way, a prey to prophets  
being won or lost from the beginning...and the child is  
grown now, the dog lame, the go-cart rusted and forgotten;  
So I swing back a pendulum of memory  
(having only to close my eyes)  
and she is standing again on the lawn in her soiled new frock  
smiling cherubically upwards, saying  
"Never mind Gran. It's washday today."



## Once, Loudly

Somebody somewhere  
is pushing back his hat with a brown weary thumb,  
squinting out towards the west. And he's smiling  
again as he loads up the ute, for the first time in months  
it seems: just one more distant idea to conquer  
and another long way to go.

Sure, he made friends  
while he was here, there came a time  
when everyone seemed to know his name  
and the nights were never empty.  
But, Christ! The smell of the open sea  
pulled him back to his feet like a hook in his belly  
and now he's ready to go again,  
For the five hundredth time,  
and not sheep nor the woman who smiles will keep him.

He recalls a conversation  
which somehow seemed to have some sort of significance  
at the time - clean words shining in the afternoon light  
but fading inevitably with the scream of the factory siren,  
and he wonders if it's all so much like just  
finding a place to stay or being eternally caught  
somewhere between closing time and work tomorrow  
- a terrible thought.

Ever gonna settle down Jack?  
Nah, too much to do.  
How old are ya Jack?  
Twenty-six, why?  
Just wondering.

Well, wonder on this ya mongrels, and with a laugh  
he slams the old red petrol tank down  
on the floor of the ute  
and climbs into the cab.

Drive past Margaret's place, sound the horn  
Once, loudly  
and keep going.

Big country Jack.  
No bigger than you or me, Madge.

In the rear-view she's standing  
At one of the front windows. Smile again, sadly.

Well...Goodbye Jack.  
Yeah, see ya...G'bye.

Follow the old track down to McCray's Road  
and, from there to the highway,  
time to follow the cockies again  
- God only knows where they go.