

CHROMATIC CARGOES



POEMS BY JOHN JENKINS

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POST NEO PUBLICATIONS

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The (fabulous!) poem *Rainbow* was first  
published in MEANJIN.

Also by John Jenkins:

ZONE OF THE WHITE WOLF  
AND OTHER LANDSCAPES (Contempa)

BLIND SPOT (Gargoyle/Makar)

THE INLAND SEA (Rigmarole/Brunswick Hills)

A cassette/CD, WAITING FOR MANANA (4T)

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## OUR DUMB EMOTIONS

Ziggurat storms burst seeming from Venn clouds.  
Our dumb emotions lean into the weather.  
Stars heliotropic and hot like chemistry,  
portions of the thinking brain,  
and of the unthinking,  
basted evidence, all these say hello:  
definite objective observations,  
and the unassuming enormity of nature.  
We look into the private lives  
words lead amongst themselves.  
Find a blue horizon in a Methode-ray-tube.  
Let's interrogate, let's find out, let's get out!

## JUICED CARGOES

There is no reason to believe  
the orange proposition -  
that the 'normal' style of modern  
usage or sentence construction  
is a fragment dealwood box  
you might find fully explicated  
in any newspaper and why not?  
outlined in kneejerks of syntax  
the public applauds like  
tonnage and haulage figures  
heaped in groaning ripe convoys  
to transport reality to that other shore  
of sense and vital interest  
predicated on ship-to-shore signals  
flashed back from 'reality' to you  
to disclose the sun-store  
of energy from bud to fruit  
however the acrid tang might sparkle  
in a glass later at sun rise or set  
into portable belief systems  
we inherit like received opinions  
and an ear attuned to the Narrow Band  
over timber decking in a wash of light.  
These bright constructs  
swung off the branch as we chatter  
might stretch your long arms to a funky Nut  
growing high in the palm,  
and as easily interrogate the real  
like photons dance across the abstract.  
But this collage is an orange in slices  
its juice welling pink and acrid  
into the next harbour to make you read  
further into the text, the argument  
a smile across the floating page.  
Dried in an African gumleaf sense  
the labels are ripe with art in a sunflare,  
the pips are shipped with the fruit,  
to disclose essential form,  
Oh my poem brightly burning!

## ZOOPLANKTON

A heliotrope miasmatic sun-swirl  
because brightness enriches  
the gaberdine of the water flea.  
You can see its heart beating,  
the minute cilia of the minutes it enacts.  
Beneath the rings of Saturn  
swim larval thoughts of winter,  
strange beauty and sudden death.  
When the ice melts  
it is the colour of azzola,  
a world newly made up  
tips to the edge of graph paper  
where the pencil dips in light,  
no mind too constant could construct  
a cinerarium for the water fern.  
How delicate are the eyes,  
Midas is outgrown by the honeysuckle  
and foam-jets, spinnerets of sense,  
ablute the dark harness of the caddis fly.  
Ganglia intact and feathery, swimmerets  
quicken in an onslaught of innocent light,  
the webs afloat, the level starry foam of  
your crown, golden in an omniscience of dew,  
floating with the many-pirates of pincers,  
maxillae, a mandibular comedy built in reverse  
to daylight, the edges and the objects  
all broken up and bright in a pure swirl.



## ROPE WORLDS SEEMING

Pointillist verbatim notes  
in the upside-down utopias of breath:  
the happy mosquito, breather tube alight  
to the water surface;  
into the tuxedo stage,  
raffish tumblers set along a bar.  
petit-point adult whisperings set ablaze the wind.  
Oh little random harvests,  
what sweetened adults emerging into fire!  
All your energy is there like a lighthouse.  
The porous wings ironically drowning. Shine  
to the depth node where the stars split off,  
a transfer to the reeds, double-dipping.  
Many levelled music of being, to return  
to your water bed means death. In the swirl  
you retrieve the monotreme - its double  
identity is double indemnity. Then  
separate into categories into fraudulent leaps!

## RAINBOW

Above the gravity that pulls everything down  
are words that float like a morning rainbow.  
Looking up, the ticket you hold in your hand  
turns liquid in the red wind. And you are  
suddenly set into the fragile form time  
erodes. There are also gulls which turn  
liquid on the wing beyond the orange river  
where the silver fades and the sun smothers  
docklands and a heart full of daisies.  
You look above yellow rails and the slight  
morning mist rising as if from the corner  
of a painting and it softens the glare of  
existence; Watching death-bright passengers  
alight, caught in the green air they embrace.  
The skyline burns into blue surrounded by  
nothingness and we move along its indigo veins.  
As intense as the violet sky, yet cloudy and often  
hopeless, your luminous and incorrigible mind  
flowers towards the cold light: a thing of  
adjectives afloat above the day, perhaps  
a bruised rainbow burning in the air  
beyond the gravity that pulls everything down.

## WHY I LIKE YOU

(For S.)

Just let me say  
that I like you because  
you are beautiful as a tropical  
avalanche in a glass full of gold.

Another reason,  
your energy.  
It often happens ...  
Before I've slept after breakfast  
you've showered, walked the dog;  
and made little aeroplanes out of an icecube.

Should I also mention  
that you remind me  
of starlight pulsing  
between the spokes of a bicycle?  
You whirl so fast it leaves me breathless!

Or say, "I like you because  
you celebrate the motors of flesh and air"  
Should I also say *that?!?*  
Well, I couldn't imagine you earnest or dull!

And is it really  
a coincidence  
that *le douceur fleurie des etoiles*  
(a quote from Rimbaud)  
also reminds me of you?  
Just a coincidence  
that in the back of our husky sled  
we could wake up *any moment* in Cuba!

And really, I'm wild too  
About that 'trick'  
where you dip the entire universe  
into a can of blue paint  
such that everything is my favourite colour!  
Yes, I think that's a good one.

I also like you  
for your teeth  
which are useful for untying knots

and because of Tasmania,  
the love-shaped island  
between your thighs

and for your eyes  
which rhyme and are green  
tiny traffic lights  
saying yesyes when we kiss!

## HAWAIIAN FLOWERS

*In an ideal world the words write themselves.  
You just wind them up then go away.*

The spinnakers of pure thought fill with light.  
Item: happiness.  
Item: a glass of fresh fruit juice.  
Coasting across the South China Seas.  
See the crimson buds from your windows  
blooming under the wake.  
Oh Mambo Mambo, light years off course.  
Will you tease me thus forever Carmelita?  
Well has Don Carlos sent his hat flying.  
The tree in the square is aflame with violet buds,  
    My Little Cha Cha.  
Will you be there to remember me when  
    I wear my flame sombrero?  
Will you see my sails in the yellow light?  
A sea drift, a hat across a vast red wash of water?  
There, chords strike like notes, notes like chords.  
Ah, it is good then  
    to take the guitar as your friend,  
for this is the Cha senor, this is the Bread!

## **CARNIVAL NIGHTS**

Hot art tango, so it goes.  
It goes one step at a time.  
I stood in the empty street then  
and imagined a life of adventure.  
South of later I found it.  
In my day's plume of blue feathers,  
flying low, in the mist, over the crags  
and rivers that gave way to rivers and crags.  
Then my bus stopped across a sheet of glass.  
People entered, paid and left; than a new bus  
Came. For me, there are stories in all the words,  
even single ones, and not even nouns, and odd ones.  
Even single ones, and that's how he flies,  
on a river bank, studying signs.  
In a smoke signal over crags, daydreams of Aesop,  
And the light fades softly about the stop. So  
you've found it, you've found it already.  
Your wonderful life of adventure!

## ZOOMFRUIT HOLIDAY

The loopy Buddhist says: "I gives you  
what you wants." My my, the caryatid  
floats on rubber knees. But that's why  
they are rubber. To bend so. And this is dumb.  
Why should you know? How should you care?  
Don't bother trying to find me, you won't  
have a chance, I've taken the locks off  
the doors and Maurice has gone back to Trinidad.  
You can keep the books and cut-glass things.  
My English she is not so well. I have ze  
'hideaway suitcase', all packed. Ah,  
velvet amours! Every time I search  
for a leakproof seal a new novel develops.  
The camera is full of brief bright flashes.  
*My laughter is the song of gnats! I wish*  
you well, I truly do, but take your  
sprayguns elsewheres. Well, isn't that nice -  
peel an orange! Ha ha. Everything's  
coming up roses!

## HEADFULS OF AIR

Skylight slipper  
Fun vests  
Meatball tubas  
Arrest the critical motion  
Sans uplift  
Filigree of slipper  
Back to it  
Shadoof bumper  
Grilled booboo  
Vestments  
Arrested  
Hummingbird lantern  
Rose window  
Courtyard of sleep  
Dialogue  
Music  
Laughter  
The little princess asleep  
Near the pool  
Little fins  
Lazy carp  
Circles  
I see fragments  
Books aflame

### *Chapter two*

It's easy to see why  
And how  
Like an arrow  
Diminished minor chords  
Dateless portals  
Daybreak  
Light on foam  
Or is it sand?  
The princess woke and yawned  
Book marks in shimmer desert.



## FUEL FOR THE COOL

Brilliant German, he was hot.  
Gunned a Red Shift to the think tank;  
ripples widened, hotter and hotter  
they said, the ash floating from  
a burning cigarette, and he  
original cool, on again or off.  
Tungsten-drill-based,  
hammered a desk  
for rates of spin.  
"Keep my spores alight,"  
and so on. On and on  
and only a popular shrug  
favours my art! Why,  
if Stalin were alive you'd...  
You'd soon cut it out!  
All froze above their ice,  
serene flamingos aping  
serene flamingos. The  
disguise was perfect.  
No tributaries  
but those which evoked  
the current phase of Capital.  
Faked 'revolutionaries'  
stopped pouting long enough  
to posture with cute wrists.  
"Jah! Das ist it!"  
And, rotating, nebulous,  
gaseous yet solar, he Xeroxed  
a perfect copy, warm from the toaster.  
"Gentle-ments," he thundered,  
"a perfect Kant-Laplace hypothesis!"

**OH YEH!**

This proposition lingers...  
that it is only by 'nomination'  
that the world becomes problematic;  
that we perhaps invent a category  
of seeming, rather than being, fancifully  
almost as an extrapolation from the end of  
the pointing human finger (primary naming)  
into the set of multiple reflective  
superimpositionary frames and planes  
of what we like to call our traditions  
(Aristotle) of self and world, viz 'reality'...  
or even "just-arrived-from-Mars" view of sociology  
or simply "lets have a look around and see"  
methodology that seems a fairly natural way  
to conduct phenomenological investigations  
of the so which place you in the world...  
and that all this resists  
the 'realm of corrosive fictions'  
as being a sort of 'evil star' on the horizon,  
a myth made more of words than words themselves;  
that is, simply that language leaves silences  
behind... and furthermore, that silence is not,  
in any sense, 'corrosive' , or a site of  
'pure emptiness' , except in the sense of  
language and, occasionally, consciousness,  
but certainly never 'empty of transactions'  
in any observable sense, but just another place  
for things to be in different ways.  
And in not so different ways.

## **GATES AND OMISSIONS**

A tethered angel  
over the train tracks.  
Desert-nodes, dry winds across  
the grain, quartz leanings.  
Random light-folds, all that we are,  
all cardboard.  
Resists the pattern,  
Rorschach-gates, the oblique  
objects in their tracks.  
No objective.  
None here, none there.  
Whoo!  
Look at me flying!

## HARMLESS RADIO

Grecian fallout,  
the too-empty airs  
of the Nullarbor, grains folding  
again to an edge of night. The tiny  
apostle screaming love  
from insect throats, the torn turns  
the time takes to arrive.  
A target, terse  
as impressionism,  
unhit as the light that lit  
your face in the carriage.  
The grouped seats, the light  
weeping across your face.  
The place of your face, the light,  
the eyes, the skies, the surprise,  
the light seeps and seeps  
and we sleep above  
your unlit pores,  
breathing like a new pool.

## VOID ELATION

The text of the drum.  
Then-date forges a kind  
of elastic wish, to enact,  
rather than signify, defeat.  
We will meet  
on a little bridge  
across our tongues,  
near the pulse of language.  
Imagine that  
we never drop.  
A Franz Kline sweep across  
the blues to deepest wonder.  
That might be endless,  
where forces we feel  
but cannot name  
enact their airbrush of the real.  
And yet - the blues - the blues  
make endless miles of radio;  
an interval which telegraphs  
not here, not here.  
Walking without the water  
wings, and waking like a culture kid,  
crashing like crushed  
crescendos of fragile surf.  
It helps. Night gaping through,  
utterly Freudless, grinning down the moon,  
needlessly stylish, needle stylus,  
its one raw tooth.

## SEASONAL SHIFTS

Brain already,  
yet not luckless.  
A characteristic galaxy of  
fallout. Metal teeth. Metal death.  
Unlovely from the sea:  
photo-foam, squid seed open  
like a baby, eagle-headed flesh.  
Taste the elongated sunrise,  
the horizon heavy with sacks,  
the feasible orgasm  
bare on Orion,  
Pluto shards bloom  
ing) in seed cells  
turn to osmosis in the heady shade,  
evaporating head horse,  
flare pony,  
an accident flayed into moats.  
Where were you then?  
Stinging! Without surprise!  
Stroke by stroke stroke by stroke.

## THE BANDIT

When You're Out Of Self  
is not a popular song  
but could be. Minarets  
need haircuts too. The voice  
goes Zoom Zoom Zoom. Who  
said, "Terrible days have passed  
these eyes in silent array"?  
Well Nancy, I see you're back in Perth.  
Does it still seem like Hollywood? A  
motor mower spins past  
The Head Of The World in outer space.  
But what's that to you! Go ahead and  
file your nails if it makes you feel like  
a better person. I have an elegiac friend  
who mourns 'the death of the subject'.  
I mourn it too. The Corinthian column  
is my favourite. But when the bandit shows  
*you shoot!* Don't ask no questions!

Do you think it's alright to go on?  
Yes. Well, often the bread that is buttered  
hits the floor face-down. That is not a proposition  
by Anaximander, but by Murphy,  
a friend of mine who needs cheering up sometimes.  
Careful, that shadow! There, on the deep pile!  
The bandit is always where shade accrues.  
And so Nancy we go back to school and learn  
to swim. Go back for another big hug  
of the Teddy Bear. And feel happy to bits!

## WHISPER

(for N. M.)

Oh you poor dog, how  
I have sadly used you.  
Though I dig you, I  
dig you like a dog.  
And you sobbed down  
the phone when you  
heard the news. There  
was no return. No tax  
buoyed you up on the  
fury of a glance as  
sweat dried on your  
upper lip. Was that  
what you had in mind?  
Searching the hello  
to transport your shadow?  
In one remove your eyes  
are searching mine. Sleep  
is in your step and it  
can never be emptied.  
And they say your friends  
liken your hands to moments.



## **ALWAYS BURNING**

Always bouncing back  
through a sudden squall of radiators,  
wobble up through the light  
up to the sunset reds full and flaring  
back to the pinks of morning,  
the meridians of the grass are green and fresh.  
And then a full round of ceilings  
while optimistic rain falls to the plains,  
chromatic cargoes  
Arrive!  
Just like that! Like BLUE SUNHAT LADDERS!  
I hear cavatina's rose of sharon  
enfoliate at the hearth.  
See carnival constructs skate your eyes.  
You in green togas, pink cravats!  
What do you think this is,  
if not a day star and a night star?  
I'm lyrical I know.  
But under my sunsets the Rosella  
extracts a brilliant price.  
What scenes do you offer? What scenes?  
There is a pulsator in the milkshake.  
The first Lobster Newburg of Spring  
cries pinkly in the gardenshade.  
Spring ways mean spring days.  
Right! Green waves with more foam than light!

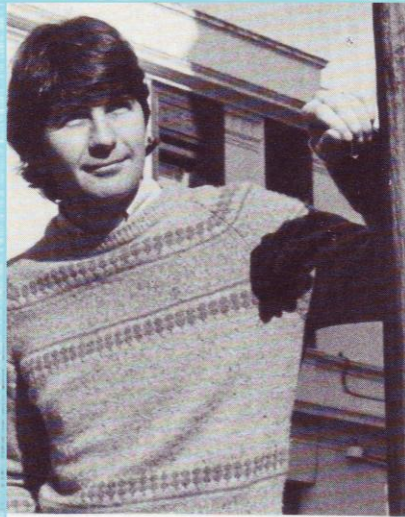
## TINY WHITE FLOWERS

Light-headed air where all is light.  
A bright force around each cup.  
You arrive on a warm wind.  
Your letter is full of your voice.  
A brown mug of champagne.  
Summer in 'the tropics', hands in the honey.  
Imagine! Aromatic blue light! And we wake  
clear as diamonds in the bright yellow wind.  
A silver thread runs out like a line into the surf,  
Clouds dot the blue like heart beats:  
Even though repetition does not satisfy,  
repetition just repeats,  
nothing has been made less real.  
Memory pushes you into the present again,  
and that's a sort of repetition.  
But this is not a narrative.  
It's not anything much.  
It's called 'tiny white flowers',  
and is pieced together from some good lines  
of a bad poem once called The Hive  
which I hope you never see -  
it was so turgid and boring.  
Your letter, which by contrast,  
was a pleasure to read,  
arrived from Holland as I was writing.  
Today's great - just part of our 'full-on' summer  
here in Australia. I'm taking a day off work,  
sitting in the garden, amongst red Hollyhocks  
( 'hollyshocks', in my blue socks)  
and bees and writing poems. It's very pleasant.  
And wonderful to hear from you again!  
I'm sorry your father died.  
(Incongruous that I should be feeling  
so happy now, over here.) It's hard...  
But from your letter it sounds like your family  
is coping well with the grief.

Remember, if you ever want to come to Australia,  
please stay with us. It would be  
fan tan to see you again.  
But, right now, I hope you don't mind,  
Margriet, if I return to my poem,  
which I would like to end, just as it began,  
with the words  
tiny white flowers.

Chromatic Cargoes

A bit like free jazz. There is an immense freedom of composition here. The method is to combine word play, free association, jokey constructions, and ever-shifting imagery, along with some hard-boiled philosophical ideas. Readers, expect great freshness and playfulness! And the always unpredictable next move. Chromatic Cargoes is not about conventional sense, or manufacturing pre-received formal enclosures of meaning. But it does seek to give pleasure and uplift, especially to readers who allow their imaginations to remain ajar, and for whom the sheer love of language is vital. Nothing is pre-set or fixed, but this might be a good approach to these highly playful experiments: where poems suggest a narrative, and characters interacting, it is the reader alone who must take free rein to construct likely scenarios and imagine unfolding stories - or not do this at all, but just let the words wash over them - just as they like!  
Poems constructed in the sand-pit of language... an odd exuberance often all too rare!



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