

plastic aesthetics

cosmetic surgery
has gained in popularity
and reasonably so
given disfigurement

though i'm wanting
my social conscience relaxed,
my pleasure centre augmented
and my injustice receptors
adjusted
to enhance the disregard override

i expect the right side of politics
could legislate
to endorse this procedure

<http://www.glass-poetry.com/poets-resist/aitken-plastic.html>

For clarification I describe my poetry as sharp, industrial minimalism and so the content is what I want you to hear. The added social conscience, mixed with ambiguity, irony, and wry humour is me and my experiences.

I have denied my award-winning emerging poet status regularly until consistently this year after appearances in Journals again and again, though David Cookson suggests I might now consider myself ‘a published poet’.

The words of ‘New Poets 19’ Judge, Thom Sullivan (in 2018), still resonate strongly for me after he said, ‘much of the pleasure is in the singularity of voice, style, and conviction. Its focus as a collection is politics, its institutions , and its consequences – and, importantly for a poet, its language. But the poems do more than just contribute to a conversation. As the poet quips in one poem, ‘school is not / for everyone / but it is compulsory’. The poems are strident and energetic, imbued with a sense of irony and defiance’.

It would also be fair to say everyone SPIN has assisted me to develop my craft beginning in 2017 after four or so readings at The Singing Gallery, when Maria’s welcome included a description of my poetry as ‘pithy’. It has been an upward trajectory since then.

There will be shareable contexts throughout and so for continuity could you save any applause until the finish unless you are inspired by something I haven’t anticipated.

So then to Institutions as tonight’s start point, and the plan tonight is to share more of my published poetry than not.

Educators are fortunate to have a window from which to view both in and out/forwards and backwards/tomorrow and yesterday - cautious not to be trapped in the mirror should they look too closely as for me that Curriculum has dismantled hundreds of thousands of young people’s lives without bother – for me the safety net was a mental health ward – and that is unacceptable

So, I shall open softly with a difference not always noticed – this, a kind observation.

figuratively

it is difficult

to store water

in cupped hands

but

that is an expectation

for many

for those without vessels

without means

i saw it in a metaphor

Highly Commended
Mindshare Awards 2020
'Emerging Published' Category
'figuratively'

<https://mindshare.org.au/writing/figuratively/>

I left school prematurely, apprenticed, post trade qualification, mature aged undergraduate, drop out, traveler, home, three times hospitalized with mental unwellness, mature aged graduate, and senior English teacher – where I discovered very little had changed with the curriculum for young people to find a self without the same difficulty I'd experienced. I wrote this only weeks ago.

personal grid lock

I must withhold this poem because editors will usually not consider submitted poetry that has appeared in the public domain.

unmannered

And another. Apologies.

This next poem, for me, represents the irony of a lauded system that recommends itself against cultures where the weak are left behind

for others

the trick it seems
is to sleep on it,
overnight it
in such a fashion
that by dawn
and your rising,
it has disappeared
ethered,
vanished,
dissolved and
 you can go about your business,
 guilt-free

Human Rights Australia
<http://rightnow.org.au/creative-works/for-others/>

So, to ‘lived experience’ a recent health profession reference to mental unwellness improved from the earlier, ‘consumer’ of the 80s. This piece has been unpopular with editors.

Sydney Morning Herald November 1st, 2017

“Australians took 3.7 million mental health days last year”

i spent exactly six months
during 1980/1
as an institutionalised
mental health patient

i learned then
things weren’t quite right.

This is based on the great Aussie notion that, 'she'll be right mate' appearing on the Mindshare site - locally.

incidental

it can
get away
from you

the team talk
the instruction

those hours
of commitment
to the ball
at the contest
during the game
in crucial moments

it can get away from you
your life.

[incidental - Mindshare](#)

My final piece regarding mental health appeared in my contribution to 'New Poets 19'.

another mental health day

somewhere
the laughter has subsided,
the barbs removed
from the hooks
and the voices, quietened,
while the spoken word
is sweeter
and the love,
ongoing and genuine –

somewhere,
though not here
and,
not today

I wish to return to a political level where i live – to be published later this year at ‘Oxygen’ an Australian Magazine.

take your seat

Look for this soon at this site ‘poetryfeasting’ once it has appeared in ‘Oxygen’ edited by Cheryl Howard.

To be published at
‘Oxygen’ December 2022
by editor, Cheryl Howard

This next piece is neo-socio snapshot of that building political crisis in the US. Published in the UK and titled

**December 2019 –
free radicals**

there is still an urgency
for unqualified confidence
and bullish bravado
at the top
still a place for
recklessness
and denial
without reservation
caution
or deliberation
while opportunity
for
sustained uncompromised attacks on truth
is welcomed
cheered
honoured
as if carelessness
is our anointed
blessed
chosen pathway

until one sees the horror
in the mirror
of so much undigested History

<http://militantthistles.moonfruit.com/geoffrey-aitken-poem/4594956897>

This is a wry look at the reporting by one world media. Not missed by the editor of Ariel Chart in the US.

disturbed

who can put a price

on difference

disadvantage

intolerance

agitation

despair

who can put a price on it?

I saw one on a masthead front-page

First published at
Ariel Chart
August 2022
Edited by Mark Antony Rossi
[disturbed \(arielchart.com\)](https://arielchart.com)

It is timely then for some poems written after thirty years in central Australia, six of those with or around Indigenous men. The first came to me after a morning delivering Literacy for work readiness at a Nursery attached to The Tangentyere Council an Indigenous body devoted to needs of First Nations people, in Alice Springs. Strange for me as I thought I understood irony though the truth of injustice expresses quite harshly in this instance and I thank TAMBA for taking a punt with it.

a flippant bird?

it is dark

life's irony

a contemptible tattoo

wry

and scalding

brief

but inflexible

turning our pages

expediently

gauchely

to diminish

&

disproportionately

disadvantage

as

it sings

its contagion

for a laugh

First published in tamba, Issue 68, June 2021
by Goulburn Valley Writers, Pat Patt editor
www.gvwritersgroup.com

I was enraged while listening to the Liberal Senator reason the Government's decision to deny the 'statement from the heart' and wrote this sometime later – once the facts had been confirmed.

uluru statement unpacked

“too thin
on proposals”
said the minister¹
“a three-word report
to the government
not nearly enough
to determine that platform
from which to initiate
an indigenous voice
in our federal parliament”

in the background
there was exasperation
as those gathered
immediately recalled
the PM's position
on economic development

from the outset
he had proposed
“jobs & growth”
&
an election was won

Note: Senator Scullion Minister for Indigenous Affairs 2013 - 2019, appeared on “National Wrap,” ABC TV on Sunday night 7th August 2017, answering questions about “The Uluru Statement” while attending the GARMA Festival. His responses are paraphrased.

First published by ‘The Mozzie’, Vol 27, Issue 4, edited by Ron Heard May 2019

John Miles at Poets Corner (InDaily) took this after I pestered him with my 'NP19' status.

whitefella travelling

Northern Territory, Australia

the sandover highway
stretches northeast from the plenty -
itself attached to highway 87
out of alice springs

slices through country
to connect cultures

700km from town
lies alpurrurulam
embracing the territory/queensland border

seven hours hard solo driving
toyota tough
satellite phone/overcast skies/good grace

traffic of stock and roos
few cars

educational postman me
delivering adult literacy
at journey's end

First published by INDAILY, in 'Poets' Corner' Aug 19th, edited by John Miles

I shall finish my central Australian recollections with a piece that also featured in ‘New Poets 19’, where the scientific reference relies on the renowned and informed Canadian Academic, David Suzuki.

to me, for you

it’s unseemly
& ill-conceived
our intrusion

this intervention
recklessly heinous

our insistence
that the oldest continuous culture
adopt
a way of living
that’s inherently fragile
&
scientifically unsustainable.

First published in ‘New Poets 19’
edited by Edie Eicas, 2018
for Friendly Street Poets

How about I lighten it up a little with a piece about SA, a world-renowned exporter of wine and home to invention – I have attempted to combine the two in this recent and unpublished piece.

cardboard caskets

As with the other unpublished pieces I cannot display it for broad consumption until it is accepted – somewhere.

In a return to the classroom but this time to the teachers where sadly, a fact of survival in The Alice saw many of us end the week with alcohol while we unburdened ourselves without caring if anyone listened - yet distract us from day to day over administered outcomes-based education.

touching truth

the specialist is expensive
adjusts my psyche
with forged neo-gospel scripture
for dietary control
and exercise uptake
a marathon into the wind
essential for
rehabilitation and recovery
because i am deeply diagnosed
but
at beer o'clock
i apply expedience,
guzzle a six-pack
and
nudge that sobriety

only drunkenness understands

A change again, to early success here in Australia at Underground Writers – no longer active – based on my witness of young men in cars which took a memorable turn that progressed my writing into better narratives.

crank encased

i want to be
stick shift
fuelled up
top gear
high octane
full speed

i don't need to be
a car crash

evocative torque
that's my dream.

Note: For the non-science people, 'Torque' is a twisting/rotational force

<http://underground-writers.org/product/issue-27-case/>

Post school I found and loved the surf as a board rider – this is a wry look at the way were often identified. I could be found mornings on the mid-coast before the afternoon shift began at GMH Woodville where as a Toolmaker I worked a large machine.

clean face

conversations

about board riders

in the surf

during working hours

fetch snide remarks

about connections

with ‘hand-outs’

drugs

and inappropriate behaviour

it is necessary

to accept and understand

we ride the waves

we do not create them

First published in tamba, Issue 66, 2020
by Goulburn Valley Writers, Pat Patt editor
‘clean face’
www.gvwritersgroup.com

This poem eventuated (more recently) after a day in the city - as we left the inbound Seaford Line for the Tram we overheard the following.

a day out

volume
on
full crank
they exit
the metro
dressed
in discount store
finery
to dance their way
inelegantly
towards
the casino
where
statistically
they will lose their
bankroll
but
for these
kings and queens

whatever
is this day out.

So, some words of love. This was the second poem taken by Underground Writers and they absolutely loved it – my damaged psyche could not go all of the way with the editors but I happily took their money.

illusionist

he was ten
she was seven:

he an aspiring
magician
and so, before her
he laid
a single white handkerchief
and on it he placed
his invitation:
a small silver styled ring
asking her,
“will you marry me?”

she, puzzled, replied:
“what’s the trick?”

<http://underground-writers.org/product/issue-28-invitation/>
Republished at Poetry Pacific May 5th, 2022, (CAN)
[POETRY PACIFIC: 3 Poems by Geoffrey Aitken](#)

A slightly different piece that aligns itself with my memory although on reflection I should have done much better at the time. It was taken by Flashes of Brilliance in the US the first of three they eventually published.

vespers

did we really talk
warmly
in those golden days
of change/liberation
and opportunity

or was it more casually
through the music of
his undying and
her eternal

our love taking wings
flying us into tomorrow
unfalteringly
undiminished

because i can't recollect
the markers, the low tides
or the crosswinds
but
i effortlessly recall
the stolen glances
that would have written so many conversations

<https://www.flashesofbrilliance.org/vespers-geoffrey-aitken/#.XriTsEBuLIV>

I would like to wind-down with those poems that voice the concerns I most enjoy writing and then witness them find homes in Journals where they can find resonance – satisfaction enough for me at this time.

wake-up call

it
hurtles
into my waking
this
morning light
savagely
shakes
the night
from
my rising
blatantly shades
the colour
of my imagining
as i prepare
to volunteer
at
the op shop
where
i serve
a disparate clientele
 that clothes itself
 in seconds

First published
'Hole in the Head'
May 2021 edited by
William Schulz
[Geoffrey Aitken 22 \(holeintheheadreview.com\)](http://holeintheheadreview.com)

This is not a popular poem for some – perhaps it is a truism and too close for them.

backpacker

i

can no longer

fool myself

in bus

& train travel

pretending

to be a tourist

face

against the glass

in window watch distance

from

suburban collateral

on

public transport

i just can't

TAMBA is no more, this Issue (70) being their last.

First published in tamba, Issue 70, June 2022
by Goulburn Valley Writers, Pat Patt editor
'backpacker'
www.gvwritersgroup.com

This piece was published well back though stands strongly given recent media insight.

current amplification factor(y)

i chase

conversation

pursue life's meaning

need to contribute

share

belong

measure myself

against others

couple with friends

seek answers

yearn stability

i live alone

<https://luckyjefferson.com/pages/testament>

I shall always believe tomorrow can succeed if we maintain our belief in and support for our children.

tethered tale

untamed
they fly with the weekend wind
above parks and beaches
drawing eager onlookers
to savour vigorous coloured flight
heightened bragging
and delicate cloud touching,
all the while
bumping and pecking
the edges of tomorrow
tethered though,
lest their dancing careens into Monday

why suggest to innocence
that a kite is only a kite

First published by Ginninderra Press
In 'The Crow', edited by Joan Fenney
December 2020

This is my penultimate poem that hopes before our children learn to disrespect us, we might well consider the incomplete lessons of our own inheritance.

have we said enough?

Do watch for this to succeed locally as it is current, news media says so and then add my touch and you could find yourself.

Before I read my final poem tonight I'd like to acknowledge the strong support from SPIN members and audiences that stretch to 2017 and of course to Julia and Maria who have enabled opportunities such as this for a wide range of guest artists with special mention to David and Veronica Cookson and Nigel Ford who identified and encouraged me personally and very early on. Without the luxury of our sound engineer Barry Timmins we could never make ourselves heard or understood – my heartfelt thanks. Lastly Jess who helps me to moderate my voice to maintain a currency that evenly respects my subject matter and Jenny who knows this journey too well, having measured it since my undergraduate days began in 1975 and who religiously updates our website 'poetryfeasting' where you'll find family and found recipes as well as my published poetry, archived for access to the sites where they appear – budding poets might well take an interest using those links as access to potential calls.

There are Chapbooks for sale at \$5.00 each (less than 1c a word) and business cards that will direct you to that website should the books not interest you. I am also aware that some audience members have already purchased this small collection.

So then, the following words by Assoc. Professor Steve Evans in a report on a small sample of poems in 2020 suggested, 'There is a wry humour in these poems and plenty of evidence of both introspection that is relevant to the lives of others and of your own sharp skills of observation'.

I trust this piece bears out that professional witness.

tests won't normalize

I hope the title interests you enough to continue to visit and revisit 'poetryfeasting' for your poetry fix while considering your evening meal from Jenny's family and found recipes.