

The sales pitch. Two chapbooks for sale. Retail price from Ginninderra is \$6.00 each [yes a \$1.00 increase] though should you take both \$10.00. Individually \$6.00 – this is not profit and loss as I recycle the money into another print run and gift batches to centres around Adelaide as Christmas readers – hoping a few laughs [albeit wry and ironic] might change the face of times. The process began Monday this week – suspicions aside, it went okay.

Mixed Creative will kindly allow the use of the in-house card payment device for any purchase you wish to make.

So to begin with, an early piece from ‘No Laughing Matter’ that may provide a further insight into the way in which distractions find my imagination.

the projectionist [old water rat 2022]

i remember the bug house
& the outdoor theatre

on one summer holiday
with that big white screen

before whispered anticipation
saw the projector light
reflect from dust particles.

suddenly dinosaurs appeared
& minds were cast
to the classroom

wondering who knew
how to put this together

no matter how clumsily

Thom Sullivan judge of New Poets 19 said of my contribution in, “much of the pleasure is in the singularity of voice, style, and conviction 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.”

To that end I’d like to begin with a recent ‘quip’.

what’s not news [unpublished ...]

another fast news day
saw only enough time

to reel-off ...

more later if published.

From the school/education scene – this;

\$\$\$ debits

i was sold on
too much silly

in school

preparing me ...

also unpublished

And this;

our past

i did understand
the importance
of school days

in classrooms ...

and again

I began an apprenticeship after school and my co-workers were more interested in Motas than studies;

learning angst [appearing in Panoplyzine early January 2024]

it seems forever

the wait

as a young man

for her

to be side chic

in your car

before stories

about

reaching the pedals

or stalling the getaway

while clumsily gear changing

finds eyes above the steering wheel

and the safe beginning to your lifetime road trip.

Another from my current Chapbook that explains in part why sport can be difficult to work with and through.

incidental

it can
get away
from you

the team talk
the instruction
those hours
we promised
to the ball
at the contest
during the game
in raging/tribal moments

it got away from me

my life.

News media does report the losses involved after schools 'fail' to provide the lasting hope it replicates along traditional avenues yet should not.

This could warrant a trigger warning.

defiant

it was him who left
that poor record
in red marks

as he fled ...

another, as yet, unpublished

And for company;

over-cooked

made

her choice

to run

as if permanently ..

again

I travel the Seaford Line regularly and use my time to patchwork the jigsaw of disadvantage into the strength of character I never fail to want to find and so I wrote this piece;

unenviably modern

unaffordable

while classrooms deny

disadvantage is/can be

topical ever ...

yep, same again

This next poem was published at ‘Sparks of Calliope’ in the UK [September].

keep it quiet

authority
has called us out

as nuisances
pranksters
and deviants

since birth

to be monitored
by surveillance

for the ongoing
safe operation of a system

maximizing efficiency

that finds and discourages

nuisances
pranksters
and deviants

defined only
by criminal records

in households
where teenage angst

congregates around retro turntables.

Another from the Chapbook;

training rides

Tomorrow
is tracking
metro lines
in Nikes & hoodies
with abstract
chat
laughter
& devices
on weekday leave
or underemployed
without cares or fears

disregarding spaces
where watchful
peering
scrutinizing eyes
are biased
about why they run &
to where

but
 should surveillance
 ever tell us
 how far they get?

This next poem is quite a recent construct harking to welfare recipients who use public transport even in unbearable weather conditions.

Bus 751H

the ride ain't a genius
means of transport

for the instinctive ...

as yet unpublished

And the train traveller who occupies a 'red [disabled] seat'. To be published in the US in early January.

things

[i need not know]

you are a divorcee

lonely

living with aged parents

reliant on dumpster food

complex health issues

and off your medication

now incontinent

and unemployable

while alongside me

as a passenger

on public transport

from which a seat change

would be humiliating.

I live in the outer suburbs – unequally vulnerable though I am happy to write about it;

A couplet these two pieces accepted twelve months apart almost to the week – ‘StepAway Magazine’ in the UK – just today.

out here

the supermarket
developed a space

in my village

to quickly attract
suburban sprawl
in concrete replication

where dinner table meals
are nutritionally exact

and so when rain falls
it confuses
street struggle residents

with its shopper trolley clatter.

blocked

i do not enjoy
the bark of dogs
in this outer suburb
 early morning

nor can i bear the prowl
of cat wander
beyond house restrictions
 during the night

and i detest church bell toll
on Sundays
that replaces native bird call
 flight alarmed long ago

by human sprawl
emptiness
in oil drip trays of avenue garages.

This next poem was written for two younger men. One known to me as the son of a friend and the other my nephew; both on our suburban roads one as driver the other a site manager.

before roadwork

it feels as if
the morning asks

sometimes

what it is ...

same story re-unpublished

[White Thrift¹]

[a brief refreshment break – a few coffee poems]

it costs more
and takes longer
to prosper
in this work
 the waitress
 explains

unpredictable
 general struggle
 restricts
 lifestyle conversance

i step away to write
the fresh taste of mocha
in her words

alert to
cost increases
and time taken

 so i add the ambiguity
 displayed
in the *Armeria maritima* ‘Alba’

at the café entrance.

¹White Thrift is one common name for *Armeria maritima*

money perversions **[to appear in Social Alternatives Second Issue 2024]**

suburban winters

are toughest

when the bar radiator

needs the kettle

for a filling cup of black tea

you pretend is herbal

after the last home brand bag

is without memory

for replacement.

unseemly

there are people
citizens

disadvantaged
by birthright

inherited
into demographics

where it is impossible ...

no, not as yet

And to top off the close scrutiny of suburban disadvantage, this piece that came back as if a missile from Ireland where it could not be found a home.

processes

it remains

inexcusable

to suggest education ...

another not yet published

This poem sat in the back of my mind for years before finally learning the context is familiar to both Southerners and Territorians.

\$\$\$ betrayals

as inheritors
of democracy
egalitarianism
and enterprise

the best we now provide ...

similarly, unpublished

This piece came about after realising I could not re-visit sporting matters permanently after thirty years in central Australia said no to footy talk only. My remaining Alice mate who lends his science logic-eye as an assistant editor also saw our climate change in it. No editor has considered either a worthy viewpoint.

climax park

i have no desire
to be

a sole survivor
last man standing
the only one left

alone at the end ...

and yet again ...

And briefly to the economy;

people

reductions
to services

say less money
from taxes

no time for ...

unpublished

And some contradictions;

the steeple

today

is Sunday

when traditional

and populist

worship ...

unpublished

excellent Sunday Service Father

that beggar
on the street

could suggest
homeless fragility

yet it does not show me ...

unpublished

And another foray into the Chapbook.

shock jock

my Satd'y BBQ
celebrated a mate's *all clear*
after recurring bouts
of depression.

the backyard mood
was cheerful
background chat
clinking glasses
& kids laughing

all drew me to Bruce
to whom i suggested
we reorganise the gang
build a better atmosphere
& manscape our modern lives

his facial expression tightened
to seriously reply,

“mate, mate - it's not Sunday!”

Note: written on the back of news a Sydney 'jock' told to get himself to 'emergency' after describing a physical symptom on air suggested, hospital would be 'lost time'.

aloof over my head

it hurts me

where i live

in this ...

not yet accepted for publication

My poetry usually avoids head-on reference to, *lived experience* as a *disability* and this no exception – editors remain private about personal struggle – unavoidable when readerships require familiarity; necessarily modern.

a production-line breakdown

welding is a daily
occurrence

in the metal fabrication
industry.

something fractures ...

nor this

at the reading **[appeared at 'Impspired']**

i quickly
became uncomfortable

realizing
i did not fit in

Jack said my notebook
looked like a bible

i sooked off
overcome with memories
that still creep me out

with behaviour modification
working insincerity

his wife asked
why i was in the corner
and i joked about being a dunce

you know like school days

it fell to the floor lame as a byline

and i wondered if a linguist
could improve my diction

someone who knew better
to help me converse
so that when i opened my mouth
it did not simply sound 'he brew'

finally i slipped away
caught Jack's eye

nodded my farewell

i shan't do that again
too many old men in the world

the drive home was a bastard.

My last dip into 'No Laughing Matter' finds a little number that should resonate beyond these walls [and I insist these poems are past tense and learning tools for acceptance, picking self from the ground and with best intentions, moving forwards].

true to my word

i searched
tirelessly
for the truth

behind doors
under rugs
in cupboards
after hours
between meals

only to discover

it's not where
it used to be.

I cannot say how grateful I am to Mixed Creative – Atom, Renae, and Danica; our hosts Pam and Tracey and of course the regulars and everyone who also read or was supported by friends thanks ever so much.

So to end the reading, this, if still uncertain what to say when ‘rock star status’ knocks at the door of your aspiration.

yesterday/today/tomorrow

it appears

daily

the ...

unpublished

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