

For clarification I describe my poetry as sharp, industrial minimalism and so the content is what I want you to hear. Add social conscience and that's me.

I have denied my award-winning emerging poet status regularly until consistently this year after appearances in Journals again and again, suggesting I might almost be 'a published poet'.

Tonight you'll hear a voice still searching for that balance between struggle and dignity where I can consistently write, nuanced frictionless humour.

It would be fair to ask everyone here to accept your presence tonight, plays a strong part assisting me to believe in my craft.

I have been specifically encouraged on three separate occasions when commentary recommended I make the most of this opportunity. In 2017 after four or so readings in the southern suburbs when my welcome to the mic by Maria Vouis described my poetry as 'pithy'. The second time was in the words of 'New Poets 19' Judge, Thom Sullivan who said; 'his poems do more than just contribute to a conversation and they are imbued with a sense of irony and defiance'. That Anthology also included Maria and Bruce Greenhalgh. Finally and no less important were these words from Assoc. Professor Steve Evans who reported on a small sample of poems, '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'.

So, it sounds as if you're in for a treat.

.

At times this evening my interpreted sentiments may sound ugly and thankless but there will be shareable contexts. And please for continuity could you save any applause until the finish unless you are inspired by something I haven't anticipated.

Okay, into it.

The first poem reminds me that we 'can't and shouldn't'.

It is titled 'our place' and was published online in the US earlier this year.

our place

we came together
for drinks
chat
& a catch up
realign our pasts
with the joy of youth
before it slowed
lost momentum
& a glass fell

broke

mixed laughter
with tears
& we realised

we'd expected too much.

First published at
Hole in the Head Review # 3
issue 1 released on 1.5.22.
edited by William Schulz
[Geoffrey Aitken \(holeintheheadreview.com\)](http://holeintheheadreview.com)

Now I'd like to set the scene proper with a poem for the anonymous, recognised two years ago, as 'highly commended', at the 'mindshare awards', here in Adelaide 2020

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/>

The next found a place in Canada and describes an ugliness of real life too often distracted by alternate facts so that ignorance can favour its perpetrators. It sits in the 2020 ANTIFA Anthology - I wrote on the back of Civil Rights while I listened to rock n roll and then discovered links to 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Black Deaths in Custody' here at home while and after working remotely in central Australia.

Brutality

the police

are busy

dispersing

angry

riotous

righteous

crowds

on streets

in public places

directed

instructed

by lawmakers

who

legitimise

Big Pharma

Arms' Traders

Big Tobacco

Corporate Control

those law enforcement officers

are

after

the wrong people

First published at 'into the void' in
"WE ARE ANTIFA" Anthology,
October 6th, 2020, edited by Heath Brougher
'brutality'

Next is a poem short listed by Friendly Street Poets for the Nova Prize back in 2018 and it probably begins my journey. This almost wrote itself me unknown from an older self.

it's all relative

it's old

before it reaches me

i'm told

the light

the day

the news

the conversation

there's warmth though

and daylight hours are favourable

still dealing a life force

measured sometimes, in moments

and so

i make the fickleness last

etch notes in my journal

ignore life's frailty

expand the impermanence

until i have possessed

the full day

calling it mine

as if it were mine to own

First published, 'Friendly Street Anthology 42' "Dream-Water Fragment", 2018
Edited by Karl Cameron-Jackson and Ros Schulz and then by 'In Case Of Emergency Press', "One Surviving Poem 1", 2019 (AUS) edited by Howard Firkin.

And now, some currency. I left school prematurely, apprenticed, post trade qualification, mature aged undergraduate, drop out, traveler, hospitalized three times, 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've experienced. I wrote this only weeks ago.

personal grid lock

I am unable to include this unpublished poem as editors would refuse it as having appeared in the public domain and therefore unacceptable. Do look for word though of its appearance in a publication – soon – I hope.

I wish to briefly dwell on the previous concern hoping this situation I describe is well beyond a use by date. [We couldn't have built a less fair school system if we tried \(smh.com.au\)](https://www.smh.com.au) **Our framework of schools, our system, is broken and probably always has been. The way we provide, resource, and run schools has long advantaged some sections of the community, and some kids, more than others.**

[Chris Bonnor](#)

Co-author of [Waiting for Gonski: How Australia failed its schools](#) SMH, 23/09/2022 Opinion piece

spotted discipline

This poem is also unpublished and throughout any poems such as this must be removed for my poetic sustainability.

taut

i could almost hear
the perturbation
inside his head

an unremitting repetition
of twelve
long
school years
indoors
underpowered
and i imagined
his dream car
filled with mates
knocking about
suburban streets

me thinking
he should be
on the open road
but he'd know

wiser than the observation
 he was still going nowhere

First published in 'Ochre 10' an Anthology by Ochre Coast Writers, edited by Dr Steve Evans October 2020

A shift to another very recent poem that arose after reading a Double J report about a band looking to Melbourne, for their music survival. It is not a lesson.

Indie Rock

Again, this piece is unpublished. Look out for me at local 'open mic' because it can still be a reader.

SA is a world-renowned wine exporter and a home to invention – I have attempted to combine the two in this piece.

cardboard caskets

And another.

This next poem reflects on part of the journey of my generation, locally. Don't take it personally. I already have.

Rock and Roll didn't

And again, but please do persist with your reading as these poems (published) could invite enough interest to have you catch me at Adelaide 'open mic' – each month.

My father's return to SA post WWII was completely insalubrious, and in this next piece he and his mates would have known these words stood - then - this poem stands now though taking it beyond forums such as this immediately finds difficulty.

safe houses

Sadly another.

This next poem has been nominated by Radon, the Journal in which it appeared for ‘the best of the net’ - those poems published online rather than in traditional Anthologies. Mine will be one of hundreds. This looks closely at tomorrow’s leaders – clearly though via a lineage.

synonymous

i am a shopaholic

a neo progressive

basket filler

of contemporary ideals

and political propriety

i communicate relevance

while recycling

off-handedness

carelessness

and immediacy

i still seek value

quality and durability

while transacting

good humour

reliability

and authenticity

I power purchase

Radon Journal

[synonymous](#) | [Geoffrey Aitken](#) | [Radon Journal](#)

I am mixing it up. As a tradesman I briefly considered Port Hedland as an opportunity to make good money in 1974 with a mate who set himself up with some extremely hard years there. I've modernized it to read contemporarily.

FIFO Future

I am hopeful this poem will be accepted very soon as it is with editors for comment and recommendation.

This is going to be difficult to introduce as I attempt to articulate how I struggle with the frustration post graduate qualifications pose for me, appearing to demand Editors choose space in Bigger Journals for those voices over smaller less expressive observations unable to employ the language of higher art. **I have no confidence this would be accepted and so although unpublished it remains.**

paying forward the Canon in Shekels

[1

patrons found writers
for shared profit

in times past

my coffee is unaffordable
and words make no sense
without affirmation

while written submissions
are denied
along old expression's conduit

[2

i am mature-aged and a graduate
with added, unqualified suburban struggle

i saved money to write this

luxury

never having imagined
a PhD could necessitate

So I wrote this piece to explain how it has become for the poets I hear and like and prefer.

unaffordable

I must remove this piece as it tugs at heart strings and therefore has publication potential across the divide.

This piece is reconfigured to protect the innocent but based on a true story involving the back fence of The London Zoo. It is 'light verse', and many noted publications have little interest in such. **I shall also leave this poem; everyone still needs a laugh.**

risky verse

again he assured me

it was easy to get in

relaxed and confident

i joined him at the hole

in the suburban oval fence

here i asked him

about penalties if we were caught

commandingly he replied

it's only the footy mate

not the gallery

try again please

Not this one, however.

We are right at the halfway mark and to avoid a bottleneck at the finish may I mention my Chapbook, 'I want that in writing' – Connie has kindly agreed to make her handheld m/c available if \$5.00 is not yours in cash. In those are business cards with a link to a website 'poetryfeasting' where my wife posts family and found recipes and my poetry – all archived with poems and sites to explore. There are a host of business cards available if that is more to your liking.

To grow up for me was to be fascinated by girls and then women and then thinking women. I write my admirations into three poems.

Nor can this poem remain.

she is understated

Nor this but look out for it as I truly believe 'she' will find her home.

she did

she flew my kite
with girlish insolence
on that summer beach
along suburban pathways
through long days
and lasting nights
fed line
to peck Heaven
dance the moon
and
scuttle shipwrecked clouds
she beat my heart
with her avenue eyes
fixed to mine

she didn't have to
but
she flew my kite

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

This piece rounds out that set as a Commended in May at FSP monthly meeting.

symmetry

i was despondent
in childhood
over suffocation
of eagerness

unwelcome
discipline
& unyielding
boundaries

the uncertainty
principles
& so
i wasn't surprised
by failure
but

i did not anticipate
love.

[Two Poems | Discretionary Love](#)

Shaine Melrose is my go-to for the environment, but my one-off for tonight, is this piece.

smashing it in new ways

I must not – my best ‘environmental’ must be allowed an opportunity.

My family inheritance included self-deprecation to avoid what often found us and this piece looks to my writing. **Self-deprecation isn't a winner in poetry publications and so this can stay.**

the doctor on duty was intoxicated

the suspension
of belief

and conversion
of unpalatability

into an artwork

is highly valued
by the literary critic

where true admiration
and respect
is rewarded with a price

far beyond that of newsprint

I have learned I must not speak for First Nations, but I can share this poem included in the 'New Poets 19' where the science included 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

Another chuckle.

guess who, kids

Under consideration with an editor.

Science needs to be simplified for the masses who still believe it is far too difficult. The following is a simple observation by me of its ability to find principles worthy of our trust.

walk on

Can't let you have this poem either. For now at least.

These next two poems will appear at Wishbone Words in October, a site that recognizes chronic disability. Possible triggers.

do not steer across the road

every day

the feeling asks me

do you like it

the blade across your throat

i always answer that i don't

while aware of

the pressure against my temple

before i recall

my doctor's explanation

they are only triggers

some things you just can't know

i didn't know

it was

a beautiful world

before pop music

late adolescent

long haired

joy riding

was replaced

with employment

routine

savings

for mortgage capability

and reminders

that lived experience

would not inherit

into my daughter's burden

This is an in-betweenener - .

smaller big plans

I would like this poem to be accepted for its ambiguous links between war mongering and political advantage.

This is a very recent reflection on my city exploits as a seventies young modern. Today?
Same suit different mirror I suspect.

beast

Another poem I truly worked hard at and hope it finds a suitable home.

Almost everyone remembers (even when simplified) ‘no man is an island’. This wishfully, is me.

a literary precedent

Also still unpublished

Almost done. If you lose yourself – you must trust your friends.

lost and found

Yet another with a home nearby I truly hope.

I wrote this with some satisfaction – Editors haven't agreed, and perhaps it is now too old and therefore, without currency.

'just a jog'

I still hope this poem will reach an editor with an eye for global issues.

Before my final poem I wish to say a few words and then offer my thanks.

So finally, \$5.00 Chapbooks and business cards for website and Journal links.

My thanks to our host Mr. Darlington who is helping Connie realize her poetry venue dream at Wakanda Place as 'Speak, Hear' and who made tonight possible for me. We all appreciate the work done behind the scenes before each new month; so thank you. To Maria who graciously welcomes us here and to the mic, everyone who attended (especially my oldest friends) and those who make it each first Tuesday – invite your friends to support Wakanda Place. Hang around and grab a drink, have a chat, and enjoy the Bar's Bohemian atmosphere. Cheers.

mixed messages [I was thinking DISDAIN as an alternate title]

in this rush

in this cascade of hours

of service

locked onto weary

it appears

the bombs dropped

yesterday

were a mistake

& for clarity

the rockets sent

tomorrow

may also be in error.

[Geoffrey Aitken \(holeintheheadreview.com\)](http://holeintheheadreview.com)

Warm, erudite, and companionable night of poetry at Speak-Hear - Wakanda Multicultural Bar. Geoff Aitkin, the special guest for the night delivered a polished, remarkably coherent set of bite-sized poems piquant with politics and poignancy. Bravo ❤️ Maria Vouis, October 4th 2022