

This is not  
my gig

*poems*

Jackson

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# 'What are ya?'

Reading, spelling, mathematics,  
science. The space  
between the classroom  
and the bag room.

Full of loud kids.

'Euh, what are ya? What are ya?'

Yet again, one blocks

my path, sneering, jeering.

'Euh, Jackson, what *are* ya?'

Little intellectual girl,  
they don't want to know  
you're a homo sapiens sapiens  
like them.

Hold your spine straight,  
lock eyes with the monster,  
and say, loud and clear,  
so all its cronies hear,  
'I'm awesome, gorgeous and smart.  
What are you?'

# Australians

She said 'They put me  
in a prison, took away  
my name, gave me a number  
instead. For a year  
I was there, called by a number,  
answering to a number,  
giving a number  
when they asked my  
identity.'

My eyes were wet  
as she bravely made her speech.  
A young woman. I can't remember  
whether she was Tamil, Afghan,  
or what. I can't remember  
whether it was her who spoke  
about travelling on a boat  
across the open sea, with people  
getting sick  
and dying.

I came here on a 'boat', too.  
A luxury liner.

One rainy English day  
my parents saw a billboard.  
Come to Australia! Sunshine, opportunity!  
Ten pounds passage—the government  
paid the rest.

We stayed one week  
in a migrant hostel. The photo shows a cabin  
with curtains at the windows.  
My mother shy on the wooden steps,  
sunshine on her pale cheek,  
babies on her lap.

The shire of Bunbury needed a labourer.  
For three months we lived in lodgings  
on the main street, near the beach.

The next job came with a house.  
A front garden, a backyard.  
My dad heaved logs into the boilers  
of the last steam pump  
on the Goldfields water scheme.  
The photo shows him shirtless,  
all taut muscle.  
There were shit jobs then, too

but in the pub  
the blokes called him 'mate'  
and the local families  
invited us to their parties.

'They locked me  
in a prison, took away  
my name, gave me  
a number.'

I'm old enough to have gone to school  
in an all-white class.  
At uni the white students hardly mixed  
with the ones from South-East Asia.  
We called them 'choges'.  
We said it to name  
what we couldn't speak:  
the newness, the fascination,  
the fear.

Even now, whenever I meet  
a person whose language  
is different to mine, whose idea of fashion  
is different to mine, whose idea of God  
might be different to mine, whose idea of breakfast  
might be different to mine, whose manners  
are different to the ones my mother showed me

I'm afraid. The stupid reptile  
at the base of my brain  
is scared that this  
unfamiliar creature

might want my eyes  
as a snack

but that day, they were wet  
as the gentle young woman spoke.

'They locked me up.  
They took away my name.  
They gave me a number  
instead, for a year.'

She didn't give this 'they' a name.

She was talking about  
Australians.



Friday  
a retired man paints  
his new picket fence

# a book

a tree

trees

music

dancing

a coastline

a product

scent or breath

a shell

a voice

voices

furniture

hands or nails or fingers

hands or nails or fingers

a tarmac road

a bird

a bird

fabric or coat or clothing

fabric or coat or clothing

fabric or coat or clothing

fabric or coat

a building

a room

a cat

a cat

a city

a gun

a book

a book

depths

night

darkness

a screen

an email

Facebook

a tongue

a kiss

a mouth

semen

the moon  
the moon  
the moon  
nothing  
a penis  
a penis  
a penis and a vulva  
wind  
a toad  
an insect  
food  
food  
satellites  
a pillow  
a face  
eyes  
a mobile phone  
a fluorescent tube  
plants  
fire  
dreams  
hair  
hair  
a knife  
a name  
a name  
a wound  
a path  
hands or nails or fingers  
a needle  
a garden  
a person  
a person  
fabric or coat or clothing  
a book  
shell-shards  
skin being washed  
a chain or leash or cord

# a black dress

Melbourne 17/9/2011

Bridget says *the fog*  
*is coming in I'm touched*  
*by the road toll* something veiled  
in the distance a spoilt brat  
raised in the firstworld cot  
my every shit licked up  
and praised my every shit  
an activism my every shit  
a scar you can breathe to make  
you sick my sister I don't notice you  
coughing I don't even see you I'm looking  
for something veiled in the distance a long  
cigarette holder Meg says *given*  
a black dress a leather coat *these disputable truths* Bridget  
says *the fog is coming in*  
*I'm touched by the road toll*  
*this ship is yours* not fucking likely Candice says  
*step up and be the man beside me* my passive-  
aggressive character defect my resistance by inaction not  
my fault not my fault they  
gave me it and when I drank it  
the pain went away but his parents  
are lovely she said such lovely people it must be him  
there is something wrong with him his every shit  
an action his every piss a resistance his every word  
a bullet his every sigh a blanket his absence  
the cold his absence the winter he is creating  
all these beats where are my family? where  
is my country? but he is so still *sometimes no matter*  
*where I go sometimes I wonder just what I'm doing*  
*there* someone says a black dress a leather coat what  
do I do now that this has occurred? if I danced it would look  
like a performance the floor is strong  
smooth wood the music is fine nobody dares  
to dance this is not my gig boys  
with their doe-eyed dates eventually it will begin my eyes

are sharp *no matter where I go* it's kind of dark  
here he is creating all these beats a black dress nobody  
dares to dance what  
do I do now this  
is not my gig

## closed

At the river park there are geese  
and ducks and parrots, all talking  
their morning talk, and an owl  
with a round white face.  
Its exquisite flecked and patterned wings  
are a spread fringe of white and brown.  
Quietly it lies on the grass,  
its modest beak closed,  
with a tall tree above it,  
a trail of ants beside it,  
and a black blob for an eye.

## sunflower

the black centre of the sunflower  
is where the seeds are

Friends, Forget REVOLUT

Our **Shaken** up

Simply ECHO the Safety

the engine, the better BC

and YOUR History

try to interest THE gone in

Lock woman in.  
out.

missing : One COLLECTIV

ION , dust ,

olive branch

**THOUGHTS**

message & *Celebrate*

BOTTLE Top lives

oric BLONDE Homes .

n *Something* :  
wants -

Favourites -  
stew -

E tomorrow

# wall (a deconstruction)

wall  
defensive bank  
rampart  
or army  
against enemy  
or sea  
defensive bank  
rampart  
army  
or person

what enemy  
what sea

chromed creamed painted  
walls  
I don't tree  
roof  
I don't sky  
floor  
I don't  
earth

what enemy  
what sea

the walls! the walls! the walls!  
the tarmac desert  
distance disen-  
gage Dr Phil's *I will pretend I will put  
on a smile I will say  
I'm alright for you*\* Rules  
distance dis-  
engage walls I don't tree  
roof I don't sky  
floor  
I don't earth

---

\* Martha Wainwright 'BMFA' reference

what enemy

if the walls  
went away  
who the hell  
would we be  
naked  
in the naked sun

if the precious  
dense  
walls  
went away  
who the hell  
would we

block block block block block  
block block block block block  
a thin line  
again  
again  
again  
class construction  
object wall

object dirty\_creature  
    wet\_leathered\_foot  
object drip drip drip  
    torrent  
object mist zephyr  
    hurricane  
object photon photon photon beam campaign  
    forcefield songline  
    tendrils\_fingers  
object neuron axon dendrite  
object response impulse  
    pulse

function demonstrate  
function symbolise  
function compensate



function postulate  
function demarcate  
function repulse  
    function defend  
    function surround  
    function enclose  
        function protect  
        function support

wall  
the rock  
    defending  
        the ore

wall  
the membrane  
    embracing  
        the womb

wall  
the structure  
    supporting  
the cell  
its mitochondria's  
    liquid buzz

who the hell  
would we be

wall  
the steep  
    face  
of a wave  
    before it breaks

# In the dream, he tells me he doesn't need a condom

In the dream, he tells me  
he doesn't need a condom  
because

he has his book. In the dream, we've both  
read it. Condoms are a manifestation  
of Capitalism. A Bad Thing. Probably

made by Monsanto. We don't  
need them. We can use our minds  
to divert the sperm. In the dream

I know it works, if done  
correctly, wholeheartedly,  
together. We have to trust.

I can't.  
I can't.  
I *can't*. Yet

in the dream, we don't  
have a condom  
to our name.

# the window

I would make a mirror  
from whatever I  
have, so that you can see  
that you are not  
broken,  
that there is nothing  
to fix,  
that you are not a machine,  
to be utilised  
or left to rust —  
that, as I have told you before,  
you are a living tree.

Today it seems to me  
that you are a bonsai,  
trunk trammelled by wires into tight  
stunted twists,  
roots trimmed, contained, compressed  
in a box,  
over-reaching branches  
docked.

What is the secret  
of the bonsai?

Perhaps it longs  
to be a giant tree in a public park,  
sheltering all kinds of creatures  
from the flensing wind and blast-furnace sun,  
spreading a generous mulch of leaves,  
throwing up seedlings,  
having initials carved in its skin  
by random lovers and idlers.

Perhaps it likes  
its current situation  
on a sunny sill  
in a small house,  
the nibbles and nips

of its particular custodian,  
the measured irrigation,  
the admiring apprehension  
of visiting connoisseurs.

Or perhaps it yearns  
for nothing more  
than a way  
to open the window,  
so it may have  
the peppermint mist,  
the chilli sun,  
and the jasmine midnight moonlight  
on its leaves.

## little

my arms around my six-foot son  
hold only a little  
part of him

## playing

a violinist outside  
the Gallery  
playing all day long

# Over Heard

The underlying thing of that whole thing  
That's not for her to letter in

It's out of my price range, lady  
Tower, like I heard

Maybe you were blasé  
But he flew as a criminal

It's interesting, you know  
The outstanding ant

Two parents who are married  
So he dies on the moors

Regular problems  
Certainly you were excited

It's within my debt cage, bitch  
To moor his boat

That's not for her to figure out  
Or was she sober?

So Dave's still working  
And then he came to Mawson Base

And in IT he got bored  
That jagged ease she might have had

Have a day without  
That partial ant

A slowness  
The anarchy of the moors

Or was she drunk?  
And in theatre he got enthralled

Well, like I said  
He trained as a lawyer

So Jenny's still relaxing  
Couldn't stand

The Mawson Base sand collective  
So you forget

Then he went to London  
To disfigure himself in taverns

His aeroplane, and his destroying play  
He lives on the Thames

So he's now able to represent himself in court  
To release his aeroplane

It's dull, you have no idea  
The law of the Thames

Forgets his place  
A scientist, a physicist

Couldn't sit  
He's always building

## Λ limerick

A monkey who lived in the zoo  
got terribly bored with the view.  
There was nothing to eat.  
There was no-one on heat.  
So he played with his shit, as you do.

# shot

a candid shot  
of the military dictator  
the burnt child  
in his eyes

# of cut country

*Art Gallery of WA Admin Building*

This was built of cut country  
by exiled boys dreaming.  
The high windows present their mouths,  
stone-jawed. On each upper lip, a scroll  
is a waxed moustache.

The wrought-iron fence has abstract paws,  
marking the land with the Lion's toes.  
Its stemtops are sketches of buttercups,  
pistils fisting from their iron centres.

one, two, three, many

# Poem, 12 June 2012

as the storm tries the wired walls  
the lantern's door is open  
and a new candle hopes  
for sudden dark

# carry

Carry on as if nothing has changed.  
Let yourself be carried away.  
Carry yourself like a dancer.

If I carry equal weights in my left and right hands,  
I can walk much further.  
People think I carry my computer everywhere.  
I carried my babies close to my heart.

If I lived in America  
I'd be tempted to carry a gun.  
When will I be carried away?  
Do I carry myself like a dancer?

I won't be carried away  
by anyone but myself.  
I still carry a photograph somewhere.  
Carry your baby close to your heart.

# Λ storm poem

I sit in my layers of clothes  
as the storm sucks and exhales  
The wooden windows bump  
and rain caws on the corrugated roof

I wonder what the ravens are doing  
I suppose they're in a huddle  
in the northeastern quarter  
of a strong tree with thick foliage,  
gripping the bark with their claws,  
hunching their heads in their wingpits  
and fluffing their down

I hope the slanting tracks of their feathers  
don't leak

*a jet engine  
displayed in a window*

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