

John Tranter

The
BLAST
AREA

Gargoyle Poets 12

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This book is dedicated with respect and affection to the memory of John Darcy.

Sovereign Lords of Death, I've neither cursed nor praised you. Pity me, a traveller who's made so many of these journeys without luggage, with no master, no money, with fame gone elsewhere; surely you're mighty, surely you can take a joke, pity this madman who, even before he passes the barrier, even, now is shouting his name to you; catch him in mid-air, let him fit if he can to your customs and to your attitudes, and if it pleases you to help him, then I pray, help him.

— Henri Michaux

NEGATIVES

Money is a kind of poetry.

— Wallace Stevens

ON THE BEACH

'It's not at all bad here,' he said, 'in the winter.'
 Turning to the gramophone: 'Play it again. Remember
 that? Remember? Casablanca. The White House.'
 Stitching together an old gesture of Bogart's.
 'Why, there's the wine . . . enough to get drunk.
 A trunk of white sand, bones, sea-wrack. We make do,
 don't we?' Leaden sky, sea chewing at the shoal,
 wrecks glitter in the mist. A ceaseless distant rumble
 deadens the atmosphere. 'What we don't do, we make
 believe. Props, phoney reminiscences, skeleton deeds,
 isn't that the game? Spinner?' He's had a bellyfull of sail.
 The pictured spinnaker bellies from the wall,
 hail lashes at the frozen wash.

That's the story, I suppose, to fix a human action
 in a chemical flux, or print a flush of dyes
 in black and white. As bleached ribcage, matted feathers
 tangle in a foam slurry to an image like a clenched fist,
 so the old salt weathers out a season in deceit.
 He acted in front of the lidless lens
 last Fourth of July, for the deaf Redskin. 'No paint,
 you'd swear it was the real blood! Swear!
 Right? Skinner?' Right onto the reef in a foamburst
 and making up for the girls. The old goat.

MARK

Mark finished it himself, choosing midnight
 and a garbage-littered swamp. He scrawled a note
 and stuffed it in a pocket: 'Like shooting a dog.
 The Vibrations. Someone please try to bring me back.'
 They pulled him from the mud and dressed him up
 and put him underground again. A week before that
 he'd grabbed me in the street, shaking,
 speaking in a foreign tongue. Lost for seven years.
 'It's all right, I'll move along,' he said. Cosmic radiation
 fried his brain. He had tapped a private source
 of horror cliches; nightmare rushed out,
 and the gestures that he used in self-defence
 were worn threadbare with too much fingering.
 He wove a plot to save the masses; loners,
 misbegotten, drifting on the edges of Night City.
 All he needed was 'charisma'. One day he left a note:
 'The Princess: She must be saved, even at the cost of death,
 her own death, if need be. I'm sorry that I cut the Cross
 against the grain, damaging the door. Yours. Mark.'
 Vibrations called him from a network
 on the other side of town. He had scuttled off
 by the time the medics came to strap him down.

Once, years ago, when he was 'elegant', he brought us wine;
 we ate well, and drank by candlelight. It seemed that sanity
 was easily bought; one needed only to be young.
 Methedrine, in moderation, kept him on the track.
 'I'm not interested,' the doctor said, 'in arty
 reminiscences. Find the stupid prick and bring him back.'

THE GUADALCANAL MOTEL

They hold no holidays at the Guadalcanal Motel;
the Sergeant stumps about the dusty yard
trying out his new leg and the President weeps
in his spider-web study, while the peons
run chattering off the rocks and drown themselves
in the grey Pacific. They make no mourning,
keeping part of their trivial sorrow in reserve
for the day when it will be needed again,
for the night when the blue troops splash ashore
and rake the sandhills into patchwork rat shit,
bringing the Guadalcanal Motel into the arms
of the New Republic amid a litter of spent shells.
They haunt the American conscience like a rotten nightmare
in a flicker of old movie clips: 'Platoon Five!
Take the hill!' And the ambulance drivers
weep and slash the air with glass slivers
from a shattered windscreen. They take no leave,
beating the stubborn earth with blunt clubs
in a travesty of agriculture, and ripping up
whatever foliage they might encounter, which is not much,
green being a surreal and worthless
luxury in the Motel trenches.
Each morning they salute the statues

of the ancient king who sold them into slavery
and the franchise king who brought them
money, poverty and Coca Cola.

GUERNICA

There's no use questioning the wretch
with his face in tatters and the bandolier
holding his guts together. You'd be better
stretching on the cobblestones beneath a tank
to get a view: that tank across the village square
aiming its throat at the running grenadier
and the hog-leg pistol in his belt.
Take the Stuka staking out the air
with banshee breath; the bombing pilot
has a dark complexion, and his thumb on the button
is very easily dealing death. There is no
postcard view of the town, in this ruin,
though russet palms flock to the 'Med'
as they have done before, and delighted many.
Take the army, in its various wreck,
and the rising tide of dead, who cry to us
through the watery lens: Huh! You!
Tomorrow we are mutton! Any nightmare
is equal when the dream chokes to an end!
If you like the beach you'll find the water blue.
The blasting Oerlikon executes a rhyme
and strips the pilot from his sight.

There's no use cornering the gunner in his grief.
His fingers rest along the rim of night.

THE COUNTRY OF LOVE

There are great fingers of ice that turn to rain
then to acrid tears, there is a house
for the blind, and in the house, a morbid Supervisor
seeing everything, who in his uniform
stares each day at the old blind men, there are plants
that reach down to the ground and grip! The sun
in his daily penitential journey strikes the old
stumbling men, warming some, but killing many! The tears
are not dried up, the ice remains a tumbled glacier,
tussocks start up from the field as if
clods were horror-struck and hair stood on end,
grass reaching up for air above the thicket,
and there is no stone (this is the country of Love)
but brambles pluck their vengeance on the Traveller
whose tears are never dry, being constantly replenished
from his horrid grief, the worse for being foolish
and without substance! For She is still in love

though in another country where the shafts of ice
drift to gentle snow, and fashionable couples
glide by on skis, and all the light permitted
is a kindly glow, and all these things are visible!
And hurtful to the sight the old blind men flounder
in the white which darkens to a muted blue
then to purple glowing in the champagne dusk!

POEM ENDING WITH A LINE BY RIMBAUD

He: It is easier to like the soldier
when he laughs and shoots a foaming dog
rather than a man, or child, and easier then
to hold the hand grenade. No plane comes
down faster when the jets are shot
than the law of gravity allows. Let the radar
plot, let the men drink poisoned lemonade.
It is better to allow the tide
to bring the fish in as they will,
or in that shoal as that shoal moves
like a flock of leaves across the hill,
across the traffic and the school of windscreens
damp with love. Leave the office,
leash the dog that nibbles at his bone,
bring all your country longings to an end.
Prepare your face to be an imprint of the scene
the clock, the limping man, the cash machine.
Wax the ski. Compress the snow.

She: Et mon bureau?

THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE DIESEL ENGINE

On or about the time of the death of your friend, did you make certain inflammatory remarks to the effect that the promulgation of a state of bliss (*Ananda*) was both the responsibility of the State and the inalienable right of the Working Class?

— No.

Did you attempt to convince certain members of the USAID mission at Loc Nol that this state of bliss (*Ananda*) could be likened metaphorically to that state of mechanical repose evidenced by the U-Boat of the Tiger' class under the command of a distant relative of Field-Marshal Rommel at about 0530 hours on the 29th of April, 1943?

— Yes.

Was this state of knowledge-being-awareness (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*) reported missing in action during the closing phases of the Pacific war?

— Yes.

How did you describe the advantages of this gambit?

— The U-Boat was resting on the surface of the water.

What was the reason given for this action?

— Brahman was charging its batteries.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE THIRD REICH

On or about the time of the funeral of your friend, did you make certain remarks referring to the hypothesised connection between the 'desire' of Brahman to perceive itself, and the projected re-emergence of the NSDAP?

— It's possible. I think I was either 'stoned' or 'being stoned' at the time.

You were observed in conversation with a 'young woman'. Is this 'woman' a 'friend'?

— No.

Did you later describe this woman as a 'good screw'?

— No. (Aircraft noise)

Do you wish to continue this conversation?

— Conversation?

Do you wish to avoid these questions which, spreading their roots, bring in the end only *ivresse et folie*?

— Ah-oo-gah! Ah-oo-gah!

Are you about to dive?

— Yes.

Is it true that I am mentally unstable?

CHEAP THRILLS

One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse.

— T. S. Eliot

WHAT CAMUS SAID

Peta, flayed red on the harrowed sand.
Dune buggy aerials across the tattered sky.
'I dropped surfing,' she said, 'you know,
too slow, all that bullshit mysticism.
Give me a good stretch of tar,
something to break the monotony.
What was it Camus said? He bought his
in an auto wreck. He should know.
Want a steak?' Nothing more personal
than the firm muscle, sheen of sweat;
she tricked you with a sly honesty.
'I suppose you'd say it's sexual,
I mean, that gearstick stuff.'

I watched her drop back into second
just before the crest. She
shot off the top of the sand ridge
and vanished: Camus, Frank O'Hara,
all the restless ghosts.

LOVE STORY

They had lunch by the lake
then they gathered up their movements and drove
head first into the accident of the city.
Will you move into my apartment?
Will you climb out of bed at sunrise?
They drove put into the country of trees.
I would like the season to be grateful
in the way it has of being less than cruel.
Showers, easy traffic, make up the symphony
they wallow in, in the framework of personal
past tense, now that we watch them
flashed and faded in the photograph.
We can move over the Alps!
They sat behind the window of the limousine
and watched the sun rise into the weather.

They drove head first
into the beautiful accident.

THE BIG PORSCHE

We watched Sebring on a crate of beer,
the sick men in the mad machinery.
Pushing two hundred past the flag.
'Take that McQueen — can he drivel
And with a broken foot!
She swung the spanner, clank!
clank! against the block. 'No cracks
there, at any rate. See you at Monaco.'

She wrapped it up later, the big Porsche,
and they had to pull her out of the wreck.
Six months in hospital, and she said to me
'Well, he came in second, but he was
wheeling it on his own. Did you
see the interview? He looked awful.
Christ it hurt.'

THE TERRITORY OF DARKNESS

Under the pressure of great acceleration
the heavy cars left the grid. Hours later
there were no vehicles to be seen.
We visited Italy on an impulse, she said. Two cars
fled around the corner. One red, one green.
The sky was a terrible white.
They were 'in pursuit of speed'.
We left the country late that evening under cover
of high velocity, thunder from a twin exhaust
and low cloud. There were flowers at the border
for the drivers of the cars which had vanished
into the territory of darkness. One of the borders
turned red in the night.

The air was obsessive, the cars followed
at incredible speed, into the darkness.
The next time we returned under cover
of a dubious cargo, drifting through the mist at dawn,
there were no drivers to be seen.

THE DUBIOUS SYNTHESIS

Peta made it easy for the boy: good food,
a dab of poetry, a lust for dictionaries.
She was amusing, all right, moving fast
to keep the mistakes under control.
'How difficult,' she complained to me once,
'how tiresome to wear a whole society like a pack!
The weight! the stupidities! the greed!'
Nonetheless she made a job of it. She
made it difficult for all of them: bad faith,
a stab at honesty, abusive literacy.
'How simple it would be,' she told me,
'to shuck off the whole greedy pack. Friends,
lovers. Chuck the lot of them!'

'I keep making some synthesis,' she said,
'and it never works. Speed, power, greed.
Do you call this living?'

COMPROMISE

Certain vehicles are produced for luxury.
The engineer removes his overcoat
and steps into the spartan frame. Steel surrounds him,
fittingly. He moves the vehicle at great speed
along the motorway. The girl in the skimpy mink
climbs into the leather seat and rushes about
in a frenzy of comfort. She would like more speed!
Other vehicles have the aim of brutal power.
The staff of the engineer are all regretful,
attempting to steer a middle course.
They come together in a new design:
staff, engineer, the girl who gets around.
They move about the highways in a game of elegance
dreaming of metal, markets, power, contradictions.

The people of the countryside also move about,
strapped to the spartan frame of compromise.

MAKING IT

He idles home along the waterfront at dawn,
the motor ticking over. The sun is an orange blob
on a lake of blue paint, he thinks.
He is not often wrong. Peta languishes in her apartment
as well as she can, which is easily
though lacking style. The sun gives a bright shudder
across the mirror in the marble room.
It is all because of the money! she imagines.
She is wrong. He is a big hairy bastard! The money!
He has another girl in Switzerland,
another car, another bank account.
The red Daytona ticks along as best it can,
which is very well indeed. He thinks:
She is *wham! Big tits!* He is an American.
She thinks: wham! big tits! so what,
desiring the pretty chambermaid. She is sometimes
so inclined: wham! motor car! chambermaid!
The sun does its best to rise over the Mediterranean
and make a big blue day. They love, as best they can,
which is very clumsily, but well.

MONEY IS A KIND OF POETRY

Consider the images which orbit
around the red Ferrari: style, expertise,
aggression. Consider the manipulation
of the symbols which surround the red Ferrari,
consider the bull in the ring, how the colours
bring him to madness, if it is possible
the machine will excite certain glands,
if it can be done the car will break up
under the strain. There is much to be considered:
engineering subtlety, brutality, immense
advertising. Consider the money

that whirls in a heated constellation
in the vast brain of the red Ferrari.

THE QUESTION OF VALUES

It was too late to leave for France, with the snow
embroidering the brown sky. There was a rime of dirty ice
along the edges of the gravel, and sour green
where rotting leaves splashed the lawn.

‘So we stayed with the Countess,’ said Peta, ‘though
we knew she wasn’t real.’ Two lightning flashes laced
the uniform she wore. It was predictable:
history repeating itself across the lake, justice
perverted to a cruel luxury. The dark came early,
moved down from the alps in a silent avalanche
and filled the grounds. So they lived, for an afternoon,
in an ‘atmosphere of monstrous corruption.’
She would talk about it later as a watershed,
a time of sickness when the will became infected
and led the spirit to stumble through the future
with a repetitive spasm. ‘You know I look sane,’
she said, ‘and beautiful; but by God
you don’t know the half of what I lost.
When things are possible, their value, good or bad,
can come to less than nothing. Is that right?’

It was too late to leave for Paris. Vast hail
slaked the damp grey countryside. ‘We were very
young,’ said Peta. ‘It would seem.’

THE LAST RUN

Coming over the pass in poor weather
 Peta at the wheel — into a new countryside
 and a different view of hard labour.
 There was time enough to taste an apprenticeship
 to cheap thrills, but a loose one in the group
 brought bad news — some train wreck,
 a touchy omen of sex developed to hysteria.
 We left the most expendable friendships at the station.
 Disaster gambled for our favour, Doctor Threat
 made a subtle play for our regard. No chance, with such a
 tight judiciary, so we filled the tank and moved out.
 The weather querulous, all the roads bad
 and a troubled motor — these deterred,
 though soft hands were capable.
 ‘Did I tell you about Paolo? And the Dwarf Intelligence?’
 Something to do with the police in another state,
 another frame of mind. So we told stories,
 mostly true, about the taste of youth for foolishness
 and high speed. Darkness moved on.

We were soon out of danger and through the pass —
 the last run, she promised,
 though we knew it wouldn’t keep.
 Too much truth in sex, too much opportunity
 for soft developments. Looking back
 over the mountains where the frost
 bit our shoes, she said ‘Damn it,
 I liked the countryside,
 and the people who escaped.’

THE DISTILLATION OF A STYLE

They were running well ahead of time
when a jagged flash cracked the perspex
and the road skidded out of sight.
A fighter plane drops over the rise
and leaps forward for the sea. I am left
to think on eagerness. They were willing
to leave risk out of the reckoning so that a style
could be distilled: trim, essential, tight,
without encumbrances and no remorse,
lopping off a second from the reflex arc.
They broke through the forest and down the slope
with a burst of power. Some detail bent askew.
They tracked a red splash along a wall
and left a smudge of oilsmoke wiped across the sky
in a hasty scrawl, an empty valley,

and a fighter plane dwindling into the cloudbank
where the line of sea attempts a perfect emptiness.

THE SUMMING-UP

Some time later I visited the scene of devastation.
 The tyre marks were still there, held in reverence
 by those whose bitterness had tied them down
 and whose accommodation to a new political reality
 had bought them cheap. The` press was active, it was said,
 papers fluttered through the cafés, fat fingers
 fiddled with a dozen rings. The girl
 was raddled with the need to kill:
 Teta and the needle — tell me,
 how do you deal with such memory?
 As the women moved among the tables
 in a morbid shoal, the light appeared to fail.
 I remembered Peta at the crossroads braking hard
 in a dangerous shift that quickly gained acceptance,
 admirers, a slow disintegration into decadence.
 The smart boys are dressed up, moving out,
 and what was once unique, a gesture, risk
 that stung with beauty, has now become a cheapened ritual.

How is it that such things pass from guesswork imitation
 into wonder — that much is easy — then to dance,
 animal dance beneath the trees? How is it
 that the café crowd applauds a riddle,
 when the key — Peta was beautiful, in a phrase —
 would turn their flattery to hate?
 How is it that pain will hunt so far,
 and such a victim?

THE POEM IN LOVE

It's possible that a poem in its own realm of being may take on a life of its own, and thus return by means of love some of the anguish and the suffering invested by the poet in its creation.

— Paul Ducasse

THE POEM IN LOVE: I

There's no end to this thing, it moves out,
 killing. Difficult to find, yet it lives on
 in plain daylight free of detectives
 avoiding the plastic explosives. Like the
 Gatling gun it clacks around in a windmill comedy
 of noise and portability (you never know
 when you might need to love it again,
 and thus you'll have to carry it about, won't you)

or, later, in the French café of its choice, quite
 independent of you (and yet you thought of it,
 didn't you, or gave it life, or
 something similar free of plastic
 mint alcohol, in its own amusement
 to its own delight

2

Then it moves on, and you are heartstruck
 or stagebroken, but later you will ride out
 dressed in black, on a moon-blue palomino
 of your own choosing to match the scenery
 and find it hiding somewhere again! and you
 will laugh, possibly, and grip its hand
 and take it to the beach of its richest liking
 and if you will find driftwood and light the fire

put on some coffee and the aromatics of its choice,
 perhaps it may promise never to leave you again!
 And you will laugh at this foolish 'promise'!
 knowing (having made the creature) how it misbehaves
 understandably, having to avoid the trap of aromatics,
 burnt coffee, and a million tons of love.

3

'Free at last!' you will smile, self-deluded,
 knowing your tears ready to gush at the slightest
 memory of its beauty, and all the dumb remembrances
 dogging your darkness when you sleep alone
 and dream of catching it again and how you will hold
 hands et cetera in a foam bath of love!
 You sleep alone with staring eyes and
 a handful of mint leaves tousled in your hair

(your freshly washed hair, beautiful!) and you are still
 hoping to stun it again, and have it all,
 all for yourself like a schoolgirl . . . you,
 fool, stagestruck clubfinger, still in love
 with its aroma, with its sweet dreams aroma
 bullshit nerve gas platitudes!

4

Sunstruck on Wilshire Boulevard nothing makes sense,
 autos starved of gas and people drivelling,
 and yet . . . yet you remember Coleridge, and several
 Revolutions! How do you explain it? With the
 tears running down like that? Your makeup
 blown and your cover shredded up? You know
 your right hand is empty, no gun, sun bathers
 bathing on the run, and you getting out!

Ah, you should be used to it. You make the thing you
 love, and give it ornaments, and tricking out the deck
 becomes the rage, and baubles make the being
 of the thing! You start again, new private eye
 greasing on the move, and all you look for
 is bruised light clouded in the mirror's sheen.

5

Big deal you're all alone again with freaky dreams
 stumbling through the forest where you find yourself,
 the dream fumbling with a club, but don't think
 the big freaky Dream becomes the Poem.
 The club smashes down the pretty drinks
 you and it loved so well.
 So you and it and all the sticky failures
 move out to that new territory

full of treachery and broken glass,
 queer declensions, fields of icicles,
 frost, snow, blue gloom and paradise
 where you, it, she, he and them balloon
 into the verbal network like a rubber sponge
 (you and your tangled hair: beautiful!

6

the Poem finds a mutual revulsion
 to discuss, and if talk founders on the trunk line
 on the rocks of new leucotomy, as some believe,
 by the Vilna, by the Don, after black nerve winter
 which you know will never end so long as
 you and it are arguing with club and claw
 you hear the neural network breaking down
 transmitters fusing with the voltage overload —

you know it really loves you something dreadful
 endogenous depression's not enough
 the Doctor breaks in with a message from the Poem
 now long vanished: 'Meet me, princess, lover!
 all smacked up on the highway
 down by the river: bridge' the new trap trick

7

The city is beautiful in the evening,
 seen from a height, with that traffic
 breaking rules along the line of light.
 Motorised developments emerge from the Poem that
 is the city into the Poem that breaks away from
 your dotted white mind, so you are caught in your
 emotions like a flock of red lights and the buses
 bustling to get through along the pipeline.

You are told to say 'The city is
 beautiful in the evening,' as though nightfall
 grew into a frock of lights to clothe the Poem
 that now walks in beauty like the diesel tram.
 You, collapsing back to trucks shunting in the yard
 of your wide emotion now reduced to metal poverty.

8

You are inside the 'scream'. Yes, it's very like
 an empty room with sky blue holes where the
 paintings have been removed for your protection.
 No clothing, it's called 'naked' like the 'scream'
 in the empty room becoming the house expanding into
 a sky blue hole blowing up to the exact size
 of your imagination. Think of television with its
 cathode snow above the treeline going blue.

You will search for emaciated verbs to stuff up
 the cracks of your imagination for imagination read
 horror of the empty room where love is all you beg for
 and the Poem has gone to Acapulco for the Fire Season
 of the Acapulco Gold and other aphrodisiacs
 of its liking, of its best desire,

9

Yet this loneliness only means that the Poem
 has gone off to ponder its resources, so let it alone
 in the café where it can meander through the lists
 of great men and their works. For isn't it you
 who feature so brightly in its wildest dreams?
 You don't believe it? Yet it's true, for it finds
 nothing else to render comfort in that realm
 where words tumble into space and get lost

in a cold bigger than a plastic bomb exploding
 a silent violet blast in outer space or so
 you imagine, yet something remains of 'kindness'
 for your fortitude in giving nerve kicks to this poem
 who rushes out with other 'friendly writers'
 and gets totally lost on the fringe of the blast.

10

Exploring the blast area is like
 thousands of tiny microbes having arguments,
 so you prepare for the inevitable monster.
 To return to the movies is like eating cake, so
 easy and so forlorn that tears spring to mind.
 Is it cold beneath the Arafura Sea? Will television
 pop like smoke bombs across the paddy fields? And then
 in our armchair the girls will cuddle us together, so

warm, so drastic, that only our manacles will be able
 to prevent us from harm and moral slop.
 This is what the Poem will hit us with: is it
 good enough to be prepared? Or will lunatics
 adopt the mask of eminent professors
 and slide us all down into the cloud chamber?

I I

So the Poem flutters in the room without a cage,
 no message, reach for window, brush the mirror
 with its feathered wing. Too much? How much
 will the average line pretend, how much tension
 will the wire bear before the wire begins to sing,
 the tightrope breaks a knot? How much meaning
 will your page extend? When the line repeat
 defeat! defeat! And whose the feet that

beat against the stair? Climbing to an attic
 with a view of ruin and a handy ledge.
 When did the wind 'wither through the sedge'
 like a madman running fingers through his hair?
 Force your hesitance. Make do. Face the
 sheet of glass. Despair.

I 2

Beneath the point of view there's
 something like a hole, and if you wait around
 it will crawl all over your body. The hole
 is called 'prose' and never ends, as the point of view
 is named Verse' and never ceases riddling.
 You could do better. Later the girls
 will lick you all over like a wet hole.
 Sooner than you think the ocean will become huge.

It is better if you leave. Beneath the film
 there's a gaping laugh like a traffic accident,
 and all your fortunes will come true there.
 Wait for the lights to change and jump into the soup.
 The Poem is nowhere to be seen, so piss off. Later,
 in the bar full of maniacs, you will be given a prize.

13

The shoddiness of the work springs from the obvious haste with which it was assembled, you say, as a roebuck might spring from a bush if prodded, and the vast size which overwhelms the viewer as an elephant will blot out a footstool, and then crush it. But more must be said — apart from the speed which is charming, dizzy, and at the same time dubious, and the weight

lowering over your shoulder like a cloud of dirty gas, there are similes, metaphors and gruesome images all tending to confuse like a martini's ingredients all slopped together, stirred up and not shaken in the proper manner, for there is a great lack of proper manner in the whole shitty mess.

14

And more repulsive than this absence of decorum which may be just a trick like a talking dog or a brand new theory of poetics dragged unwillingly out of a hat and made to squeak, there is a sour taste and a whetted edge to the thirsty intellect, as though the Poem loathed its very medium and thus the world and the big blue sky which we know is good for breathing.

How can we endorse a monster? Christianity is dead but something else lives on, and it is our duty to believe it. How can we adore a dirty head? We do not masturbate. We respect the 'truth' of 'art' which is now having its pretty face rubbed in the shit of politics like a new theory of a talking pig.

The concept of the abandoned Poem reluctantly
becomes plausible, and then very interesting.
Like all bad art it is phoney. Goodbye!
At night you could hear the language
burning fiercely, and the heavy traffic
moving about. Goodbye! Oh, how I loved you!
Isn't that what it said? And all this
burnt to a crisp! And where is that Poem

we loved so heedlessly and hoped for so much from?
(Doesn't that whip your tragic sentiment to foam?)
I drank a Pepsi like they do in N.Y.
and that fizzy noise was like how
you could hear the Sonnet feasting on itself.
Goodbye hopeless poems! Kiss me! Kiss me! Goodbye!

[*INSIDE BACK COVER*]

[Photo of John Tranter and Abyssinian cat Blossom,
11 Walter Street, Paddington, 1974.]

John Tranter was born in 1943 and was raised on an isolated farm on the south-east coast of Australia. He has travelled through Europe and Asia, and has worked mainly in printing, publishing and radio drama and features. He now lives in Sydney, and is married with one child. He has published two other books of poetry: *Parallax* (South Head Press, 1970) and *Red Movie* (Angus and Robertson, 1972). Another *The Alphabet Murders* (Angus and Robertson), is forthcoming.

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