

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Emma Lew**  
**- poems -**

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## Emma Lew(1962 -)

Emma Lew (born 1962) is a contemporary Australian poet.

Born in Melbourne, Emma Lew studied arts at Melbourne University and worked as a deckhand, shop assistant, proof-reader, and clerical assistant, only beginning to write poetry in 1993. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies in Australia and overseas. Her first volume of poems, *The Wild Reply*, won the 1998 Mary Gilmore Prize and was joint winner of The Age 1998 Poetry Book of the Year Prize. Her second book, *Anything the Landlord Touches*, published in 2002 and reissued in the UK by Shearsman Books in 2006, won the 2003 C. J. Dennis Prize for Poetry (Victorian Premier's Prize) and the 2003 Judith Wright Calanthe Prize for Poetry (Queensland Premier's Prize). A collection of German language translations of selected poems, *Nesselgesang*, was published in 2008 (translations by Mirko Bonne).

# Holes And Stars

I just got my memory back.  
Few loons and I would live  
in a corner at the airport,  
not for the sequence  
but the agony we had to be in,  
running off with the money  
and faking our own deaths.  
Will technology make me remote?  
I don't know where I am,  
I never know what's going to happen.

Everything is quiet,  
stunned yet animated,  
evolving yet wilting.  
If I want to read a newspaper,  
I reach out for it with my hand.  
Funny how you've taken my theory  
and decided to call it your own.  
They will be making snow tonight;  
it will be beautiful and we can afford it.  
Come quickly,  
by yourself,  
bring the negatives.

Emma Lew

# How Like You

How like you, cholera,  
to worry over the health of strangers.  
And you have let your sweetheart go hungry,  
while your legend crossed the country,

a surprise visitor playing Cupid,  
keeping the happy happy -  
from guest wing to portrait gallery,  
prickly wilderness to deepest city.

With a grace of Goth and Hun,  
you taught the danger of your good turn -  
in roadless times, with early spoons,  
and it only took an afternoon.

You rise like Islarn this mauve morning,  
inventing dark and savage deserts.  
Tonight you launch them from the spire  
and they'll spread like spiny fire.

Emma Lew

# Prey

I was daydreaming about wiping out the whole school  
I was rehearsing and perfecting the 'gentle giant' approach  
Rebellious and defiant, had no ambition  
Death is a beginning, it's beautiful

I swore I never shot at a windowless wall  
I was calm and denied, and was allowed to drive away  
And killed a young bride, inconclusively  
It's sad, but I don't live there any more

Not like you'd expect - real dark, red blood  
Humid in the city known for its beer  
I was wrestling with a list, perhaps posing as a cop  
And I wrapped my fingers around your throat. Did you panic?

I'm not an expert, I don't know the terminology  
They were looking for a guy who was ghoulish or foamed  
It's a slow road with a lot of curves  
Maybe I should have toyed with her more

Emma Lew

# Riot Eve

I haven't, thank God, become a perpetrator.  
I never caused the death of others, though I must utter these words.  
I hold myself back, as the shrewd son of my father.  
I see it like this: a lion will attack a gazelle.

We have one life. Why spend it being feebly decent?  
We see but one night; we contain others.  
I ask myself if this path and all those terrible detours were really necessary.  
There is a reason for everything, and our catastrophe.

Imagine then that a father returns and doesn't speak about any of this.  
He carries me on his shoulders during the long walk in the forest.  
Imagine a man - so polite, so clean;  
his swiftness, his warmth, his murderous ideas.

Look, nothing in this world is perfect.  
This is the condition, now growing darker.  
History has shown us: the Black Death, the Borgias...  
I await the real wooden anger that shapes me.

The gardens have roared for days.  
The wind bends the trees. It is like a sign.  
I hear of a palace rising.  
It is just after midnight, and I will obey you.

Emma Lew