jerry hughes
- poems -

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Frankly it's a miracle I can write. Born dyslexic I had to be a dunce at school, and I was. Persistence, and a little voice within told me I could learn just as well at the school of hard knocks, and I did.

What you'll read in my writing is a gaggle of experiences, love, lust, hurt and pain. My loathing of war, especially the miserable bastards who promote and profit by it.

Also a life-long support for the not so fortunate with whom I relate. If you find a spelling mistake or two, that's the way flip flops.
2008

2008 a new year.
But is it new?
That feeble minded imbecile
George W. Bush is still here.
As is the locker-room giggling
limp-wristed faggot,
Tony (Tory) Blair.
And the putrid, lingering stench
of John (Winston?) Howard.
So what's new about 2008?
Bugger all...

jerry hughes
A Capricorn Bites The Dust

Ye gods, will it never end?
It will, when I toe the line
and 'Urbie' says,
'git your arse in here! '

Today I bid adieu
to my old mate Alan Bainbridge.
I was bereft, for he was indeed,
an old mate.

Accolades with humour, a bit trite,
but in the circumstances, adequate.
Apart from your company I'll miss the
humour, and long (business?) lunches,
Al pal.

jerry hughes
A Found Fragment

'the Somme 1916'

I'm scribbling in incessent rain
and mud has turned to slush.
The stench of death is all about
and god's deserted us.

Last night I saw a young lad die,
he cried his life away.
I felt so bloody helpless -
Will it be me today?

jerry hughes
A Leaf

'I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree'

A single leaf makes its own history. Attached to the bough from which it sprung it is a perfect entity.

As part of the whole a resting-place for birds, and a refuge for life-forms that we cannot see. It welcomes the seasons, and greets each day with an open face.

Throughout it's life it made no enemy, yet, men come with chainsaws to fell the parent tree.

jerry hughes
A Message To My Father

My beloved father, the last time we met
in company with your confidant and friend Abu,
we spoke of many things.
Most importantly the history I'd lost in the
half century of not being your son.

You surrendered me for expediency
because you were a man of peace.
The circumstances of then made me who I am,
and not necessarily the son you wanted;
But that's another story.

jerry hughes
About Eric

There is a similarity about them.
Eric, and my father.
Quiet men, who went about their lives
doing well for others.
Gentle men, who didn't seek rewards,
the doing would suffice.

When I talk with Eric,
memories of my father come flooding back.
The timbre of his voice,
an occasional gesture,
the size and shape of him.
I look forward to those moments joyously,
sometimes sadly.

My father's passing?
An unfathomable void.
To Eric, I repeat the words I spoke
the night my father died.
'Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.'

Eric Smith, friend and mentor, died on
January 4, 2006 aged 92

jerry hughes
Adieu Eric

To say I'll miss you?
Words clog the mind
and tighten in my throat.
'Go gentle into that good night'
old friend - knowing love lives on.

(Eric Smith
21 June 1913 - January 4, 2006)

jerry hughes
After The First Death*

Amidst the rubble and confusion
a child's hand clutching a toy.

Near by

The hand's arm twisted grotesquely
around a dead young woman.

Was it the hand's mother
to which the infant body clung?

Sans hands, sans eyes, sans-

You did your job smart bomb but,
after the first death there is no other.

(In memoriam the children of Gaza/* Grateful thanks to Dylan Thomas)

jerry hughes
Aftermath Of A Stroke

The sense of loss
can't be explained.
It's as though half
of you says 'let's do
it', the other half says,
'you know you can't'.

jerry hughes
All But Two Years

January 4, 2006

It's all but two years since
my friend and mentor,
Eric Smith died.

Adieu dear friend,
until we meet again.

jerry hughes
An Aussie Summer

The sun rises early.
'Bloody daylight saving.'
Birds fly. Grasses grow.
The Victa's primed and
splutters to life.

Johnny's off to play cricket.
Sarah's off to the beach.
Mum's making dinner.
Dad's mowing the lawn
and shooing off bees.

Next door awakes after
an all night party.
'Jesus, I'm still pissed'
His lament interrupted by
the flushing of the dunny.

A dog barks. A blue-tongue
uncomfortable with strangers
waddles into the hydrangers.

Midday. The sun's ablaze.
Mr Whippy's van circles.
Children run to it with
shiny coins and eyes.
The sounds of summer
punctuated by flies.

Early evening.
The kids return.
Johnny scored eighty
and took two wickets.
Sarah's red and glowing,
not only from the sun.

Mum's set the table
and prepared the tea.
Dad the silly bugger
was stung by a bee.

jerry hughes
Anaesthetist

He said
calmly, professionally
without bamboozle;
You won't know a thing
until you recover in the
I C U - twenty four to
forty eight hours later.

They’ll take the tube
out of your throat, the
one that kept you alive,
and make you cough.

Jesus, I thought - cough,
with my ribcage stapled?
He must have a sense of
diaboloical humour - cough?

Problem is, he doesn't......

jerry hughes
Andrew

for Bruce Dawe

God speed Andrew,  
may the sun be at your back.  
The leaves have dropped and  
winter chills your three score  
years and more.

It's some months since the hospice rang,  
dissolving forty years.  
'It should have been me'  
you told the dead telephone.  
You held her hand and promised.  
Remember?

A nice young couple bought the house.  
'Have you lived here long? '  
'Thirty-five years, ' you said.  
'It's lovely, ' they told you.  
You had to walk away.  
'Sorry if we've...'  
'It's alright, the agent reassured,  
he's just a bit upset.'

Settle in thirty days?  
Sooner if you like?  
Thirty days is fine,  
there are a few things.  
We understand.

The agent rang,  
the cheque's arrived.  
One more walk around the house.  
He thought he heard the children laugh?

What's left?  
Check the list.  
Tell the neighbours.  
Warm the engine.
Don't forget to shut the gate.
It's a long drive to the sunshine coast.
Take it in easy stages.

'See, I didn't forget my glasses'

God speed Andrew,
may the sun be at your back.

jerry hughes
I wish I'd have done the things
I should have, when I should have.
Looking back, we're told we shouldn't -
I could have done better - been kinder -
talked less - listened more - shared more.

But life is a learning process.
Aren't we all students?
I wonder what my marks will be at the end?

jerry hughes
Ann T. C. Pation

Really gives me the shytes.
Making such a big deal of
getting her knickers off.

jerry hughes
Anyone, Everyone's Son

He was anyone, everyone's son.
A splendid, strapping lad
with a smile to make an angel blush;
So innocent, shy and wide.

There was goodness in his every gesture,
and in every stride of his bold step;
As he marched off with his regiment
to a war not of his making, but he went.

Without complaint he went, believing
it was his duty to fight beside his mates;
Even if the odds were great, as they died
in their thousands like slaughtered sheep.

Sheltered by the Somme in an unmarked grave
where memory saves forgetfulness, that, and his
final letter are all that remain of anyone, everyone's son.

jerry hughes
Argument Resolved

I was a feisty fist ed lad
who'd fight at the dropp of a hat.
With something to prove I'd blazon on
regardless of this, or that.

My tempered sword was always drawn
more often than my pen.
With something to prove I'd blazon on
not caring for why, or when.

Late in the day I sheathed my sword
to pick up my unused pen.
With nothing to prove I must concede
it's easier now, than then.

jerry hughes
Autism

Autism
a first cousin
to Dyslexia.

Aren't I lucky?
I've got both
as companions.

jerry hughes
Aye

Aye, joke.
Don't you mean, Jock?
Noooo, joke.
Why?
Because I can smell fear in you.
Bullshit!
Nooooo, not bullshit, fear!

You're no longer the tough guy who
knocked kids out in the squared circle.

You're an old man with the frailties
of an old man ringing in your ears.
Accompanied by tinnitus that
keeps you awake at night.

'Don't try to knock him out, out-box him'
Remember that advice?
You didn't listen then, try to now.

jerry hughes
Bagatelle

I write to you in jingles
and babble on in speech,
of what I ever fail to know
and therefore cannot teach.

The riddle of the fleeting joy,
uncaptured glimpse of truth.
Elusive as an elfin child,
as lost as vanished youth.

Religion of pure beauty,
what nobler one to reach?
But this joy I have never snared,
and thus, I cannot teach.

jerry hughes
Baz

Old friend
it pains to see you as you are;
Grasping at old straws of old delights.
Filling in your empty days
with empty, aimless nights.

How soon before the trembling and the shkes?
The snakes and ladders of the mind.
The wobbling gait, the drooling mouth
and lolling tongue?

Old friend
it pains to see you now.
Rembering you
when you were brightly young.

jerry hughes
Behind The Dark Door

'of cardio-vascular surgery'

Uncertainty coupled by trepidation.
'Aye, don't worry lad, its all done by
tookin' marrgic now! '
'No more open chest surgery.'

It's just like putting a patch on a
cycle tube - only easier.
A stent placed in position via
the groin, or keyholed in. Voila!

'You speak from experience? '
'Nah, I saw it done on Google.'
'On Google you say? '
'Yeah.'
'Shyte, that's reassuring.'

jerry hughes
Being Seventy Two

Des, what time is it?
Seventy two.
Not your age you silly bugger;
What's the right time?
It's never the right time when
you're seventy two.

Jasus, I give up...
And so you should.
Should what?
Give up asking people the time
when they're seventy-two.

jerry hughes
Beyond The Horizon

Yesterday didn't happen.
Tomorrow is but an assumption.
With the future of the world in the hands
of morons armageddon isn't a possibility,
it's a certainty. Why you may ask?
We chose to ignore the Cree Indian proverb:
'You can't eat money'

jerry hughes
Big C

Time to say goodbye.
Silence. Awful silence.
Then.
A last embrace.

Emotions to the fore.
Tears mixed with anger.
The inevitable question.

Why?

Rationalising doesn't help.
We all have to go, sometime.
I know that damn it!

Medication for the pain
every four hours.
An alarm clock
ticking her like away.

She didn't want the operation.
'I'm 83 and I've had a good life'
Could it have been better?
Too late for recrimination.

In the early distance a cock crowed thrice.
Too soon cock - too soon.
A month to the day, my mother died.

jerry hughes
Big Luci

Luciano Pavarotti
one of the greatest voices
of any century - vale

jerry hughes
Bleak House

I used to pass it on my way to school,
an eerie place with a tumbled-down fence
and gates that groaned on windy days.

Around its terraces gargoyles leered
at passers-by in stoney silence.
Ivy wrapped the house in a green cocoon
and the curtains were always drawn.

A crone lived there they said - died long ago,
but I'll swear I saw her framed by a window
dressed in crinoline and lace.

A Gainsborough lady of such exquisite beauty
she took my breath away.
Such are the fantasies of an adolescent boy
on the threshold of pubescence.

jerry hughes
Blind And Toothless

An eye for an eye
a tooth for a tooth,
so quotes the bible.

The end result?

A world full of blind
and toothless people
warring over mushy food.

See, nothing changes.

jerry hughes
Bloody Disgrace

During two horrific world wars
thousands of young men died,
defending freedom and democracy?
That's what they were told as they
marched off to a certain death.
But it was a calculated lie!

A hundred years on the freedom
they gave their lives for,
is a freedom for the rich and powerful
to manipulate the weak and poor with impunity.
Under the high flying flag of democracy.

jerry hughes
Bosko And Admira (1993)

'If thou must love me, let it be for naught except for love's sake alone.'
(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Ethnically cleansed through love, when all bout them hate of generations raged - they held hands while clenched fists threatned.

Amid the rubble that was Bosnia a sniper waited, dispassionately. Don't discriminate. Kill.

In the distance two figures. Aim for the larger target first. Squeeze the trigger. Got him. Now the other. She's bewildered, distraught, crying. Got her. What's this? She's crawling toward him. She's reached him. Don't waste another bullet. It's time for lunch.

'Lime trees are blooming everything is as it was before only your heart and my heart aren't in love any more.'

jerry hughes
Brain To Body Post Operation

Brain: Where have you been?
Body: Where I've always been.
Brain: No you weren't, I heard a machine clanking and hissing.
Body: Oh, you mean the heart-lung machine?
Brain: Is that what it was? You didn't ask if you could by-pass me.
Body: I had no say, they shut me down.
Brain: They? Who the hell are they?
Body: The surgeons.
Brain: Not good enough, next time ask them to get my permission.

jerry hughes
Breaker Morant

Handcuffed, manacled and blindfolded
he stood before a firing squad,
awaiting the prescribed military execution.
A colour sergeant, inappropriately named asked:
'Do you have anything to say before the sentence
of the tribunal is carried out?'
Breaker Morant replied, 'Shoot straight you bastards.'

Addendum: Morant requested his blindfold be removed,
it was.

jerry hughes
Brief Encounter

He saw her, and knew he had to meet her,
this elfin girl with bobbed hair
and an oval face.
Eyes as big as saucers, and lips,
sweet jasus, her lips.

What's your name?
Helen, she replied.
Of Troy? he blurted foolishly.
She smiled, and her smile
seared into his brain.

Have coffee with me?
I don't know you.
You will, by the second cup.
You sound so sure.
I am. I am.

Only for coffee?
For now.
And later?
Later is later.
Now is now.

And I have to tell you -
What?
I love you.
You're mad.
You're to blame.
Me?
Yes, you're so lovely.

I have to go, they're expecting me.
They?
My parents, for dinner.
Not yet.
I have to.
I've offended you.
No.
Then you don't have to go.

I'll phone them.  
What can I say?  
Tell them, you've fallen in love  
with a madman.  
And you won't be coming home,  
ever.

You are mad.  
Yes I am.  
I love your madness.  
Sanity can be so cruel.

Where shall we go?  
Where would you like to go?  
Anywhere, with you.  
Are you sure?  
As sure as I'll ever be.

I don't even know your name.  
What would you like to call me?  
Beelzebub?  
And you'll be my, Lilith.

Are we going to hell?  
Probably.  
But heaven first, I think.

jerry hughes
Bubbles

See them rise, float away and gently burst.
Innocently the child blowing them didn't know
he was creating a perfect metaphor for life.

jerry hughes
Bullocky

'win some lose some'

He was lean and mean,
like the rawhide whip he'd
crack above their heads.
'Pull you lazy bastards pull!'
he'd roar.
Crack - crack - crack!
went the whip.

The bullocks straining, slobbering
and grunting, moved the massive log
up a gradient on to even ground.
And when they cleared the rise
their bodies trembled in relief.

The bullocky won the bet
his team could move the log.
But in the effort his massive lead bull,
bellowing from exhaustion, died.

jerry hughes
They called her Bussie, dumpie with acne
so nobody kissed her.
A matinee groupie who seldom saw a film.
The only tenderness she knew was
when she gave 'her boys' fellatio.

As the lights went down, so did Bussie.
Oh, so gently,
to callous thrusting intermixed
with muffled laughter.
When the film ended Bussie would arrange
herself and smile sweetly at her boys.
But nobody kissed her.

jerry hughes
Buttocks

Isn't it a splendid word?
Signifying those protuberances
which form a hump or
in common parlance arse, or rump.
But arse or rump, tends to lower the
tone of buttocks.

Buttocks:
See them sashy down the street
accompanied by swinging hips.
Goodness, gracious, what a treat.

Buttocks:
Apropos the female gender, unless
one's inclined to be a gender bender.
In such a case the merest glimpse of
a laddies rear, makes the gay chap
overjoyed there's buttocks.

Indeed I say, one could muse
for days and days on, Buttocks.

jerry hughes
Capitalism U S A

Inept, deceitful, tainted and rotten.
Exploitation to the nth degree.
An amalgam of hispanics, asians,
coloureds, and post-war eastern-bloc
emigres scrambling for recognition in
a system where the wealthy get wealthier;
As shattered dreams of expectation fall
by the way side.

jerry hughes
Casanova

I walk lamely
I stutter when I speak
I forget things easily
names, dates, places.
Why is it so?
Blame it on the casanova.

jerry hughes
Ceausescu's Children 1996

Out of the manholes they crawl
to face another hopeless day.
Not rats or cockroaches,
but Romania's children.
Selling their miserable bodies
for food, or glue.

Food barely sustains, but sniffing
glue anaesthetises their misery.
Children of Romania, raped,
abused, diseased and forgotten.

Alina, just sixteen was heard to say.
'I wan't to die'
Why not?
She's only just alive.

jerry hughes
Charlie

I buried him near the fuchsias
where he liked to lie, snapping
at the bees and flies that dared
invade his space.

A feisty chap with a furry face
and huge brown eyes.
His whiskers drooped even as a pup,
more so as the years went by.

And when his eyesight failed,
he'd follow my voice to jump onto my lap,
tail a-wagging, ears pricked and alert.
This was our quality time.

With my companion gone I now avoid
the paths we walked. For habit made
me turn around and wait.

jerry hughes
Christmas Carols

God rest ye merry gentleman
Let nothing you dismay;
For Jesus Christ your saviour,
is here now on display.

Hark the herald angels sing,
glory to the cash till ring.
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
Jesus in the shops defiled.

And lo, what sayeth that sign
above the sacred star?
'These christmas carols are for sale
at the record bar.'

jerry hughes
Cold Steel

'I parried, but my hands were loath and cold. Let us sleep now.' Wilfred Owen

Between the trenches no-mans land. Strategies had us confront one another. I didn't know you my brother, but blood would be our bond.

You thrust, I parried. Thus we fought, and died. I saw your lips form 'mutter,' as 'mother' hissed through mine.

jerry hughes
Conclusion

In 2008 one of the worst decades in history will end - but the political and moral damage done by Bush, Blair and Howard in collusion, will need a quarter century or more to rectify.

jerry hughes
Consequences Of The Nek

Inspired by Alan Attwood's essay 'Into a Dazzling Flame' on the Dardanells campaign, August 7, 1915.

The 3rd Australian LIght Horse Brigade (horsemen without horses), attacked the ridge. Support from the New Zealanders on a captured Chunuck Bair was not forthcoming.

The barrage finished early leaving them exposed. The first wave charged, and the Turkish gunners mowed them down. A second was slaughtered two minutes on.

An officer called a halt but he was overruled, so a third wave was massacred, and in the confusion a fourth met the same fate as the rest.

Like moths into a dazzling flame they charged the Nek and died. Victims of incompetent Generals who gave orders that belied.

jerry hughes
Conundrum

If today is a precursor for tomorrow, what was the day before yesterday?

jerry hughes
Cosmetic

I recently met a man
who said he was Jesus.
He was certainly stereotypical;
Flowing robes, sandals, a beard,
and a bit on the scruffy side.

Impressed I asked him for further proof, for instance nail scars on hands and feet?
But I was singularly unimpressed when he replied:
'I've recently had cosmetic surgery'

jerry hughes
Crocodile Tears

'adieu the crocodile hunter'

It seems incongruous
this outpouring of sentimentality
over the death, by accident,
of one so-called celebrity, when
at the very moment hundreds of
children in Ethiopia and Uganda,
died of curable illnesses or starvation.
Unknown and unreported.

Addendum: 'Death where is thy sting?

jerry hughes
'Sorry if I offend.' she said quietly.
'Offend? ' I asked quizzically.
'Your sensitivities, ' she replied.
We were strap-hanging in a crowded bus on a very hot day.

Her slim tanned arms merged into damp unshaven pits.
'I never use deodorants, and my olfactory offends some people.'

'Doesn't offend me, ' I said.
'In fact I rather like that funky woman smell.'

'Really? ' she smiled.
'Yes, really, ' I confirmed.
Ours was the next stop.

jerry hughes
Dachau

It wasn't just a concentration camp
designed to commit murder.
It was much much, more.
It deprived inmates of their dignity.
Making fun of their misery.
And that, is the cruelest of hurt of all.

jerry hughes
Dachau 1933-1945

Picture this in your mind's eye
if you will because it happened
to Jews, gypsies, poets, writers,
actors, musicians, resistance
fighters and ministers of religion.

When the living skeletons were
liberated in 1945, they were found
in huddled groups, picking fleas and
lice from their stinking bodies.

Erik laughed, vomited blood and collapsed.
Claus, riddled with dysentery died in a pool of
his defecated bowels.

30,000 died of disease, cold, hunger or in gas
chambers. Of those who survived many later
died from typhus.

What did we learn from this horror? Nothing.

jerry hughes
De Profundis

I should have been there
to hold you, when you were scared;
And cuddle you when you were sad.

I should have been there
to see you blossom from adolescence
to womanhood, in the blinking of an eye.

I should have been there,
but I wasn't.

jerry hughes
Death Of A Daughter

With a convulsed help me,
she collapsed to the floor
filthy and stinking.

I'd seen it all before.

With pleading eyes and
outstreched arms she;
Urinated, deficated,
vomited and died.

(The final moments of an 18 year old heroin addict.)

jerry hughes
Decade 2010

In a matter of hours I step into my octogenarina decade. Scary? You bet your sweet arse, 1931 to 2010 is a long time. Much longer than I expected, or deserve. However, the French have an apt saying in the circumstances. 'C'est la vie'

jerry hughes
Decision Day

In fifteen second you'll be dead.  
The decision is entirely yours.  
The pain you've endured makes 
the act so simple.  

No more palliative injections  
No more morphine as the pain 
became excruciating.  
No more, no more, today's the day.  

You searched your conscience 
and said your goodbyes.  
Unwavering you press the YES button.  
Miraculously the pain decreases.  

jerry hughes
Depression

Alright, I'm depressed!
You'd be too given my circumstances.
I'm told its (normal?) to feel like this,
but its bloody depressing nevertheless.

jerry hughes
Dig A Hole, Fill It In

Dig a hole, fill it it.
Dig it again, and fill it in.
Jasus, what's the point?
There isn't any point.
But see how much better
you're getttting at it?
So dig an hole, fill it in.

jerry hughes
Disconnected

Datconnected.
Who gives a ....?

jerry hughes
Dispossessed

We don't clear tall buildings
in a single bound anymore.
The people we once admired
have surrendered to mediocrity.
And the tall buildings wonder:
'Will we ever be hurdled again?'

jerry hughes
Don'T Forgive Them They Know Exactly What They Do

They sit in board rooms, or is it bored rooms?
Planning wasteful obsolescence for a consumer
driven global market.

In another, insurgencies in the name of democracy.
Postulating to people who've survived for a thousand
years how wrong they've always been.

They'll tell you god is good and in him they trust, as they
manipulate poorer nation's economies until they're wholly
dependent on loans for survival.

They'll never admit to being hypocrites and liars
who hold a bible in one hand, a gun in the other.

Who are these people? Look over your shoulder,
there's one right behind you.

jerry hughes
Doors

A metaphor for life, doors.  
From our earliest years we  
open and shut them without  
a thought, yet they symbolise  
our journey to the very end.  

So when is a door not a door?  
When it's ajar. Jocular jocular,  

jerry hughes
Duh?

He looked about fifteen, leaving slovenly against the wall of the local post office; Eyes showing the animation of a dead fish.

His face erupting with zits of various sizes and colours, and teeth I’d rather not describe.

Attired in the fashion of the day; Long shorts with crotch nearly touching the ground - topped off with a once white T-shirt, USA emblazoned front and back.

Curiosity made me ask the question. 'Are you American?' He looked at me blankly so I asked again. This time I got his erudite answer - 'duh?'

jerry hughes
Dwindling Childhood

'lie still, and be forevermore a child'  Christopher Dowson

Your remote beauty is impressive
but not lovely.
I fear, the sudden aloof awareness
of these barren heights to which
no longer child you foolishly aspire -
and ruthlessly descend -
self banished from your elfin realm;
In which you dwelt and frolicked.

jerry hughes
Ego

Self esteem.
Do I have enough?
Of course I don't.
I'm not egocentric.

jerry hughes
Eighty-One

Ye gods, eighty one!
Who'd have thought it?
Certainly not I.
So there's one delightful
person to thank.
Alison.
She's stood by me in every
conceivable way.
Lucky?
You bet your bippy I am!

jerry hughes
Emily & Sylvia

EMILY in celebration

Twix life and death
she wrote the words
that shook the tree
that held a Christ.
And, like his,
her life closed thrice.

SYLVIA
'ven in your zen heaven we shan't meet'
(from Lesbos)

Posthumous poet,
spinner of words
bitter, sad and sweet.
Nothing could quell
the fire in your loins,
but death.

(my humble tribute to these outstanding writers)

jerry hughes
Emotional

Lately I tend to get emotional.
May be it's the weight of years.
The accumulating awareness of,
'not enough time?'

So much to do -
so much I haven't done.
Now it's me,
against a relentless clock.

jerry hughes
Eucalypt

A giant eucalypt crashed to the ground with an agonised groan. The earth around it shook, then settled. As I stood in awe of this magnificent death, it seemed to me like a metaphor for life itself.

jerry hughes
Evulsion

‘in memorium Peter Shoobridge and his daughters’

Gentle poet what drove you to this extreme?  
Something from your private living hell?  
Severing the hand that took your daughters lives, 
you placed a rifle to your head.  
There was no audience when the shot rang out,  
and the curtain fell on the silence of the dead.

Explanation: Peter Shoobridge a writer-poet, slit  
the throats of his four daughters, chopped off his  
hand with an axe, then blew his brains out.

jerry hughes
Facing The Wall

How will I know?
When he turns to face the wall.
Why would he do that?
It's called release, recognition,
a return to the womb.
I don't understand.
You don't have to, just accept.
Won't he be lonely?
Only for a little while.
Then?
Open your storeroom of memory
and be glad.

jerry hughes
Feint Praise

Expertly the barman filled the pot to an overflowing head of foam. Just as expertly ran a boning knife across the head ridding it of the superfluous - then with a flourish placed it on the counter saying: 'You've never seen a better beer poured in your life, get it into you!'

The unimpressed drinker sipped, looked up and retorted, 'It's alright, but I can do without the bullshit.'

jerry hughes
Feral Kids

They’re out there in their thousands.
Street kids, sleeping rough, sniffing glue,
shooting up. Out of sight, out of mind?

While the wealthy squander millions,
Tory governments downsize the welfare state.
Be ashamed Australia, these are our children.
Outcasts of a nation too preoccupied with self.

jerry hughes
Fidelity

As in faithfulness.
Tell me what it really means
and we'll both know?

jerry hughes
First Born

Mark, my first born and I, didn't see eye to eye for a long time. Generationally and diametrically opposed on issues I didn't, or want to understand we drifted apart.

But love must never be denied. ...I love you son...

jerry hughes
For A Dancer

Sad little face
Sad wide eyes
the nymph of you
belies your womanhood.

Ah, that I could by magic means
flower that within you unfulfilled -

But I am just a poet
writing words
released to air
like fledgling birds.

The strong survive
The weaklings die
Sad little face
Sad wide eyes.

jerry hughes
For Denis Joe

Wordsmith extraordinaire,
it would be a lesser world
without your waterfall of
words splashing over us.

Denis Joe O'Driscoll,
you faced your demon
and survived. Amen

jerry hughes
For Jack Kerouac

On the road, Jack.
Hit the road, Jack.

Follow his footsteps?
Walt Whitman.
He wrote songs for himself.

You wrote for a generation
who followed a drummer
with a different beat.

Critics didn't like your work.
But like you said, Jack,
critics tend to beat their meat.

Guilt

Sat you on Desolation Peak
not for 40 days and nights,
but 63.

There you tried to zen it away
but it didn't happen.

So you drank
until you couldn't remember.

Finally

You succumbed to booze, Jack.

But the road goes on.

jerry hughes
For Ridge

Young man,
you write so eloquently
I wondered
if you were born in
a different time and space.

A Chinese proverb goes
'the moving finger writes
and having writ moves on'
But tarry a while young man,
you have much to say.

jerry hughes
For The Stolen Generations

By decree we stole their birthright.
Little heathens in our christian eyes.
We had to make them white, from the inside.
So we plucked them from their mothers' arms
and farmed them off to christian homes,
and fearsome christian institutions.

Negating sixty thousand years of nurturing
with the stroke of a pen, our benevolence
profoundly misplaced, we dressed the girls
like mammy dolls, the boys in sailor suits.
We taught them of a Jesus Christ, and
wondered why they couldn't understand.

Forgive us our trespasses
and our christian pride.
We-were-wrong!
Money can't compensate
and words sound shallow.
In reconciliation I offer my hand.

jerry hughes
For 'Tieeri'

To: the death of a former lover -
whose tangihanga I could not attend

And I (?) Well...
I am bleeding
copiously -
like a continual
heavy downpour
of rain
And...and, as
far as I can
make out -
the 'Sky-piss'
and its relieving
(- relieving?)
down-flow
has no relationship
to my tears
for you...YOU,
who have gone,
gone, gone - leaving
me, utterly bereft...

Hone Tuwhare
Oooooo......! ! ! 2005

jerry hughes
For Wilfred Owen  1893-1918

'We know! An angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not a hand upon that lad,
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.'

From: The Parable of the Old man and the Young.
Wilfred Owen

Dead at twenty-five, poet and chronicler
of a war too horrible to contemplate.

Genius touched the soul of one so young
to leave these images of terrible desolation,
of youth plucked before their sap had risen.

Amongst them you, young soldier-poet,
to whom I dedicate this 'in memoriam.'

jerry hughes
Forget Me Not

What's that little blue flower
you've got in your lapel?
A forget me not.
Has somebody forgotten you?
I suppose they have.
Who are they?
Oh, just people.
Are people just?
I suppose they are.
You suppose a lot, don't you?
I suppose I do.

jerry hughes
Friendship

I have few friends and I love them.
I have lived long enough to see many
of them die, and I miss them.
They're getting fewer, so I don't read
the obituaries any more.

jerry hughes
Friendships

I have a few friends and I love them. 
I've lived long enough to see many of 
them die, and I miss them sorely. 
They are getting fewer, so I don't read 
the obituaries any more.

jerry hughes
From Hamlet To.....

What a piece of work is man - how noble in reason - how infinite in faculty - in form and moving how express and admirable - in action how like an angle - in apprehension how like a god - the beauty of the world - the paragon of animals. Shakespeare: Hamlet, act 1, sc 2

Then there's the moronic George W. Bush, and that little sewer rat John (Winston?) Howard.

jerry hughes
From Whence I Came

Me, myself and I.
The end of the line, the last Mohican.
So dust me over the pretentious grave
where my grandfather F. W, my father Fred,
and his brother Ben, cluster together.
They were believers - not I.
But instinct tells me I should be with them;
If irreligiously.

jerry hughes
Gallipoli

'how we blooded youth for battle'

It came.
The command.
Take the hill.
But, sir...?
No buts Captain, take the hill.
Sir, I must protest.
Captain, you're facing
a court-martial for insubordination.
Take the hill, now!

Sparks, have you got the line
to HQ fixed?
Not yet Captain, shouldn't be long.
Sparks, every moment counts.
I'm doing my best, sir.
Sorry lad, I know you are.
Let me know the second.
The second, sir.

Lieutenant Hadley?
Sir!
Fixed bayonet charge.
Sir, they'll be massacred.
Fixed bayonet charge
that's the order.
Pass the word.
Yes, sir!

Sparks, how's it going?
Nearly there, sir.
It better be soon.
Won't be long, sir.

Lieutenant?
Sir.
We go with the flare.
Are they ready?
Ready, sir.

Oh, Christ, there it is.
Lead the charge with me?
I'm with you, Captain.

Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat.
They died with yells frozen in their throats.

Sir I've reached HQ, they're on the line.

Sir?

.

jerry hughes
Gargantuan

Your willy-willy of words
spiral through, leaving a
flavour and scent of how
things were, or ought to be.

In my dreaming time
I too search for words
to describe, to cajole?
But unlike you, dear Les,
it isn't easy for me.

My childhood nightmare
'I cannot read the word'
still haunts.
But I love our language
so I must write,
and reading yours
determines mine.

(For Les Murray)

jerry hughes
Girl Child

From mewling and puking,  
nappy wetting and fouling,  
to standing and demanding.  
This miracle of procreation  
beautiful in construction,  
carries within her  
the beginning, and the end.

jerry hughes
God

Is there a god?
What does he look like?
Is he that benign, long-bearded figure
artists have painted over the years.
Is he a Jew?

A dear friend now deceased, following
a long discourse on the subject said.
'God is god.' Thank you, Abu.

Abu Raschid wasn't a member of Al Caeda,
or a Muslim terrorist. He was a gentle man of
god, and my very dear friend. Allah akba.

jerry hughes
Goodbye

Goodbye is so final.
It ends everything, dismissing
all the goodness by tying it up
in a shabby parcel, and posting it
stampless to the dead letter office.
There to sit on a shelf with the other
goodbyes that suffered the same fate

jerry hughes
Goodbyes Aren'T Easy

Goodbye dad,
I'll see you soon.
But in my heart.
He looked so frail,
but his mind was
sharp as a tack,
the old bugger.

Drive away,
don't look back.

Jesus Christ!
Those wasted years.
Tell me about me, dad.
Tell me about, you.
Was I?
Did I?
I couldn't have!
Really?

Tony?
I wrote you.
Don't be sad.
He didn't suffer.
(Thank god you didn't know)

Yes dad, I should have seen
him more, but it's the distance,
always the bloody distance!

Goodbye dad,
I'll see you soon?

jerry hughes
Hand In Hand

Look how they walk apart,
each to their lonely end.
Not hand in hand as lovers do.

So my darling, before distance
widens beyond reach and sight
look this way, give me your hand.

And the last to see us will say.
We saw them kiss,
then walk beautifully naked
into a sea of bright blue water.
Leaving their bodies like
old clothes upon the shore.

jerry hughes
Heart-Lung Machine

I'm told it'll keep me alive, 
although I'll be clinically dead 
when they open up my chest, 
pull my ribcage apart, 
and replace a stuffed section of my 
ascending aorta with a dacron graft.

Guaranteed for 10 years or 120 months, 
whichever comes first. 
Big plus! 
No oil change or filter necessary. 
How good is that?

jerry hughes
Hobbling

When I'm tired I hobble.
Symptomatic of the stroke.
To remind me a few weeks ago, I couldn't walk at all.

So when I hobble I do so,
gratefully...

jerry hughes
Hoddle Street

Dark night.
Street light.
Rifle shot.
Julian Knight.

(About Julian Knight, a failed Australia military cadet opened fire on people in Hoddle Street, Melbourne)

jerry hughes
The convulsed night
held forth a star;
Immeasurably the star
expands, explodes,
and from the abyss
spears a porcine squeal;

'Father, have mercy.
Understand.
Kiss me.
Oh, father, forgive me
as well as man.'

The hapless puppet Judas
hangs from a branch like a
cast-aside doll.

As a murdered tree
is resurrected briefly
into a living ornament of wood.

jerry hughes
Hone Tuwhare's: Rain

Rain

I can hear you
making small holes
in the silence
rain

If I were deaf
the pores of my skin
would open to you
and shut

And I
should know you
by the lick of you
if I were blind

the something
special smell of you
when the sun cakes
the ground

the steady
drum-roll sound
you make
when the wind drops

But if I
should not hear
smell or feel or see
you

you would still
define me
disperse me
wash over me
rain

Hone Tuwhare  1922-2008
jerry hughes
Hot Summer Night

It was stifling in bed yet you lay with a sheet undulating with your breath, like a sail in a gentle breeze.

I thought you were asleep until I saw your hand move to where your garden blooms, and your smile said you weren’t.

jerry hughes
How Many?

'Is that right, Chasso?'
'What?'
'Yer missus had another snork?'
'Yeah.'
'Ow many's that?'
'Eleven.'
'Gord stiffen the crows!'
'Nah - gord slacken me cock.'

jerry hughes
Humpty Dumpty

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the kings horses and all the kings men said;
'Jasus Humpty, you're pissed again'

jerry hughes
I C U - Intensive Care Unit

I remember it well.
Well, sort of.
Doctors and nurses
with anxious faces.
This is where you live or die.
I opted to live.

jerry hughes
Idiot

'no apologies to George W. Bush'

If you look like an idiot,
think like an idiot,
speak like an idiot,
and even walk like an idiot,
chances are, you are an idiot.
George W. Bush,
you qualify unequivocally.

jerry hughes
Illicit

HE BREW
SHE BOTTLE
NAUGHTY

jerry hughes
Images

In a quiet dream
I saw you walk toward
then pass yourself

There was no shadow
of your journey but I knew
where you'd been

jerry hughes
In Memorium (Port Arthur: April 28, 1997)

It is raw this memorium day.
Nerve ends scream quietly,
where a year ago a sick child's
mind made mayhem.

That child is in a different
playpen now, deprived of toys.
Cared for by severe nannies
he simply gathers space.

It is raw this memorium day,
as consoling words are said.
And with the setting of the sun,
nannies put the child to bed.

jerry hughes
In The Beginning

An apple fell from the tree,
Eve bent to pick it up.
And god said: 'Adam, it's
time you put on your trousers.'

jerry hughes
In The Name Of The Father

In the name of the Father,
Crusaders sallied forth
raping and murdering.

In the name of the Father,
the Vatican turned its back
on the holocaust.

In the name of the Father,
we assassinated Gandhi,
and Martin Luther King.

In the name of the Father,
the Irish killed one another,
and the British urged them on.

In the name of the Father,
paedophiles lurk behind
dog collars and cassocks.

In the name of the Father,
children are sold or enslaved.

In the name of the Father,
this a father I can do without.

jerry hughes
Inferno

It birthed several summers ago
as the undergrowth grew into a
carpet of flammable fuel, waiting
impatiently to explode.

On Saturday February 7,2009,
explode it did, into a holocaust
of unprecedented death and
destruction. Lest we forget.

jerry hughes
It Is Writ

I write this
because you are on my mind immensely.
There is none like you I have loved before.

I write this
for the evergreen times we shared,
when you entered the unknown of me,
and seeing yourself loved, strutted,
like a favourite to applause.

I write this
for the years that pass.
For the time to come
when days quicken,
as the clock runs down.

jerry hughes
It's Said

I have nothing more to say.  
It would be repetitious and  
boring if I did.

So I'm taking my old mums advice.  
'If you haven't anything constructive  
to say, don't say anything.'

May be a few drops of spring water  
will eventually infiltrate the barren well.  
Until then - stumm...  

jerry hughes
Jacemo

His name was Jacemo,  
later anglicised to Jack.  
A nondescript little man  
distinguishable only by  
the tattooed numbers on  
his forearm.

He came with nothing  
and left with even less.  
Save a scribbled note  
in Yiddish that read:  
'Please, will some kind  
person say Kaddish for me? '

(To the memory of the  
Jacemo's who didn't survive.)

jerry hughes
Jacqueline Du Pre

She was the instrument
A cello gripped by her thighs
And warmed by her loins
Sang as no other
And Elgar was there

jerry hughes
Jaws Of Death

I recall the barbarity of not so long ago. When traps referred to as 'jaws of death' were set. Non-discriminatory they closed with asonishing speed on limbs both front and rear.

Inescapeable and in terrible pain foxes in particular, chewed off the captured limb to survive. Yet this most cruel of procedures was sanctioned by State and Federal governments of both persuasions.

And in the pubs you’d hear the red-necks skite about how many they had trapped, in order to collect five bob for each pelt.

Addendeunm:
Five bob - five shillings.

jerry hughes
Jerzy awoke from a fitful sleep, his body aching from head to toe. He focused his gummed up eyes on the bedside clock - it was 9am.

He felt more tired than when he went to bed some ten hours earlier. Pulling the curtains aside filled the room with pale winter sunlight. Sensing it was crisply cold outside a shiver ran through him.

It had to be today, he decided. He'd put it off for too long. His check-list of fors and againsts confirmed it, and he felt relieved.

Pulling his track suit over his T-shirt and pyjama bottoms, Jerzy slid his feet into his slippers, stood up and walked stiffly up the stairs into his study.

The room was cold, but he didn't turn the heater on. Sitting at his desk he unlocked the big bottom drawer. At the back, carefully wrapped in chamois, was the souvenir he brough back from the war.

As Jerzy unwrapped the pistol, he realised it hadn't been fired in 50 years. He checked the ammunition clip and it was still filled with bullets. His mind flashed back to the the day he retrieved it from a dying German officer. He'd be about my age now, Jerzy reckoned.

'Now...' Jerzy thought aloud. Placing the pistol to his temple he curled a finger around the trigger and squeezed. The very last sound he heard was the click of the hammer.
jerry hughes
Juxtaposed  For K

I am.
You are.
But this twain
can be juxtaposed
when we meet.
Not as strangers
but souls, expiated.

For I am of you
as you are of me;
And my needs are
no less than yours.

Hence, no clause
or injunction can alter
that which binds us.

jerry hughes
Kerry Packer Haiku

Seven billion dollars one day
Shitpence the next
You can't take it with you

jerry hughes
Kindergedicht - Child Poem

When I was little everything was so big
I thought I lived in a world of giants.
Even the cat looked like a lion.

The sky seemed endless and scared me.
Lound noises too like thunder, a rain strom
or the wind. I'd drown them out by crying.

With my first steps I began to understand
the world I was born into, a place of mystery
and exploration.

As I grew bigger my mother playing the piano,
music on the radio or gramaphone, made me
sing and dance. A musical child they called me.

When I was seven I went to school, but what's
learning for? A B C? I knew that already and
2 + 2 makes 4. May be my older brother can
explain this to me?

jerry hughes
Kindness

Stranger, whence come you?
From yonder place.
Why come you here?
To find a friend.
You look familiar stranger.
Do I?
Yes. I have seen you before.
Where?
Here.
Then I cannot be a stranger.
Will you sup with me tonight, friend?
I would like that.
So mote it be.

jerry hughes
Lest I Forget

I'll never forget the vision of young men
turning old before my eyes.
Shell-shocked babbling to themselves.
The exuberance of bravado, or the guilt
of cowardice brought about by fear.
Victims of a graveyard for the dying and
the dead. Indeed: 'Lest I forget'

derry hughes
Lines That Separate

I have a sense of desperation because
the next turn on this rutted road is blind.
I'm unable to control my direction, or destiny.

Headlights on high beam mar my vision.
I can't see the white lines that separate life
from serious injury, or death.

Then it happened, my mind turned off.
I pressed the accelerator to the floor,
relishing the eerie squeal of the tyres
and the oncoming horrendous crash.

'No need to rush,' a paramedic said.
He's terribly dead.'

jerry hughes
Love

Love cannot be departmentalized or quantified. It is...

jerry hughes
Mark & Parkinson's

My eldest son Mark,
unfairly stricken with Parkinson's,
has had to concede his working
days are over.

He was a nurse who loved his job
and the geriatric patients in his care.
Little believing he'd be one himself.
Mark with Parkinson's, me with a stroke,
we make a formidable pair.

jerry hughes
I'm no soothsayer however, 
I predicted it would happen 
two decades ago.

And now we've reached the 
very apex of media-ocrity in 
this 21st century.

Politically driven newspapers. 
Banal advertising of consumer 
driven products.

Substandard television scripts 
and production, catering to the 
lowest common denominator.

Finally the piece de resistance. 
Leaders and politicians more 
rightly, an excuse for.

America has George W. Bush 
who looks, talks, and even walks 
like the moron he is.

England had the lisping faggot 
Tony (Tory) Blair, who sold his 
soul to be a statesman, and failed.

Last and always least John Howard. 
A miniature retarded sewer rat with 
rampant halitosis.

Looking forward to 2010? 
Don't hold your breath. 
On second thought, do.

The air will be even more 
polluted than it is now.
jerry hughes
Minus Howard

Sewer rat John (Winston?) Howard, a covert racist and bigot ego driven to win another term, saw him driven out of office into oblivion where he belongs, with his scheming harridan wife.

jerry hughes
Mirror Mirror

Your beauty, somewhat tarnished now, still outlines the joyous lass you were those summers ago, when men stopped in their tracks just to look at you.

Oh, how cruel time can be. Now the only recognition you receive is; 'Mum, where's my football socks? ' 'Mum, isn't dinner ready yet? '

Now you're mum. When once you were darling. Your sun set when he didn't take you that way - any more. So you lie beside him, remembering how your passion rose with his. And you eyes ask, 'What happened? '

jerry hughes
Misapprehend

Miss Apprehend joined the police because;
She liked the uniform, enjoyed the power it
gave her and she exercised it as often as
possible. Until the day she pulled a motorist
over on a minor misdemeanor.

She wasn't to know the driver was a psychopath
who smiled, leaned out of the window and blew her
brains out.

Moral: You can't change the world with a uniform
and a bad attitude.

jerry hughes
Morning Glory

'Coffee, tea or me? '
she asked with a wry smile.
Arms folded accentuating
her cheeky breasts.
Hips twitching to the rhythm
of her pulse, her olfactory
filling the room.

'Come over here? ' he asked.
'No' she said. 'Time to get up.'
'In a minute' he pleaded.
'Come over here'

And she did

jerry hughes
Morning Poem

To say I love you
is but a half-truth.
To gauge its depth and width
is unfathomable.
But this I know, without you
I am a shell, waiting for a
hermit crab to climb inside.

jerry hughes
Mortality

I look into your eyes
and see magic.
I touch your hand and feel
the vibration of centuries.
Reminding me that we are
mortal, and the span we are
permitted is finite.

jerry hughes
Mountain Ponies

'Line 'em up,' the starter barks.
'We haven't got all day!' 
As twenty of the Snowy's best
are gathered for the fray.

The starter fired his pistol high
and suddenly, they're off!
And twenty pairs of frenzied hooves
go thundering down the rough.

They're bunched up tight before the pass,
and leading from the sway,
the winner of last year's event,
Bob Wilson, on his bay.

A stranger on a dappled mare
rides easy in the pack.
Waiting for the moment
to let the mare attack.

They're stretched out now before the climb
through stringy bark and brush,
and Wilson on his mighty bay,
rides fiercely from the push.

They forge the creek at Yabby Traps
with saddles now awash.
They're keen of eye and sure of foot
these ponies of the bush.

The stranger on his dappled mare
keep up a steady pace.
They bridge the gap to Wilson's bay
before the mountain face.

He coaxes her with, 'go on girl,'
and let's the reins go slack.
With every stride she catches up
until they clear the pack.
The steep descent down Blind Man's gorge
is treacherous that day.
The ground is hard, as hard as flint,
and doesn't suit the bay.

Wilson sees the stranger pass
upon his bonny mare,
gliding down the mountain slope
as though the ground weren't there.

He spurs the bay for extra pace,
he spurred him once again.
The big horse baulks, then trips and falls,
whinnying in pain.

The stranger and his dappled mare
are clearly out of sight,
as Wilson mounts the injured bay,
who's given up the fight.

The legend goes the stranger won,
but didn't claim the purse.
He rode for sport to prove to all,
he had the better horse.

jerry hughes
Mrs F

Old Mrs Fancourt, gone to god,
smelt of lavender and wees.
I'm sure she wore those bloomers
that came down to her knees.

Her teeth were false,
her hair was permed,
her lips were flaming red.
Despite her faulty bladder though,
she never wet her bed.

jerry hughes
Much Loved

'For Alison'

I know you well much loved,
through the peaks and valleys
of your exquisite body;
The shadow hint under your arms,
the lettuce-crisp between your thighs.

Blindfolded
I could kiss a thousand mouths
and still know yours
by taste and texture.
You are absolute.

jerry hughes
Naughty Boy

I knew a lad who grew up believing
his name was 'naughty boy.'
Thirty years later he came home,
shot his wife and three children,
then himself.

jerry hughes
Never The Twain

We put up the barriers, you and I,
with some misguided notion that
one of us was superior to the other.
Prejudice based on colour, wasn't it brother?

At the end of the day does it really matter?
For when we shuffle off to seek a better place
we'll face each other sans colour-
equal in the eyes of god, won't we brother?

jerry hughes
Nil Desperandum

It was cold and wet
and there he was,
sitting on a park bench,
sorting his worldly possessions
into a plastic bag.

A book of poetry,
a comb,
darned socks,
a grubby shirt
and seventy cents.

I said, 'G'day mate,
what's your name?'
He answered, 'Hope.'

SEQUEL

The park bench was there,
but not the man who called
himself, Hope.
Had he become, as Greek philosophers describe,
a last despair?

I asked some fellow passers-by
if they'd seen him. 'Who? ' they asked.
A rough and ready said, 'Mate,
there ain't no hope - never was.'

But a dog-eared book of poetry,
a comb, darned socks, a grubby shirt, and seventy cents inside a plastic bag suggested otherwise.

jerry hughes
Nothing Sacred

Is nothing sacred?
That being so, we should negate
all organised religions and isms
to make 'nothing' sacred.

jerry hughes
November 14, 1900

Had he lived, my dad would have been 109.
I remember our final meeting,
short though it was, with tenderness.
Our parting, with sadness.

Being the sole survivor
of our nuclear family,
I feel the loss more deeply now.

jerry hughes
On The Irish

O sad, yet happy people, 
your innate sense of humour 
was tested to the nth degree 
by bloody British treachery.

Dance, Colleen, dance. 
Sing, Paddy, sing. 
Never let those bastards 
quell your Irish soul.

jerry hughes
Orgasm

Excruciating...
The body tenses,
the heart momentarily stops.
And when your eyes refocus
you'll see her victorious smile.

jerry hughes
Outside Dunny

If you didn't spend time in the bush during the middle of the last century, you wouldn't understand the significance of the 'outside dunny.'

They weren't particular to Australia, however, we had the legendary variety consisting of:

1. A hole dug in the ground with a wooden bench atop, and a roughly hewn hole for sitting or squatting on, used by both sexes. Plus the mandatory five billion blow-flies to keep you company.

2. A similar building that always leaned, but more sophisticated with a door, and a bucket below needing emptying frequently. Generally at the base of the citrus trees that grew close to the house.

Revolting? Absolutely! So during my sojourn in the bush of south-west Western Australia, I preferred not to participate in this 'outside dunny' mystique. A kindly tree for # one, and a heel-hole kicked in the earth for # two became the norm.

jerry hughes
Over The Years

Everyone is sleeping.
The trees are motionless.
The wind a whisper.
Sleep hums like a current
through the bright steel night.

Hills fit together like lovers.
Their great straddling thighs clasping
still greater darkness where they meet.

A star breaks and arcs across the night sky
like god, striking a match across a cathedral ceiling.

Therefore I wish, my lips making your name.
It is still, so still, I'm sure you must hear me?

jerry hughes
Panacea

Panacea for the worlds ills.

Chicken soup in America.
'Mr President, the twin-towers
were destroyed by el caida terrorists.'
The President replies:
'You wouldn't have any chicken soup
on you, would you?'

A cup of tea in England.
'Prime Minister, the nazis have bombed
the shyte out of London.'
Prime Minister replies:
'Bastards, we'd better have a cup of tea
and think about this.'

jerry hughes
Percentages

Fifteen per cent you'll get a stroke,
five per cent you'll die.
They were my odds, and without
surgery my aneurism would implode
and I’d die a painful death anyway.

Okay, right hand is stuffed pro-tem,
but I’m alive god damn it!

jerry hughes
Persona Non Grata

I was.
I am no longer.
Neither am I shorter.

jerry hughes
Poddy Calves

'Grab a hammer,' the red-necked dairy farmer said. 'What for I asked, it's just six in the morning?' 'You'll see,' red-neck said. 'They calved last night.' 'They?' I asked. 'Yeah, the heifers, and we don't keep bull calves.' 'What do you do with them?' I innocently asked. 'Use your hammer, wack 'em on the head, cut their guts open, here's a knife, and feed 'em to the pigs.'

I couldn't believe what I'd heard, so I threw the hammer at his feet and said: 'Stick the hammer up your arse you disgusting piece of excrement,' and walked away from an experience I've tried hard to forget.

jerry hughes
You are a child born in the womb
of my imagination.
Conceived within myself, shrouded
in words and nurtured like no other.
You are the love of all my years
condensed into one explosive -
YES!

jerry hughes
Progress On Peace?

Little Palestinian girl,
holding her brother's hand, sobbing.
'Please, Mr Soldier, he didn't throw
the stone. 'Please, Mr Soldier,
don't arrest my brother.'

Little Palestinian girl,
six or seven or eight. Who knows?
But Jesus Christ Almighty she's
just a little girl pleading, as she holds
her brother's hand.

Little Palestinian girl,
I feel your pain, and rage against your fear.
I want to hold you close and say,
'It's alright, your brother will return.'
I'd lie to you, if I must, just to see you smile.

jerry hughes
Prophecy

'the best of seers is he who guesses well'
Euripedes: fragment

Like panicked wildebeest
we are gathering momentum
toward annihilation.
Only the old will be saved this terrible fate,
for they have outlived their uselessness.

The nuclear button is pressed
and nothing can stop the journey.
It will end in cataclysmic glory,
when the air stifles, rivers clog,
trees die, and children mutate
into brainless beings.

See.
The cloud on the horizon grows
with the thundering of a billion hooves.
It's getting closer.
No.
There's nowhere left to run.
It has begun;
And you, ignored the warnings.

jerry hughes
'Wat'cha lookin' at?
I'd had enough of this loud mouthed lout,
and his pissed-out-of-mind billigerence;
So my repartee needed to be swift:
'I'll tell you what I'm looking at, a brainless,
boring, inarticulate piece of excrement.'

He slurred a reply sounding something like
'Yar lookin' for a punshup arshole?'
My calm reply, 'I don't fight mentally fragile
cretins - go away!'

Gathering himself to a swaying target
he lurched at me arms flailing -
'I'll do yar, yar barshtard.'

Instinctively I side-stepped and kicked
him up the arse, propelling him through
the swinging doors into the street.

The last I saw of him - he was propped
by an upright mumbling, 'barshtard took
me on cos I were pished - I'll doimlikea
dinnaneshtime.'

'Sorry pal, ' there won't be a neshtime.'

jerry hughes
Rain

It was blowing a gale and pouring the day we met.
More rightly bumped into one another.

The first thing I noticed when she tilted her head to say 'sorry' were her eyes.
Deep set and astonishing.

'My fault...' I began to say as we ran hand in hand for cover - and a future neither of us expected.

jerry hughes
Raptor *

Magnificent creature much maligned,
a travesty of your former self.
Wired to a fence proud head askew.
your bright eyes lidded in acrimony.

Your bold cry as you soared free stifled,
when a bullet smashed into your breast
spiralling you to death.

'Look there's a Wedgie'
Weekenders say driving by.
Take a good look unseeing eyes.
Look at what's left of nobility.

jerry hughes
Reflection

What we see in the mirror is a falsity, an apparition. To know who we really are requires two lifetimes, and we're only given one.

jerry hughes
Remembering David

Bewilderment and questions answered
as the curtain quietly fell,
ending the final act.

But the script continues
as it must.
So the players pause,
then as one, applaud.

This was a good life.

jerry hughes
Remembrance Day: 11- 11- 2008

'after the first death, there is no other'

Acknowledging Dylan Thomas

jerry hughes
Riddance 2007

It came toward me down at wing and heel,
dirty and unkempt, mumbling incoherently.
Instinctively I reached into my pocket for some coins.
It read my action saying, 'I don't deserve your sympathy,
it's been my fault entirely.'
'What's your name? ' I asked a bit perplexed.
'Annus Horribilis, ' it replied.

jerry hughes
Robert Aka Rob

Heart of gold, generous to a fault. 
Intelligent, well read and articulate, 
but a procrastinator extraordinaire. 
He'd cancel tomorrow if he could, it 
might bring a moment of decision.

Rob lives by this simple rule, put off 
indefinitely that which can, that which 
can't can wait a year or two, or three. 
If there were more Rob's in the world 
there'd be no wars, in the time it took 
them to decide, they'd be too old to fight.

jerry hughes
Rommy

Rommy, my handsome Russian Blue, had to be put to sleep yesterday. Words can't describe how distraught it made me feel, and still do.

jerry hughes
Rwanda 1994

A latter-day holocaust indeed.
Between April and May 1994,
600,000 Tutsis were massacred
by the Hutu malitia at an average
of 10,000 a day.

What did the so-called civilised
countries do to stop this travesty?
Absa-fucking-lutely-nothing.

jerry hughes
Sabbatical

I didn't remove my poems in a fit of pique as has been suggested. It was time to cull and revise, cut and polish, and give some a swift kick in the arse.

In the saying and the doing I also make this observation. Poemhunter sold out to mindless boring promoters of mindless boring products. It's called consumerism, and it starts wars.

jerry hughes
Sadie

Sadie, my faithful, devoted, tortoiseshell moggie, sits in my den with me needing only an occasional touch of reassurance. Other times she sits beside me on the lounge chair purring quietly, just happy to be there. How lucky am I, how lovely is undemanding Sadie?

jerry hughes
Saloth Sar Aka Pol Pot

Vile incarnate.
Are you really dead?
No.
Monsters like you never die.
The millions of souls you slaughtered
on the 'killing fields' of Cambodia
bear testimony.

Addendum: Our little hero John Howard, the deposed prime miniature of
Australia knew this was happening, but didn't utter one word of sadness or
regret. It wasn't a vote winner then, and he didn't have George W. Bush's
backside to kiss.

jerry hughes
Seascape

The undulation of the tide
reminds me of your thighs
pulling me deeper into you
until, there's only one of us.

jerry hughes
Seasons

WINTER

Thunder, lightning, hail and rain.
The wind howls flapping my overcoat around my knees, as I scythe through this harshest season.

SPRING

With the birth of a single flower others envious follow suit until, the earth bursts into a symphony of colour. Evergreens join in too. Why should they miss out on spring?

SUMMER

Begings with beaches and barbecues. Girls in bikinis brown as berries, and just as succulent. Lads growing beer-guts sucking tinnies. No matter where you go, flies and mosquitoes.

AUTUMN

Colours change from green to gold, then rustic brown to reddish hues. Time to hibernate as sap falls, waiting impatiently to regenarate.

jerry hughes
Semantics

I recall when a 'gay deceiver'
was the colloquial name for a padded bra.
It now refers to a promiscuous homosexual.

jerry hughes
Seventy Two

Des, what's the time?
Seventy two.
Not your age you silly bugger,
what's the right time?
It's never the right time
when you're seventy two.
Jesus, I give up!
So you should.
Should what?
Give up
asking people the time,
when they're seventy two.

jerry hughes
Shadows

They walk in isolation.
Who are these shadows?
Nobody asks, nobody cares.

He walks lamely.
She with the easy elegance
of a childhood discipline.

He mumbles an incoherent mantra
to the rhythm of the traffic.
She hears him and asks,
'Would you like some wine? '

He stares at the bottle.
'Give it to me or I'll kill you! '
She falters.

He plunges a knife into her chest.
'Oh, Jesus, ' she cries,
slipping to the footpath.

He sits her on a bus stop seat
smoothing her dress, and putting
on a shoe that had fallen off.

The crowd hurries on to its destination
as a single shadow stands, bottle
in hand, silently sobbing.

jerry hughes
Sign Of The Times

I heard and saw a little girl,
a pretty little girl about five,
apparently lost in the noise
and rush of a supermarket;

Plaintively calling for mummy,
but mummy wasn't anywhere
to be found.

The next week I enquired at the
check-out about the little girl
to be told mummy was found,
in a toilet, with a needle in her arm;

Overdosed.

Leaving a beautiful little child;

Underloved.

jerry hughes
So Mote It Be

'Adieu Kevin Smith'

Another old friend dead.
The bell-toll of mortality pealed
ever louder as we gathered to
celebrate his life, in death.

jerry hughes
Sojourn

I was there.
Believe me,
there's nothing.
No daddy-o, laddy-o
or spook.
No vestal virgins, harps
or haloes.
Furthermore, I really don't
recommend the trip.

jerry hughes
Suddenly Silence

Suddenly there'll be silence.
It'll be inexplicable and eerie.
As though armageddon
is but a hair's breath away.

It'll happen when the creativity
of centuries is washed away by
a tsunami of mediocrity, and
replaced by a Muck Everything
on a sesame seed bun.

jerry hughes
Sun Woman

She stood on a city corner
in summer's first noon
blind-eyed to the sun,
arms across her chest
eyelids closed.

Her hair was cropped
and grey and straight,
yet her face was beautiful
and still, and noble.

As she stood
drinking in the sun,
in this place of people
rushing to appointments;

She didn't realise she'd
saved the world,
by giving old Sol
someone to shine upon.

jerry hughes
Supplication

Bless me father for I have blinged

jerry hughes
Surgical La La Land

A calming, professional voice will say:  
'This'll relax you.' followed by a prick - 
in the arm that is.  
It's the precursor to surgical la la land  
I'll know nothing about it until - 
(I've been there before)  
waking up in Intensive Care with tubes  
of all sorts connected, doing all sorts of  
recovering things.  
As the fog lifts and my eyes open I'll  
realise I'm alive, even if I feel, and I will,  
like shyte.

jerry hughes
The Blue Horizon?

Yesterday didn't happen. 
Tomorrow is just a possibility 
with the future of the world 
in the hands of war mongers.

jerry hughes
The Dream

She rode the stallion bareback,  
pressed against his spine.  
They galloped free together,  
it simply blew her mind.

He was the stallion of her dreams  
so sleek, and strong and tall.  
Of all the things she ever loved  
she loved him best of all.

She died of a massive overdose,  
it was simply a matter of course.  
And on the floor beside her was  
a drawing of a horse.

A fragment from her childhood  
when innocence was sweet.  
The thing she loved the most of all,  
lay crumpled at her feet.

jerry hughes
The End Is Nigh

The little sewer rat John Howard
can't swim against the tide of public
loathing and distrust any longer.

Facing ignominious defeat and the
loss of his own seat, his paraplegic
morning walk is now a mourning wake.

Hoisted on his own petard, little Johnny
faces the remaining years being nagged
to his grave by his awful, scheming wife.

jerry hughes
The Flasher

In she'd arrive at the supermarket
car park in her convertible Mini Moke.
Micro-mini-skirted and no panties.
Knickers, to the more refined?

She'd wait until she drew a crowd
of departing elderly, then with a
flurish she'd step out legs spread
wide - hiding nothing - showing
everything.

The ladies tut-tuted audibly, while
their husbands found it hard to push
a loaded shopping trolley with one hand.
.

jerry hughes
The Horror

Her naked body peeling as she ran
mouth wide open, screaming in fear and pain.
This image of a Vietnamese girl-child,
an innocent victim of a napalm attack,
made the front page of newspapers
all around the world.
Still the war sent on.
Children died.
Mothers grieved.
The photographer won an award.

jerry hughes
The Long Drought

Clouds gathered darkening the sky.
A distant rumble told of rain,
and the parched earth prayed -
'Please, let it pour.'

The first drops made tiny rivulets
and the trees sighed, 'ah, bliss.'
The rumble grew louder,
followed by a mighty clap of thunder.

Down it came, the blessed rain.
Unevenly at first - then harder.
The scorched earth drank it up
in thirsty gulps, and the trees
were cleansed of gathered dust.

Just as suddenly, it stopped.
'Don't go rain, ' the earth implored;
'You've barely wet our surface.'
But the rain had gone -
and the trees wept rusty tears.

jerry hughes
The Mire - 1996-2007

I now live in an alien land.
My country has changed
from a caring, compassionate society
to one whose people feed off each other
like piranhas in an ever shrinking pool.
Take heed - don't wade in.
If the piranhas don't get you,
the mire around them will.

ejerry hughes
The Mission

Declan and Patrick
were given the mission
of placing a bomb in the
British Houses of Parliament,
during a packed sitting.

On the way in an nondescript vehicle
Declan, quietly, but anxiously said,
'Paddy, I don't like the way that bomb's
ticking away on the back seat.'
'Why's that? ' Paddy asked.
'It could explode! ' Declan replied.

'Not to worry, ' Paddy reassured.
'We've a spare in the boot.'

jerry hughes
The Night My Father Died

Quietly his body sagged
and like a distant star,
blipped out.

There was no organ peal
or host of seraphim to mark
his passing.

The closing of a screen
with little reverence was,
the final act.

So ended a life tinged
with sadness and regret yet,
glorious in defeat.

Though many years have passed
I vividly recall;
The night my father died.

jerry hughes
The Numbers Game

They spun the barrel
but you didn't win.
Your number came up and
within weeks they'd turned
you into a killing machine.
But they didn't teach you
how to die.

With uniform pressed,
buckles gleaming, spit and polished,
you followed the Judas officer
up the gangplank into the hell
of Vietnam.

On your very first patrol
you didn't see the sniper
camouflaged in leaves.
But his trained eyes saw you
and talking aim, fired once.
The only sound you made
a sigh, echoed around the world.

jerry hughes
The Shadow Of His Smile

His grip was strong
and his eyes twinkled,
he was pleased to see me.
Alan Bainbridge, friend and
mentor with a vocal delivery
that thundered, now reduced
to an incoherent whisper.

I recall something he said
the last time we lunched.
'It's a bugger getting old'
It certainly is Al pal,
it certainly is.

jerry hughes
The Well

I've been asked
why I've stopped writing.
I haven't really
but I haven't felt the need.
It's a year since
'the operation' subsequently
a stroke.
But I'm culling and revising,
meaningfully and gratefully.

jerry hughes
The Wino In The Park

I'd seen him on many occasions throughout the seasons, sitting on a park bench, sipping wine from a brown-paper wrapped bottle.

To me it seemed the same bottle, unchanged in time and space. Occasionally one would hear a snide remark, 'Isn't he a damned disgrace?

Apparently he didn't care what was said. He'd courteously nod his head and smile as if to say, 'I hope you have a better day than mine.'

One morning he wasn't there, I asked his park-keeper friend, 'Where's the wino?' His answer was succinct. 'He's dead.'

'How?' I asked in genuine surprise. 'How? 'came a staccato reply. 'Of love he sought and didn't find.'

There wasn't anything I could say. But now whilst walking through the park I try to find a different way.

(Inspired by Dylan Thomas' poem 'The Hunchback in the Park')

jerry hughes
There

In my minds-eye I conjure you as would an enchanter, playing to a crowd of one.

I will your nakedness to see your curvatures ebb and flow. To trace so lightly the shape and size of you.

And there, within the shadow of your hips, there, below the down that entices the vee - the explosion of your being.

jerry hughes
They

Not so long ago intimately guarded her from the attacks of the insidious.

They

Belong to a lovely child of the twentieth century, who grew into a woman of substance and extraordinary vision.

They

Bring an encrypted message men have fought over, and even died for.

jerry hughes
This

This is where she moves and breathes
and has her being
and thinks and reads and writes
and lives her secret inner life
and this is where she sleeps;
Where I now sit in staggered unbelief.

And this is where,
I wish it were not so;
And yet I wish it were,
if I could be here to comfort her.
This, is where she sometimes weeps.

jerry hughes
Tickets Please

Tickets please.
Sorry, what was that?
I said, tickets please.
Oh, yes, I had one.
Had one?
Bought it yesterday.

Did you get one today?
Did I have to?
Yes, you're only valid daily.
That's strange, I didn't feel
at all valid yesterday.
Doesn't matter.
Tickets please.

jerry hughes
Time Out

What fantasies will I imagine
in deep anaesthetic narcosis.
A trip to the moon on gossamer wings?
Or something I won't remember?
More likely the latter, unless the anaesthetist
sneaks a dropp of acid into the line.

jerry hughes
Times Are A-Changing

I recall over lunch when
a truly delightful walked
in one of us would say:
'Jasus, wouldn't she be?'
Imagine the rest yourself.

Now it's
'How's your heart?
'How's your back?
Or
'Did you hear about
poor old Pat McDonnell?'

jerry hughes
Tis So

You sat by my bedside every day
for weeks it seemed observing the
taruma of me, and my the operation.
' Let me go, ' I pleaded when I realised
seriousness of my situation.

'No, ' you said, 'we'll get through this.'
As always you were right, little one...

jerry hughes
To Jerry Hughes At 75

Love is life. Life is love.
Everything I understand,
I understand only because
I love.

Everything is,
everything exists
only because I love.

Everything is united by
love alone.

Love is God
and to die means
that I, a particle of love
shall return to Love itself, whole and complete,
the eternal source of Love itself.

*

Did that fiery pacifist, that Pacific warrior,
that defender of the loving heart,
Jerry Hughes, write this? No,
it was Tolstoy, the writer of 'War and Peace' but
you two have much in common
and I salute for everything
that you are and stand for.

Michael Shepherd: R I P

jerry hughes
To The End

I was with him the day he died,
still proud and stoic.
He was in pain, I could see
it in his face. The occasional
grimace, and sharp in-breath.

'Can I get you anything? ' I asked.
'No son, ' he replied. 'Just be with
me to the end.'
It nearly broke my heart but I said,
'Of course, of course.'

A minute later he was dead, and
a glorious chapter of a world war
one Aussie digger died with him.

jerry hughes
Toad

Poor toad.
You carry such
a load of ugliness.
A gash for a mouth,
big bulging eyes,
a fat, round body.
It doesn't surprise
when people wince.
But in your dreams,
poor toad, you'll
always be a prince.

jerry hughes
Tomorrow

I stood in summer rain watching
the pain of my city wash away.
The town hall clock that stopped
the day the soldiers came groaned
back to life, chiming the wrong hour.
But we didn't care.

Flowers bloomed on cue nodding
their heads in approval to the breeze.
Children played in once deserted streets,
their laughter tinkling like crystal.
Dogs barked, cats meowed, birds sang.

An old lady lifted the hem of her dress
and waltzed to the Strauss in her head.
Today we won't count our dead.
That we will do tomorrow,
in the awful shock of peace.

jerry hughes
Unequal Terror - Tory

In the West we start the day
with breakfast, having spent
the night in a comfortable bed.

In the East they start the day hungry,
having spent the night on a dirt floor.

This can’t and must not go on.

jerry hughes
Unsung Heroes

'to the memory of those massacred at the Somme'

What sunrise set before those young men fell?
Facing insurmountable odds they squelched
through mud to fight a pointless bloody campaign,
because 'the enemy' was there.

The Generals safe in tents gave orders,
and returned to coffee and cigars.
They weren't overly concerned as they were
following orders too from 'higher up' - where
in cosy carpeted rooms old men in morning
suits sent despatches, tapped their pipes,
and refilled them.

The King in his castle secure and whisky warm,
telephoned his Minister for War.
'How goes it at the Somme? '
The answer was succinct and like the colour grey.
'As well as can be expected, Sir',
'Our casualties? ' the King enquired.
'Considerable, Sir.'
'Oh? ' was all the King could say.

Meanwhile at the Somme,
their bodies soaked in mud, and blood and rain,
420,000 unsung heroes died.

jerry hughes
Urbie

Bloke walks into a packed public bar on a steaming hot summers day:
'Listen yuse! ' he yells at the top of his voice, 'anyone in 'ere called, Urbie? ' 

'Who want's to know? ' says him with tattoos and scars everywhere.
Bloke says, 'not me, but there's someone in the dunny goin' - unbie, urbie urbie!

jerry hughes
Vale Ronald Ryan (February 1976)

Ronald Ryan was the last person hanged in Victoria. Shortly after hanging was abolished in Australia.

The barbarism of the procedure, worse than any Greek tragedy. No, this wasn't theatre, this was murder!

We hanged a man to satisfy a drunken premier's whim. Therefore the sin of omission rests with him; Not the man who pulled the lever.

jerry hughes
Variation

Hey diddle diddle
the cat had a piddle
when the cow jumped
over the moon
And the little dog laughed
his knackers off
when the dish had it off
with the spoon

jerry hughes
Victory

Did you see that?
What boss?
The way he drops his right
when he throws a left.
The next time he does, ping him.
Okay boss.

Now go in hard, bustle him,
and wait for the opening, alright?
I will boss.

How do you feel?
Great boss.
Good, nearly time.
Go get him tiger!
I'll get him boss.

The boys met mid-ring and touched gloves.
Fight!
The referee ordered.
He saw the left coming and the right drop,
just as his trainer said it would.

He threw a punch like a snake striking,
and felt his glove smash into his opponents jaw.
The boy crumple and didn't move.
'Back to your corner' the ref said.

I did alright, didn't I boss?
You did alright, kid.

jerry hughes
Voyeur?

I saw an old chap
standing under a stairwell
gazing up at mini-skirted girls
walking up, or down.

Not every girl mind,
mainly those with long slim legs
and neat tight bums.
Oh yes, he was discriminating,
a connoisseur, one might say

Of the female form
from the ankle to buttocks.
Occasionally he'd sigh,
close his eyes, and wet his lips.

He wasn't doing any harm.
Just an old man paying tribute
to girls who didn't know, much
less cared that Eros existed.

jerry hughes
We

We of the human race do solemnly swear,  
we will not perish by nuclear holocaust or  
any other wrath.

Our technology is too far advanced  
to permit such catastrophes.  
We can negate them before they start  
because we are the wisest of the wise.

After all, didn't we abandon god?

jerry hughes
Weeks Later

It's been several weeks since I limped through the front door, joyous at the thought of being at home. Beside beloved Alison, who'd sat at my bedside during the worst of my recuperation, I was met by Ella, our dachshund, wagging her tail so vigorously her rump threatened to fall off.

Rommy, the Russian blue, silently mouthing a meow, and Sadie, the tortoise-shell delight made up a welcoming trio.

Yes, I was alive and home, eleven kilograms lighter, hardly ate the hospital food, for want of another word. Recalling the surgeons words, '15% you'll have a stroke, 5% you'll die during the operation.' And if I don't have it I asked. 'You'll die', the surgeon said. 'I'm in your hands,' I replied - cognizant of the ramifications.

And you want to know something? It's good to be home!

jerry hughes
What's It All About Mal?

Once that seemed eternity shortens 
and encapsulates.  
Forget-me-nots bloom by the roadside 
and I look at them in wonder.  
How can such fragile flowers 
buffeted by a traffic storm survive?  

I then recalled the wise old Sage who said:  
'The smallest of us has the strength of ten, 
if you believe.'  
'In what?' I asked.  
'Yourself, of course,' the Sage replied.  
Then he placed some flowers in my hands, 
a posy of forget-me-nots.  

That was many years ago, 
before roundabouts, speed humps, 
bitumen, pavements and signs;  
And people whizzing by in cars, 
ignoring those brave forget-me-nots.  

A humble tribute to fellow poet Mal Morgan, 
who died prematurely of cancer.  

jerry hughes
Will It Hurt?

Life is like
a first punch.
Will it land?
Will it hurt?
Will it be retaliated?
Will that hurt?
Here's a promise.
'I'll never show it'.

jerry hughes
Now all I can encompass is
within the width of my hands.
I miss the colours of the seasons
and the force of nature's will.

Once more that old familiar path
my childhood steps retraced.
Dark shadows abate to let a surge
of youthful joy embrace.

How well the tug on the string
of a high flying kite.
Old Sam chasing his tail.
Gracie Fields spinning on a 78.
The bookcase with the leadlight panes.

So sad these things of the past.
The mind remembers the rest forgets.
That fleeting burst of youth has left,
turning the page is difficult now;

Words blur as the brain slurs from
one forgetfulness to the next.
Only these fragments remain,
within the width of my hands.

Voices but I do not see their lips.
A slight sting in the arm.
Warmness fills and my mind is clear.
A dear voice says, 'sleep now, sleep.'

The light dims and I feel the tug
of the kite's string.
Come kite let's fly!
Chase your tail Sam,
there's a good dog.

jerry hughes
Wombat

'with apologies to Herbert'

Rollie-pollie, wobble-wobble, shuffling on your feet.
'Good morning Mr Wombat' the other creatures greet.

Without an upward glance you simply muttered, 'eff!'
Goanna said to Wallaby, 'I think old Wombat's deaf.'

jerry hughes
Yonder

When I was a youth
you were not born.
When I was a man
you were a child.

Yet our seasons
mine of autumn brown,
yours of summer gold.
blend perfectly
beneath a midnight sun.

jerry hughes