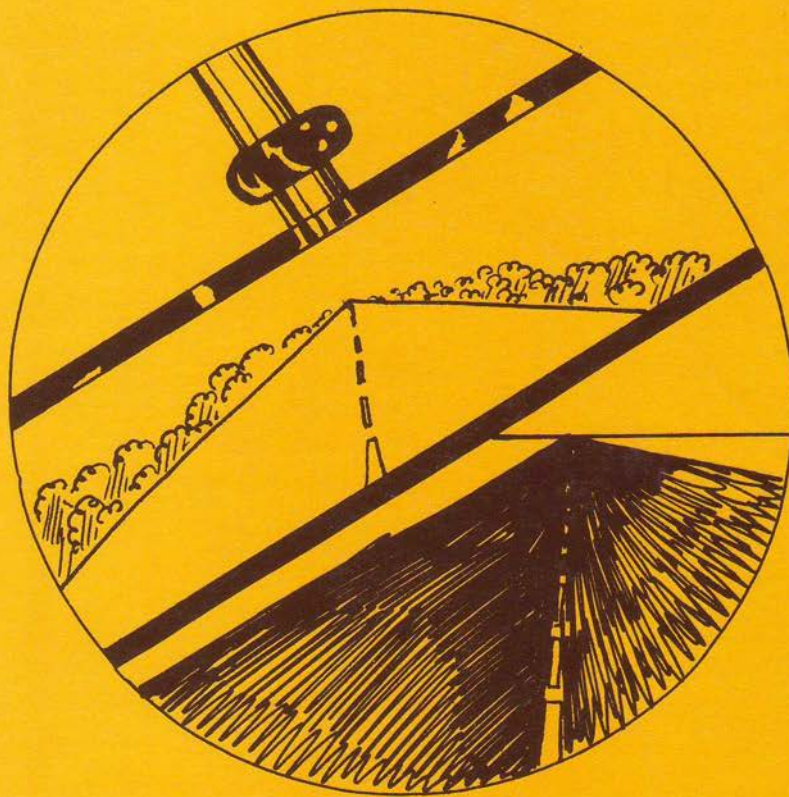


BLIND SPOT



John Jenkins

*BLIND
SPOT*

John Jenkins

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CONTENTS

- 5 Read This
- 10 View
- 11 Time Sequence
- 12 Six Poems for the Television Generation
- 16 Three Slides
- 20 With Tongue in Cheek and Love
for the Hippy Paradise
- 22 Where Will It All End
- 24 Magazine Tan
- 25 The Very Beautiful Women

READ THIS!

1 A Truly Distinguished Pleasure

MacLuhan was a bore
You know it's true
Opening the beautiful bound volume
Of fine new poems
The thick pages
Of rich white paper
That seem to breathe taste and discrimination,
Complementing your refined sensibility
Even *before you* read!
And when you do read, you are glad,
So glad that poetry
And pages of magic fiction
Exist to take your breath away
Thrilling you once again
As lines and lines of elegant print
Skim under your intelligent eyes.
There is nothing else you would
 rather be doing,
As mere celluloid cannot please this way.
Movies and T.V. are so crass
Throwing up everything at your ears and eyes,
There is no 'special place'
For your own imagination there.
The greatness of your own mind's theatre
Which pure print allows!
Pausing a moment from the mellow nook
Of your own warm pleasure now
You treasure a thought
For the scribes of the past
Painstaking over their leather-bound
And beautifully illuminated books.
What a truly distinguished history –
An established and fine tradition –

There is in the simple art of reading!
Yet it requires no special breeding
Only the natural aristocracy
Of your own good sense;
The simple skill and taste of a reader of books.

2 You're Great.

Welcome to this poem. Why you? Because
You're one of us, and belong here. You
have the right credentials: the taste,
sensitivity and above all intelligence
to appreciate and enjoy poetry. Now,
imagine a breast. A shapely, tanned breast.
The sun and beach background is optional,
but I know you'll want it too. You are
driving in your open-necked way, enjoying
the ocean view. You've always recognized
fine Scotch, and mix one in the cocktail
bar of your sedan. It's good and mellow,
like sunlight through an amber windshield.
Very good, you're doing fine. The girl strides
her slim, long-legged way to the beautiful
and easy shoreline. You admire her, the shape
of her tanned breasts beneath her sheer, silky
bikini. Then you smile again in your terrific
way, sure and cool above a new white cravat.
The girl's golden undulations merge into
the smooth dunes rippling in a heat haze,
fading out into the middle distance: a beautiful
shot! Then you throw your car into gear,
accelerating under tremendous power, thinking
of the clear certainty and amazing devices of
the poem. The highway is like a soft rubber
band stretching into sunset. You know just
how good poetry feels now and disappear into the
future; assured, impressed, another great reader!

3. *What it Takes*

Sure, I'm a businessman. And a tough one. I have to be, with my responsibilities. You don't go to top management levels unless you have what it takes. And what it takes what it's always taken: brains, toughness, the ability to make decisions; and something else that looks like luck but is more like horse-sense. You either have it or you don't. And I have it. Business is a full-time activity with me, it's my ballgame. But that doesn't mean I don't know how to relax. That's why I read poetry. It calms the ulcer as well as keeping my mind sharp and clear. It saves me money too, by keeping me in touch with today's changing world. Reading one good poem is better than wading through a hundred newspapers. In a good poem everything is tight, cool and clear. You have a whole experience at your fingertips, compressed and where you want it. Sure, good poems are rare, as rare as good businessmen. But then again I'm lucky. I can pick a good poem with the same ability that has made me a winner on the market. See if you've what it takes too, pick a great poem today.

4 *So Beautiful!*

Your hair is immaculate, your garments are individually styled; you are rich, beautiful, with time on your hands. Just a trifle bored, you pass 'Vogue' on to your latest male escort Yves, who sits beside you on the luxurious leather couch, and pausing slightly, take up a handsome volume of poetry in your long manicured fingers. And, it is *so beautiful!* You have found the answer. And why?

Because ...

Poetry becomes an immediate feeling
of well-being for the adventurous few
who value erotic refreshments.

Poetry may be like a shawl of tranquillity
under the swaying palmtrees of a tiny coral
island more precious and delicate than a
gold-lacquered fingernail.

Poetry is sometimes an exquisite tropical
butterfly that kisses your perfectly bare
shoulder with its soft powder-blue wings.

Poetry treasures fresh peaches and a glass
of cool milk on the island's breast at sunrise:
your hallmark of most simple luxury.

Poetry dances in the sweet springtime
rain under cherry blossoms with colourful
Japanese umbrellas gliding against paper-thin
mists of pure sensibility.

Twilight on the shoreline after poetry
with a hibiscus in your teeth is a perfect delight.

Poetry will turn like a pearly metaphor
in your mind again and again until all the world
is new and stunning.

Poetry is best when most like night-music in the
foyer, clean as seaspray and totally irresistible.
You read on and on, enchanted, while Yves strolls
the illuminated patio, alone.

5 There's a Lot going on under the Bonnet of Today's Poetry

If you have an eye for precision engineering, then you know it takes a sophisticated infrastructure to assure those lasting aesthetic thrills. Today's Poetry is definitely for you. Today's Poets care about accurate design. Days are spent over the shade of a cadence or the balance of a single syllable. And in the big picture we're just as fussy, with the whole weight of modern linguistics

behind each stanza. It's complex, and it's sophisticated.
So is a computer or a satellite. We've all come a long way from
the first T-models. At Today's Poetry we've never
looked back. Each model is fully tested in the poet's own
conceptual laboratory, using the most sophisticated
formalist and structuralist techniques. This guarantees performance.
Today's Poem looks good, too. There are numerous wind-tunnel
tests for full aerodynamic styling. The poem is sleek,
powerful and modern. The fastest on the page. You gain full
directional stability, unlimited power, rapid acceleration
all within an electronically controlled total system, Remember,
our world's already in the space age. Bring yourself into it,
too. Read Today's Poem!

VIEW

Time to become a man again.

I returned.

The mirror. My cool imagery.

The recurrence of a huge ice bridge, with massive crystals and blue internal light – all the familiar paraphernalia – stretching in a huge bow from horizon to horizon.

As I stand underneath, gazing at the enormous mass, poised there, high above my head.

10

TIME SEQUENCE

A lone truck driver takes a short cut through
a city park, only stopping when he buys a yeast
bun from a kiosk, near the ornamental fountain.
Leaves quietly fall onto the tray of his truck.
Years pass.

The park is under a mountain of leaves,
a sea of leaves,
a storm of leaves,
leaves in the winds –
drifting like small fish among the trees.

Leaves falling like thin snow flakes of green
and
 orange
 and
yellow
over some cold glowing equator
through a timeless flurrying
of leaves
until we reach the last morning of the last day
in a chill drenching fall of light,
as each leaf, like a clear dew drop,
turns into millions of separate little time-pulses
which falter in the weak sun, and blink out, evapor-
ating in the air.

The truck driver returns with the yeast buns,
glances at the park, the fountain, swings slowly into
his truck and drives away.

SIX POEMS FOR THE TELEVISION GENERATION

1 *Discrete Entity*

discrediting futurity
the looking glass yawns

a glossy lost eyeball,
beams of light,
teak housing

in multi-ghosted
logi beards

so many extra lives
to the square measure

synchronised
all nerves a-waver

it's crossed to real now
as – interlude

only weight of a focussed hand.

2 *The presence*

we skim,
collapse into silence
from the film

a crisis never
above surfaces

you were somewhere else
part of the day

bridging
instant and expectation

the eye hits at three slides
then sinks,
its all-watery light

words only
the cliché empties outward
into images
of air

even in reflection
our densities
relative

a touching
through all fingertips.

3 Video Blanks
the bullets don't kill
your identity is pattern

models
alternatives

a tube rubbed clean of dots

teacups for tea
for and with
the interruptions
as: all possibilities
accounted
fore-counted
and cast

the composite
faced
competently

as: *our system*
tuned in synch. faces
and, like the oiled beach girls,
toned superbly.

4 *Foothills of Dakota*

the foothills of Dakota
are in front of the fire
the fire is watching the television
the television is watching the toes
the toes tap the foothills
of Dakota.

5 *The Other Side Of The Set*

clustered pairs of eyes
smaller and larger case

flicker addicts
we meld
into the set /
reversed
blind clustered dots

the oblivion
of a landscape
beyond us.

6 *Worlds Away*

who were you last night,
how many through the dreamscape?

the social surfaces – we watch the play

relative realities /
are humanising dimension
above a sheer abstract

garb and overlay
and basis of all fictions

no schisms except
through proper channels

parasitic ghosts swimming

our sense of time and space
the diorama

at once,
concentrate
and thinnest edge of glossed ephemera

which the sunlight on the hand
(bared now),
turning off the changing set
(there extended),
barely cancels.

THREE SLIDES

1 *Tentatively There*

You see the objects resting against ('touching') one another. The glow is fading, and your eyes dim down to tiny dots. Then it is very flat – and, casually, *a situation* – to the margins of what has to be seen.

As another edge presents itself - sheer and shiny - balanced upon another edge, and suspended within dim light ...

Noticing bland, flat areas remain below...

The light peels away from your touching, your seeing, cutting back to the dim early sense of itself as a proper background.

Another object now. Milky. You sense it, or imagine it, and two brown hands, then, extend through the milky air – touch it – and rest upon thin ricepaper sheets, folding them.

Edges crinkle. Horizons softening in the creases, then outwardly into the milky air, like light fading abruptly to dim softness. Further horizons are balanced, carelessly askew, in miniature, over little light-pulses or through thin ricepaper sheets ...

And you test each one against the eye-line before they fade, by seeing, and sensing, and touching.

x

2 *Play Corners*

The noises in the corners are trapped in taking ways. (Three shades of orange.) You choose one to come in a corner, with big taking ways. You choose to eye in a corner with big ones and coloured curtains. So I am here as a nice one choosing. I eye a colour and enter the corners.

Now big noises are trapped in taking ways, catching in coloured corners. The white noise eats the nice ones choosing. The white sheets eat the coloured corner noise. No one notices. We repeat, 'Eats. Nice. Choosing.' Then corners, catalogues and curtains sprout in big noises and coloured shades, in three concepts of yellow.

So, leave the big noises in white sheets, keep the catalogues, grow quiet big ones.

Only coloured corners could. So go quietly, go colouring sheets, cornered by white sheeting noises.

There, now that's a ploy. All here are nice ones and choose white sheeting in coloured corners, quietly.

Trap nice ones, big ones, corner noises, under the shades, in three concepts of orange.

And all eyes eating coloured catalogues, curtain colours, taking ways; all noisily. Eating nice big ones.

3 *She Remembers*

Nothing is happening. Little lights of the city discharge like bright popguns. We declare that night will be infinitely sad and elegiac. Her eyes are glass, and lightly drifting now, in the light of blue songs.

It is cold. Semi-darkness folded into warm paper packages. Old women take them home in crumbling shopping jeeps, to grow cold and spill out everywhere, as they stare vacantly across their lonely lighted tables.

The city is intersections, squares, parallels, cuboid blocks. Her body, likewise, is an assemblage of attributes. Head, shoulders, arms, legs, breasts, buttocks, trunk. She stands, a still chess-piece; queen. The two geometries meet here, male and female, on the street. Now, the probabilities are probably infinite, as in the chess game.
She does not choose to change her square.

Her hands are patting down the mussed profusions of her drifting hair. We expected this. It takes an unimaginably long time. Still. There is nothing happening.

Her future is understood as yellow letters on paper yellowing with age.
She remembers, remembering, is remembered.

A drifting haze of memories, in autumn colours, melts across white surfaces.

It is understood that the curling edges of these pages will breathe time.

Drifts through an arcade. Through airs of remembered springs.
Summers glowing in hot bright sunlight. Or winter gardens

reduced to a faint tonal wash. Now thinning colours dissolve against the blank white surfaces.

Returns to the pavement. Her eyes dim to tiny dots. The game changes, and she paces cement dominoes. Square edges, lined intervals.

A six-six, a six-nine, nine-five, eight-three.

Stops. Still. A picture of her drifting scarf. Held about her shoulders in the limpid vice of nerve-light; a million pearls and plains of threaded music.

A wary animal, night advances, retreats, advances.

She finds herself between lighted cuboid buildings. Reflecting white and white interiors, mirroring back upon themselves like atonal music. Transparent planes and glistening sheets multiplying spaces between cement and glass.

Her eyes blink across to little lights of the city. Little lights of the city discharge like popguns, as before. We trace back the lines and find it so: remembering. Where the past is a balanced cliché.

‘She walks the pavement, long hair thrown to the wind, etc.’

Still. Nothing is happening.

WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK AND LOVE
FOR THE HIPPIY PARADISE

1

Ivory Taoists we gleamed
in wordshine, moonshine,
yes, stooped at all the crazy shines
as the zap bolts flashed,
our minds tooled to comix
and the household language
we were thinking in, drinking of air,
in words,

speedily too, in words,
downriver light –

the cast-off's alphabet coat
you were seen in
all night –

(Or the stuff? How pure,
anyway? Was our concern.
Softly
and without substance ... ?)

Well, truthfully, was
in words,
the white-maria, small lies, at synapse tip,
simply limpid with a clarity
of all meanings-beyond-this,
the depth-dissolves,
even the films, cut-ups, the comix,
and all transparency to the object!

(Conceptual word, you springeater,
from your empty mouth these poems fly!)

I remember
hip Rose our 'tea lady'
would always bring her
brim-upped autumns in auburn cups
telling them one by one
and burning
see another leaf from
the alphabet tree-fall,
the tree for all
she's gliding to,
 ah yes, you drink
of air, and rose hip tea,
giving all transparency to the object,
fresh springeaters,
her mouth reigns there
 from the open poems,
and so cool
 to take a sip
and grow clearwater blooms
through her two bright eyes!

WHERE WILL IT ALL END?

A bright beach haze
sets 'great days' alight
through an open window's pan-flash
over palm trees,
and all the little sootpuffs
along the beachfronts are seething.
Just another face of machineland I suppose
and a pity really
how we, ant-like,
flung out to the baycurves
must soak up our sunshine
between the stop and go
between winter and the cities ...
just thousands of little picnickers,
nit-picking sandbars between umbrellas
and destiny.

Gosh!

We're all caught up in
'wheels within wheels' I guess.
And begin to sound like Americans.
Where will it all end?
In the shrill squeal
of one fat brat perhaps.
His mindless and empty thrill
which seemed to chill the air
when the bland white
ice-cream ball
bounced from the crisp golden cone
he'd crushed just for kicks
in his fat slack hand
and which (ker-splatt!) we saw
spludged
(frosty, sparkling!)

out onto hot strips
of beachfront asphalt ...
And which trickled slowly away
into a slick and sticky mess there?
Hey - is that it!?

MAGAZINE TAN

A giant smile, all cover,
conjures yet another
day-dream lover
singing 'sail me to the stars
over that ocean sunset'
oh we must all be ultra-
violet by now
dazzling in our
bathing suits
the latest
bright young people
posed in
a colour magazine ...
So
slink slow
and easy now baby
into your tan
oil up all the surfaces
and just slip off
those scratchy little mittens.

THE VERY BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

It is a mistake to think all the very beautiful women are beautiful at all times. Indeed, they *do* explicate all vogueish maxims, refined to a single statement: that in the eye's world, a world of images and visual effects, style may indeed be *everything*. Yet they, like us, must also sometimes be lonely. They must wake, like us, dishevelled and disgruntled from a restless night. The parties they attend, graced with scintillant conversation and light among champagne bubbles, must sometimes, surely, leave them with hangovers?

And whom do the very beautiful women adorn their lovely selves to please, I ask, quite genuinely enraptured - as we notice one now in her furs and silk gown, drifting languidly through an arcade of polished mirrors. For truly, she will refuse your advances as the grotesque and boorish gestures of an inferior order of life. It is almost as if in spurning us the very beautiful women become more beautiful. Unless, of course, one were to offer them a fortune...?

I say this knowing it might be unkind ... To suggest that the very beautiful women have lived someone else's lie. That they are puppets of fashion designers, or have been destroyed by 'society'. That they have become paper-thin creatures, ultimately hollow, so preoccupied with surfaces. Yet, is theirs not a genuine sacrifice - to beauty and the imaginative life? That they have given their bodies to 'the beautiful', and have refined themselves almost into non-existence? Or at least, to such a sheer degree of the exquisite?

Is it not then for us to *understand*, and in our attitudes be generous?

You may see the very beautiful women on the decks of magnificent yachts - full of sublime hauteur - in the pages of

fashion magazines, in the most chic and expensive shops, in the upholstered seats of chauffeured limousines, and sometimes strolling the best street in town.

Are the very beautiful women truly happy? Would they forgive me this naive question? But of course, I have never been allowed to see the very beautiful woman frown.

I once thought that the most beautiful of the very rich and beautiful women were beautiful – not for other women, nor for men – but for themselves alone. But recently, a supreme irony has occurred to me. It may be true that the very beautiful women spend so much time on their perfect images because they suffer a supreme lack of confidence. They secretly feel they are ridiculous! And perhaps with good reason. For the very beautiful is as much a freak in this world as the hideously ugly. They may feel intuitively that at the extremes the circle rejoins. Are they always then a hair's breadth from being spurned as grotesque!?

And what do the very beautiful women think, and what do they feel? Are they simple warm creatures trapped in the untouchable glaciers of their beauty? Do they dream secretly of being shopgirls? Have they hungered for 'true love'? Does the world ask too much of them? Is their endowment a curse? Or are they shrewd and knowing, and use what nature has given them to dazzle silly men, and further their desires for indolence and luxury?

Do the very beautiful women love each other ... with the fire of sensuality mixed with the ice of narcissism; and in doing so, in reality, love themselves ... their images, ultimately, being interchangeable?

Are there not moments when wiping the powdered cheeks of their bottoms with the softest and most expensive of toilet papers, their long carefully varnished nails pierce through the barrier to 'reality', and the frailer inner image shatters on contact with their more fundamental natures?

The very beautiful women seem terrified of growing old. They search for grey hairs, for the first wrinkles, quick with dyes and unguents.

Yet the very beautiful women achieve so much without (apparent) effort. The radiant glass cases of jewellery wink back their secrets as they melt past us into a frieze of beautiful surfaces.

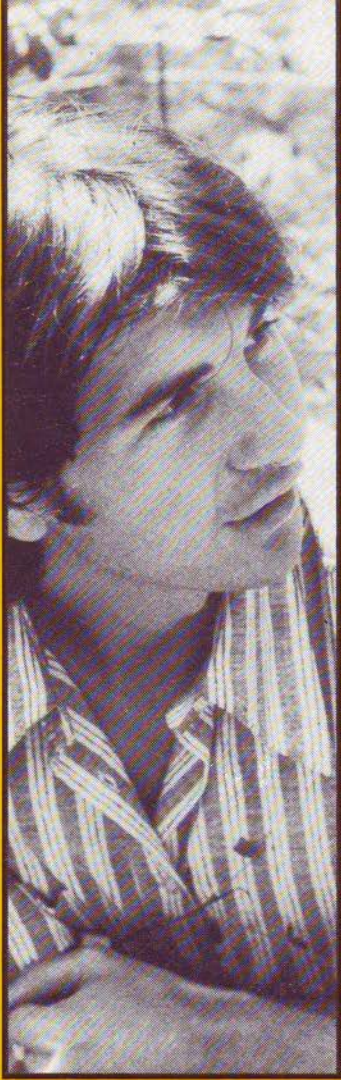
And it seems true that they have no need of us. They are as smooth as polished crystal set between white arctic furs and black onyx; pure and self-contained in their sheer glossy nylons. Set in the beautiful dream of themselves: the image.

Here is one with a carefully swathed model's figure, immaculate eyebrows arched to perfection. And this one holds a cup more precisely than a surgeon makes his first incision. She is immaculate in an exact balance of matched highlights; her make-up, the luxury and elegance of her attire, the expensive leathers, and pointed polished nails in an exquisitely tasteful shade of red, are as co-ordinated as facets of cut crystal.

Are the very beautiful women merely collector's items purchased by excessively rich men with taste? If they have been exploited, will they be avenged? Are they stupid, but blameless?

Should we forget then the anonymous faces of the poor, the greed and squalor of our polluted cities, all for the sake of the very beautiful women? Do they provide us with a greater vision of life? Do we, in our wretchedness, need them, to give us hope? Are they as rare as roses in a pig sty, to be ultimately treasured? Or do they offer a hollow lie? Will the future see them reflected in crystal, or in the cheap chrome and plastic flimsiness of our supermarket 'culture'? Will they too be unable to resist it? Will good taste save them from the street? Or will they grow richer on our misery, and more beautiful on our ugliness?

Ah, but perhaps they will remain encased in their cold perfection forever, and continue to disdainfully refuse our secret desires. They are so bright and splendid and unreal we must rub our eyes when we return to our more familiar lives.



John Jenkins was born in Melbourne in 1949. He began writing in 1967, and was associated with the La Mama writers' workshop. He edited 'Aardvark' and 'A' in 1970, was co-editor of 'Etymospheres' and is associate editor of 'Aspect'. He published a book of prose, 'Zone of the White Wolf' (Contempa Publications) in 1975 and co-edited 'The Outback Reader' (Outback Press) in 1976

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