

CHROMATIC CARGOES



POEMS BY JOHN JENKINS

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POST NEO PUBLICATIONS

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The (fabulous!) poem *Rainbow* was first
published in MEANJIN.

Also by John Jenkins:

ZONE OF THE WHITE WOLF
AND OTHER LANDSCAPES (Contempa)

BLIND SPOT (Gargoyle/Makar)

THE INLAND SEA (Rigmarole/Brunswick Hills)

A cassette/CD, WAITING FOR MANANA (4T)

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OUR DUMB EMOTIONS

Ziggurat storms burst seeming from Venn clouds.
Our dumb emotions lean into the weather.
Stars heliotropic and hot like chemistry,
portions of the thinking brain,
and of the unthinking,
basted evidence, all these say hello:
definite objective observations,
and the unassuming enormity of nature.
We look into the private lives
words lead amongst themselves.
Find a blue horizon in a Methode-ray-tube.
Let's interrogate, let's find out, let's get out!

JUICED CARGOES

There is no reason to believe
the orange proposition -
that the 'normal' style of modern
usage or sentence construction
is a fragment dealwood box
you might find fully explicated
in any newspaper and why not?
outlined in kneejerks of syntax
the public applauds like
tonnage and haulage figures
heaped in groaning ripe convoys
to transport reality to that other shore
of sense and vital interest
predicated on ship-to-shore signals
flashed back from 'reality' to you
to disclose the sun-store
of energy from bud to fruit
however the acrid tang might sparkle
in a glass later at sun rise or set
into portable belief systems
we inherit like received opinions
and an ear attuned to the Narrow Band
over timber decking in a wash of light.
These bright constructs
swung off the branch as we chatter
might stretch your long arms to a funky Nut
growing high in the palm,
and as easily interrogate the real
like photons dance across the abstract.
But this collage is an orange in slices
its juice welling pink and acrid
into the next harbour to make you read
further into the text, the argument
a smile across the floating page.
Dried in an African gumleaf sense
the labels are ripe with art in a sunflare,
the pips are shipped with the fruit,
to disclose essential form,
Oh my poem brightly burning!

ZOOPLANKTON

A heliotrope miasmatic sun-swirl
because brightness enriches
the gaberdine of the water flea.
You can see its heart beating,
the minute cilia of the minutes it enacts.
Beneath the rings of Saturn
swim larval thoughts of winter,
strange beauty and sudden death.
When the ice melts
it is the colour of azzola,
a world newly made up
tips to the edge of graph paper
where the pencil dips in light,
no mind too constant could construct
a cinerarium for the water fern.
How delicate are the eyes,
Midas is outgrown by the honeysuckle
and foam-jets, spinnerets of sense,
ablute the dark harness of the caddis fly.
Ganglia intact and feathery, swimmerets
quicken in an onslaught of innocent light,
the webs afloat, the level starry foam of
your crown, golden in an omniscience of dew,
floating with the many-pirates of pincers,
maxillae, a mandibular comedy built in reverse
to daylight, the edges and the objects
all broken up and bright in a pure swirl.

ROPE WORLDS SEEMING

Pointillist verbatim notes
in the upside-down utopias of breath:
the happy mosquito, breather tube alight
to the water surface;
into the tuxedo stage,
raffish tumblers set along a bar.
petit-point adult whisperings set ablaze the wind.
Oh little random harvests,
what sweetened adults emerging into fire!
All your energy is there like a lighthouse.
The porous wings ironically drowning. Shine
to the depth node where the stars split off,
a transfer to the reeds, double-dipping.
Many levelled music of being, to return
to your water bed means death. In the swirl
you retrieve the monotreme - its double
identity is double indemnity. Then
separate into categories into fraudulent leaps!

RAINBOW

Above the gravity that pulls everything down
are words that float like a morning rainbow.
Looking up, the ticket you hold in your hand
turns liquid in the red wind. And you are
suddenly set into the fragile form time
erodes. There are also gulls which turn
liquid on the wing beyond the orange river
where the silver fades and the sun smothers
docklands and a heart full of daisies.
You look above yellow rails and the slight
morning mist rising as if from the corner
of a painting and it softens the glare of
existence; Watching death-bright passengers
alight, caught in the green air they embrace.
The skyline burns into blue surrounded by
nothingness and we move along its indigo veins.
As intense as the violet sky, yet cloudy and often
hopeless, your luminous and incorrigible mind
flowers towards the cold light: a thing of
adjectives afloat above the day, perhaps
a bruised rainbow burning in the air
beyond the gravity that pulls everything down.

WHY I LIKE YOU

(For S.)

Just let me say
that I like you because
you are beautiful as a tropical
avalanche in a glass full of gold.

Another reason,
your energy.
It often happens ...
Before I've slept after breakfast
you've showered, walked the dog;
and made little aeroplanes out of an icecube.

Should I also mention
that you remind me
of starlight pulsing
between the spokes of a bicycle?
You whirl so fast it leaves me breathless!

Or say, "I like you because
you celebrate the motors of flesh and air"
Should I also say *that?!?*
Well, I couldn't imagine you earnest or dull!

And is it really
a coincidence
that *le douceur fleurie des etoiles*
(a quote from Rimbaud)
also reminds me of you?
Just a coincidence
that in the back of our husky sled
we could wake up *any moment* in Cuba!

And really, I'm wild too
About that 'trick'
where you dip the entire universe
into a can of blue paint
such that everything is my favourite colour!
Yes, I think that's a good one.

I also like you
for your teeth
which are useful for untying knots

and because of Tasmania,
the love-shaped island
between your thighs

and for your eyes
which rhyme and are green
tiny traffic lights
saying yesyes when we kiss!

HAWAIIAN FLOWERS

*In an ideal world the words write themselves.
You just wind them up then go away.*

The spinnakers of pure thought fill with light.

Item: happiness.

Item: a glass of fresh fruit juice.

Coasting across the South China Seas.

See the crimson buds from your windows
blooming under the wake.

Oh Mambo Mambo, light years off course.

Will you tease me thus forever Carmelita?

Well has Don Carlos sent his hat flying.

The tree in the square is aflame with violet buds,
My Little Cha Cha.

Will you be there to remember me when

I wear my flame sombrero?

Will you see my sails in the yellow light?

A sea drift, a hat across a vast red wash of water?

There, chords strike like notes, notes like chords.

Ah, it is good then

to take the guitar as your friend,

for this is the Cha senor, this is the Bread!

CARNIVAL NIGHTS

Hot art tango, so it goes.
It goes one step at a time.
I stood in the empty street then
and imagined a life of adventure.
South of later I found it.
In my day's plume of blue feathers,
flying low, in the mist, over the crags
and rivers that gave way to rivers and crags.
Then my bus stopped across a sheet of glass.
People entered, paid and left; than a new bus
Came. For me, there are stories in all the words,
even single ones, and not even nouns, and odd ones.
Even single ones, and that's how he flies,
on a river bank, studying signs.
In a smoke signal over crags, daydreams of Aesop,
And the light fades softly about the stop. So
you've found it, you've found it already.
Your wonderful life of adventure!

ZOOMFRUIT HOLIDAY

The loopy Buddhist says: "I gives you
what you wants." My my, the caryatid
floats on rubber knees. But that's why
they are rubber. To bend so. And this is dumb.
Why should you know? How should you care?
Don't bother trying to find me, you won't
have a chance, I've taken the locks off
the doors and Maurice has gone back to Trinidad.
You can keep the books and cut-glass things.
My English she is not so well. I have ze
'hideaway suitcase', all packed. Ah,
velvet amours! Every time I search
for a leakproof seal a new novel develops.
The camera is full of brief bright flashes.
My laughter is the song of gnats! I wish
you well, I truly do, but take your
sprayguns elsewheres. Well, isn't that nice -
peel an orange! Ha ha. Everything's
coming up roses!

HEADFULS OF AIR

Skylight slipper
Fun vests
Meatball tubas
Arrest the critical motion
Sans uplift
Filigree of slipper
Back to it
Shadoof bumper
Grilled booboo
Vestments
Arrested
Hummingbird lantern
Rose window
Courtyard of sleep
Dialogue
Music
Laughter
The little princess asleep
Near the pool
Little fins
Lazy carp
Circles
I see fragments
Books aflame

Chapter two

It's easy to see why
And how
Like an arrow
Diminished minor chords
Dateless portals
Daybreak
Light on foam
Or is it sand?
The princess woke and yawned
Book marks in shimmer desert.

FUEL FOR THE COOL

Brilliant German, he was hot.
Gunned a Red Shift to the think tank;
ripples widened, hotter and hotter
they said, the ash floating from
a burning cigarette, and he
original cool, on again or off.
Tungsten-drill-based,
hammered a desk
for rates of spin.
"Keep my spores alight,"
and so on. On and on
and only a popular shrug
favours my art! Why,
if Stalin were alive you'd...
You'd soon cut it out!
All froze above their ice,
serene flamingos aping
serene flamingos. The
disguise was perfect.
No tributaries
but those which evoked
the current phase of Capital.
Faked 'revolutionaries'
stopped pouting long enough
to posture with cute wrists.
"Jah! Das ist it!"
And, rotating, nebulous,
gaseous yet solar, he Xeroxed
a perfect copy, warm from the toaster.
"Gentle-ments," he thundered,
"a perfect Kant-Laplace hypothesis!"

OH YEH!

This proposition lingers...
that it is only by 'nomination'
that the world becomes problematic;
that we perhaps invent a category
of seeming, rather than being, fancifully
almost as an extrapolation from the end of
the pointing human finger (primary naming)
into the set of multiple reflective
superimpositionary frames and planes
of what we like to call our traditions
(Aristotle) of self and world, viz 'reality'...
or even "just-arrived-from-Mars" view of sociology
or simply "lets have a look around and see"
methodology that seems a fairly natural way
to conduct phenomenological investigations
of the so which place you in the world...
and that all this resists
the 'realm of corrosive fictions'
as being a sort of 'evil star' on the horizon,
a myth made more of words than words themselves;
that is, simply that language leaves silences
behind... and furthermore, that silence is not,
in any sense, 'corrosive' , or a site of
'pure emptiness' , except in the sense of
language and, occasionally, consciousness,
but certainly never 'empty of transactions'
in any observable sense, but just another place
for things to be in different ways.
And in not so different ways.

GATES AND OMISSIONS

A tethered angel
over the train tracks.
Desert-nodes, dry winds across
the grain, quartz leanings.
Random light-folds, all that we are,
all cardboard.
Resists the pattern,
Rorschach-gates, the oblique
objects in their tracks.
No objective.
None here, none there.
Whoo!
Look at me flying!

HARMLESS RADIO

Grecian fallout,
the too-empty airs
of the Nullarbor, grains folding
again to an edge of night. The tiny
apostle screaming love
from insect throats, the torn turns
the time takes to arrive.
A target, terse
as impressionism,
unhit as the light that lit
your face in the carriage.
The grouped seats, the light
weeping across your face.
The place of your face, the light,
the eyes, the skies, the surprise,
the light seeps and seeps
and we sleep above
your unlit pores,
breathing like a new pool.

VOID ELATION

The text of the drum.
Then-date forges a kind
of elastic wish, to enact,
rather than signify, defeat.
We will meet
on a little bridge
across our tongues,
near the pulse of language.
Imagine that
we never drop.
A Franz Kline sweep across
the blues to deepest wonder.
That might be endless,
where forces we feel
but cannot name
enact their airbrush of the real.
And yet - the blues - the blues
make endless miles of radio;
an interval which telegraphs
not here, not here.
Walking without the water
wings, and waking like a culture kid,
crashing like crushed
crescendos of fragile surf.
It helps. Night gaping through,
utterly Freudless, grinning down the moon,
needlessly stylish, needle stylus,
its one raw tooth.

SEASONAL SHIFTS

Brain already,
yet not luckless.
A characteristic galaxy of
fallout. Metal teeth. Metal death.
Unlovely from the sea:
photo-foam, squid seed open
like a baby, eagle-headed flesh.
Taste the elongated sunrise,
the horizon heavy with sacks,
the feasible orgasm
bare on Orion,
Pluto shards bloom
ing) in seed cells
turn to osmosis in the heady shade,
evaporating head horse,
flare pony,
an accident flayed into moats.
Where were you then?
Stinging! Without surprise!
Stroke by stroke stroke by stroke.

THE BANDIT

When You're Out Of Self
is not a popular song
but could be. Minarets
need haircuts too. The voice
goes Zoom Zoom Zoom. Who
said, "Terrible days have passed
these eyes in silent array"?
Well Nancy, I see you're back in Perth.
Does it still seem like Hollywood? A
motor mower spins past
The Head Of The World in outer space.
But what's that to you! Go ahead and
file your nails if it makes you feel like
a better person. I have an elegiac friend
who mourns 'the death of the subject'.
I mourn it too. The Corinthian column
is my favourite. But when the bandit shows
you shoot! Don't ask no questions!

Do you think it's alright to go on?
Yes. Well, often the bread that is buttered
hits the floor face-down. That is not a proposition
by Anaximander, but by Murphy,
a friend of mine who needs cheering up sometimes.
Careful, that shadow! There, on the deep pile!
The bandit is always where shade accrues.
And so Nancy we go back to school and learn
to swim. Go back for another big hug
of the Teddy Bear. And feel happy to bits!

WHISPER

(for N. M.)

Oh you poor dog, how
I have sadly used you.
Though I dig you, I
dig you like a dog.
And you sobbed down
the phone when you
heard the news. There
was no return. No tax
buoyed you up on the
fury of a glance as
sweat dried on your
upper lip. Was that
what you had in mind?
Searching the hello
to transport your shadow?
In one remove your eyes
are searching mine. Sleep
is in your step and it
can never be emptied.
And they say your friends
liken your hands to moments.

ALWAYS BURNING

Always bouncing back
through a sudden squall of radiators,
wobble up through the light
up to the sunset reds full and flaring
back to the pinks of morning,
the meridians of the grass are green and fresh.
And then a full round of ceilings
while optimistic rain falls to the plains,
chromatic cargoes
Arrive!
Just like that! Like BLUE SUNHAT LADDERS!
I hear cavatina's rose of sharon
enfoliate at the hearth.
See carnival constructs skate your eyes.
You in green togas, pink cravats!
What do you think this is,
if not a day star and a night star?
I'm lyrical I know.
But under my sunsets the Rosella
extracts a brilliant price.
What scenes do you offer? What scenes?
There is a pulsator in the milkshake.
The first Lobster Newburg of Spring
cries pinkly in the gardenshade.
Spring ways mean spring days.
Right! Green waves with more foam than light!

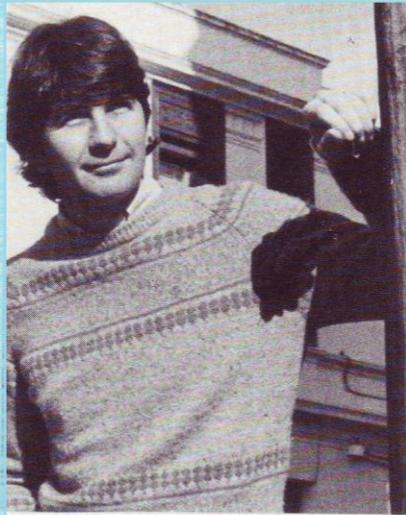
TINY WHITE FLOWERS

Light-headed air where all is light.
A bright force around each cup.
You arrive on a warm wind.
Your letter is full of your voice.
A brown mug of champagne.
Summer in 'the tropics', hands in the honey.
Imagine! Aromatic blue light! And we wake
clear as diamonds in the bright yellow wind.
A silver thread runs out like a line into the surf,
Clouds dot the blue like heart beats:
Even though repetition does not satisfy,
repetition just repeats,
nothing has been made less real.
Memory pushes you into the present again,
and that's a sort of repetition.
But this is not a narrative.
It's not anything much.
It's called 'tiny white flowers',
and is pieced together from some good lines
of a bad poem once called The Hive
which I hope you never see -
it was so turgid and boring.
Your letter, which by contrast,
was a pleasure to read,
arrived from Holland as I was writing.
Today's great - just part of our 'full-on' summer
here in Australia. I'm taking a day off work,
sitting in the garden, amongst red Hollyhocks
('hollyshocks', in my blue socks)
and bees and writing poems. It's very pleasant.
And wonderful to hear from you again!
I'm sorry your father died.
(Incongruous that I should be feeling
so happy now, over here.) It's hard...
But from your letter it sounds like your family
is coping well with the grief.

Remember, if you ever want to come to Australia,
please stay with us. It would be
fan tan to see you again.
But, right now, I hope you don't mind,
Margriet, if I return to my poem,
which I would like to end, just as it began,
with the words
tiny white flowers.

Chromatic Cargoes

A bit like free jazz. There is an immense freedom of composition here. The method is to combine word play, free association, jokey constructions, and ever-shifting imagery, along with some hard-boiled philosophical ideas. Readers, expect great freshness and playfulness! And the always unpredictable next move. Chromatic Cargoes is not about conventional sense, or manufacturing pre-received formal enclosures of meaning. But it does seek to give pleasure and uplift, especially to readers who allow their imaginations to remain ajar, and for whom the sheer love of language is vital. Nothing is pre-set or fixed, but this might be a good approach to these highly playful experiments: where poems suggest a narrative, and characters interacting, it is the reader alone who must take free rein to construct likely scenarios and imagine unfolding stories - or not do this at all, but just let the words wash over them - just as they like!
Poems constructed in the sand-pit of language... an odd exuberance often all too rare!



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