

# Poems

## Michael Farrell

### C.O.U.N.T.R.Y

You feel this way, kind of free when you lie down

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I've seen it, the cocking head, the dipping branch, but now  
I'm thinking of something else. The long drawn  
Out day. The novelty of peaches in  
A new form. Savour the bird's body language, you may need  
It to recognise yourself later. Like water, your head empties  
slowly  
Of melody (though not music) and you find yourself alone - but  
In a kind of love. The cow stretches her neck as  
If to scratch it on the rough air

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You become milder, watching her, finally letting the march  
fly bite  
& then crushing it with a hand. 'What did I cook?

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Chops a la Brisbane.' I heard, but looked at you like  
You're a jackass. To run as if your brain's an egg  
In the heat. The grass deep and delicately iced with petals

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The woman identified the noodles. She was  
A grandmother now, cooking them for her plastic surgeon  
grandson. The  
True way to do it, she said, was

Under the blue light of the sky till  
You could see the moon  
In them. But her grandson would never be home  
In the daytime so she compromised. The bookshop next door  
caught  
Fire and the poets ran for their lives. They won't rebuild  
In a hurry she thought. Unlikely. Her grandson put  
On his red shirt that made him look like  
A detail from Caravaggio or  
A hundred kangaroo paws. The law differs. You see the plane  
Appear to pause. You bring it across the sky with  
Your mind. Two planes on the ground like insects without  
appetites

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Behind the border, the look of things meant judgment was  
unstable  
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You could only report, and remember that  
Others were doing the same  
On the land that took horse's bones bigger than anything  
It remembered for thousands of years. A jay is tougher than  
A magpie. A magpie does the rounds  
Of the bus stops where the crows don't go. They sound  
Sweeter but are equally daggy in their daily activities with only  
A beak and no bag to put  
Over their wing. The leaves crackle like Christmas beetles  
& someone runs past in a cloak. Your body changes as  
Your mouth forms new words. You use a milk carton to  
Explain about the university you went to. Your great love was  
A Perth smoothie who rode a dugite. In their eyes  
A wall of surf. It made you social, like conceptual  
Art  
-----

There were so many waves. Our eyes are globby archives  
& seeing a man on a train blow gently on an  
Ant's just dust on the table. Come to me like  
A cat. Clay dries. Wood blackens. Hens dart in for company

Some Problems with the Page as Terra Nullius

That boat - from England - has sailed

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You have a body, a cut  
Whole body. Your hand was once a wheatstalk, caterpillar  
dropping

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The blue Word, the blue Explorer

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(The grey banner, the grey ruler)

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*Like poppies from a train window*

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You were the first person in  
Your family to take a train; Australian fauna in  
Bavaria or the Forum would not  
Have fazed you. Now every page has the  
Finish of a Big Mac. According  
To Zizek. Only the view is yours, the reflected lazy  
Dust

---

Indigenous loggers write songs of the  
Pine trees' upright years. They were more like green beauty  
Queens

---

They would dance on the  
Needles and shells (of the shotguns). Only the joggers would  
See them. Some problems with  
The idea of nations. Two memories of pages, both in  
Colour: both practical, torn. Both  
Memories of more than one place; in the back  
Bedroom, in the hut, on the

Hip, on the safety clip. Why is there  
Nothing instead of something asked the  
Teachers of the statesmen? What is the point of military  
Tradition?

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A line: a black line

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Your company is no drawing

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From above the trees are dots

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Smaller dots become bigger dots

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I want to reach the  
Readers of the nineteenth century; I want to reach the  
Readers of the eighteenth century. The  
First Australian poem was a collaborative prose poem of  
colons

Posing as a letter. Harpur off  
His hinges was better than a swinging door. I hope  
Your chooks turn into wrecking  
Balls and knock your arenas over. Undergraduates of  
Melbourne

These are your models. There never  
Was a space program stuck down your face. Lights  
Wipe out stars; suicides show a  
Lot of faith in the ground and sky. You were  
Born with bacteria in your gut

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This is not, in itself, genius

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Spilling coffee on a library  
Book is not a breakthrough, arguably. Some brought bricks from

Spain and Holland; and the paintings  
Came from Greece. They were rough and knew the  
Cycle of the pastoral. The two  
Shapes (of the square and circle) come together in  
The Western Desert. To start to  
Write poetry, first find a door

## What The Land

It's the usual rhetorical question. Don't begin to  
Understand yet, the poem hasn't quite begun. Quiet. The  
Only sound that of words on paper. Still: the  
Only movement that of the past, history if  
You will. The reading contract (not the writing contract)  
Is that you understand that you will feel  
Or think something. What the land forms in you  
In your mind. This relates to the history  
Of reading poetry, and to that of writing it

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Money is part of it, take  
A step further, killing is part of  
It

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We know that

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It could probably be seen from the moon if  
Anyone was there (up, down, across), watching. The moon's  
A whole other concept  
Of land, related to space programs and other exercises  
In propaganda, imagination and syntax. We are  
In view of it as the sun and stars

---

Everything seen is implicated. Everything heard and said.  
Are  
You an unbeliever? Or are you the one who  
Understands, without reading, my love? Ok, that's ok  
You will never know I asked. The fragmentation  
Is complete. So  
Is the building. Now the poem can begin  
Oh. I am tingling. The wind is  
In the ruins. But the sound is not  
A message. There is residue  
In my teeth, teeth that

Ache for the ground, that  
Are part ground. Try to hear what is not  
An effect. What makes sense? Not writing. But  
It's the only challenge I want, not when  
Or whether people began to see a God, when  
That changed, how. If you carry a blue  
& white flag that says  
Your name's James Joyce, it makes sense

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You come to the city because  
You want to show it to your dog

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You can't stay in a hotel so  
You sleep nearby. The social seems  
Only to be between you. No local sees you

---

There is nothing 'going on'. If we step  
Outside we feel the mood, while others try to  
Escape the mood. A café is not a verb

---

There are realities. There are things we stopped believing  
In when we were seven that haunt  
Us forty years later if we make  
It like guardian angels

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Adopted northern structures. The spines of the  
Oak trees reach though power lines. The power lines  
Run through the trees. Gold pours into the houses  
& other places mining for human feeling, boring holes  
In the world. Magazines flap against newspapers. Everything  
I thought all day was untrue. Time  
Especially. Alarms push themselves out into the air

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A poem can't begin with so much action