

Classic Poetry Series

**B. R. Dionysius**  
**- poems -**

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## **B. R. Dionysius(1969 -)**

B. R. Dionysius (born 1969) is an Australian poet, editor, arts administrator and educator.

B. R. Dionysius was born in Dalby, Queensland. He was the chairperson of Fringe Arts Collective Inc from 1994 to 2001; directed the Brisbane Writers Fringe Festival from 1993 to 1996, and directed the Subverse: Queensland Poetry Festival from 1997 to 2001. In 2004, he completed an (Creative Writing) at the University of Queensland. He is currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) Grad Entry, again at the University of Queensland. He lives in Ipswich, Queensland, is married to the writer Melissa Ashley and has two daughters, Rhiannon and Sylvie, and a son, Theo. *Universal Andalusia*, his third poetry collection was shortlisted for the C. J. Dennis Prize for Poetry in 2006.

## [excerpt From The Negativity Bin]

(i) Lower than the Angels

'Today is the first day of the rest of your life.'

(i) Woolloongabba, Brisbane 1998 AD

The first thing Helen says is,

'If any of you touch me,  
it's assault'.

Their first session  
in Job Search Training  
with Work Corrections Australia.  
The Maori man beside Baldwin  
has difficulty filling in  
his career skills survey.

How can you describe a life  
in twenty-five words or less?

(ii) Misbah

Misbah does not call  
the Job Network member (JNM)  
to let them know that  
he's not coming in.

He figures, in one hundred  
years we'll all be jobless  
(& with God) anyhow.

He'll enjoy this day  
like it's his last.

A lick of breeze lifts.

(iii) The Ascent

'Every animal leaves traces of what it was; man alone leaves traces of what he  
created' – J. Bronowski

The Taung baby;  
the first pre-millennial

Hollywood child star  
raises her head & time stops.  
The Rift Valley hums like  
an apartment block on M LOW defrost.  
Unemployed for two million years  
her child labour resumes in 1924.  
Australopithecus - 'Southern Ape',  
the first astronaut on that -  
'awful planet of the apes'.  
No paid overtime, no holiday loading,  
no maternity leave in the ascent of man.

(iv) Now, the other dole bludgers in the queue:

- fossil lemur (50 million BC.)
- Aegyptopithecus (30 million BC.)
- Dryopithecus (20 million BC.)
- Ramapithecus (14 million BC.)
- Australopithecus (4-5 million BC.)
- Homo Erectus (1 million BC.)
- Homo Sapiens (500,000 BC.)

NB. Neanderthal Man tried to jump the queue 100,000 years ago & was breached out of existence.

NB. Fire making; the first work for the dole project.

Good morning  
Work Corrections Australia  
This is the Taung child  
How can I help you?

B. R. Dionysius

# Albert's Lyrebird

Albert's Lyrebird  
Menura alberti

(i)

He whistled to her & like an inquisitive dog  
The bowl of her head angled, a satellite dish  
To receive the new music. She was muttering  
Away in some mimic's foreign language when  
He stumbled upon her; a woodland Pokémon  
That evolved the power of water & then slaked  
Some deeper desire in him. The brown, rusted  
Stovepipe of her tail feathers swung back &  
Forth, as each great scratch of her garden fork  
Claws ripped the humus open like rotten cloth.  
As he fell, he noticed the bathtub-sized granite  
Boulders were covered in grey lichen squares,  
Cool & treacherous as damp flannels on a tiled  
Floor. Momentum snared, he heard her scream.

(ii)

A Trojan War had passed since he last saw one.  
Oracle elusive, it had tracked him like a prophecy  
Or some shadowy ninja as he hiked at Lamington.  
Then it had melted into the forest floor like a fat  
Witchetty grub, a curled white question mark of  
Memory he could only find again if he dug deeply.  
He picked himself up, mud stigmata slashed across  
His palms as he retook the track, his partner shaking  
Her head at the plunge of birdmen. Or that his cry  
Had become a lyrebird's sound effect. Recorded for  
Posterity like he was the endangered animal, a loss of  
Pride's habitat. Their black ship of extinction hauled  
Up on nature's beachhead, time caulking their voice's  
Hull; faint echoes of crackling bushfire & corroboree.

B. R. Dionysius

# Alisha's End

& this is how it ends?

Some grimy memorial near stop 14,  
duct-taped elegies from school friends  
plastic gerberas & bad poems wrapped  
around traffic lights, bridge struts, power  
poles - stagnant flower vase water trapped  
under the false, industrial epidermis;  
microbes benefit from mourning too.

A city of strangers eyeball the photocopied  
formal picture, the original tucked away  
inside some cheap branded furniture.

Ikea's similarity to coffin material goes  
unnoticed until this last improbable act.

A second's miscalculation, Senna's  
God miscued too & like Henry he wore  
a broken lance through the helmet visor.

Didn't make it to the Eighth dimension  
like Buckaroo Banzai, but then again  
who does these days, dimensions being  
so commercialised & did you notice

they've even removed the winner's  
floral garland from the Gran Prix circuit,  
the leaves – an impediment to corporate  
recognition. & can we take anything away  
from Alisha's & Aryton's end - were they  
sped on well to whatever they imagined  
came after? They live now only in our cultural  
memory, this road warrior & prom queen  
undone by mechanical theories  
& the media(n)s polished slick.

B. R. Dionysius

# Beeble Gas

Beeble Gas

For Louie

(i)

It is a dirty old story

Of a boom & bust cycle

Beyond the scale of anything.

Earth, an over-oxygenated fish

Tank burst with nutrient growth.

The original hothouse skyscrapers;

Carboniferous gods that thrust

Themselves like a giant's beanstalk

Up through the world's wet roof.

Giant ferns unwound like contrary

Clock springs, the cogs of their spores

Spun over the forest's damp floor

As green fibrous assassins choked

The life out of titans, millennial wise.



(ii)

Time, the eternal miner  
Chipped patiently away  
At the world forest's rich  
Vein. Spent eons loading  
New atoms into the trunks  
Of lifeless trees as though  
Presents were being stuffed  
Into a Christmas stocking.  
It was a Frankenstein morph  
In reverse, a transformation  
Of the living into the dead.  
There was a smell of methane  
As the Earth's fist squeezed  
& the black putrefaction began.

(iii)

It was searched for  
Like a cardiac surgeon

Sniffing out a heartbeat.

At first ungainly, where

The flicker of a pulse

Registered at the surface

Of the Earth's thick skin

Like an Adam's apple's bob.

It was witnessed protruding

Through creek banks like a weft

Of femur erupting from a shattered

Leg. Then, the vivisection began.

Black marrow sucked out of the bone

Like breath out of a lung.

(iv)

Then the desire was to go deeper,

As if pumping one body full of chemicals

Would cure the disease that appeared

In everyone else. So they went at it; a gold

Rush hysteria as needles pin-cushioned

The earth's dark suit. A voodoo curse

Bringing pain to the body's deep flesh.  
They brushed aside relatives who moped  
Around the old fence line & dug for their  
Lives as though they were children, mining  
Crab tunnels with a wild irreverent glee.  
Never minding where the vortex of sand  
Flew, which locals were upset or whose eyes  
Watered, as grains bit into a delicate few.

(v)

It is like cutting the fin  
Off a blue shark's body  
& throwing the bleeding  
Trunk back into the water;  
To die by sluggish drowning.  
A useless thing choking on its  
Own being. It is trawling by  
Impossible numbers or cutting  
Off an iceberg's tip, to harvest  
Slush for a short-lived cocktail

Party. A drunken yield for refined  
Tastes, that loses sight of the ocean.  
It is clearing an entire forest in order  
To build a temporary airstrip.

(vi)

It is the mistaken language of a child  
An innocent's trick, mouthing 'beeble'  
For bird; the meaning crystal clear  
As a water table left untapped, but  
Its annunciation polluted when the time  
Comes to extract. This is a body without  
The need to resuscitate, a set of lungs  
Without the desire to inflate.

It is the breaking of a hundred million  
Year old pact, the thieving of a fairytale  
Giant's coal sack. A boom & bust cycle  
Beyond the scale of anything.

It is cutting off a dirty old story before  
The narrator reaches the punch line.

B. R. Dionysius

# Boobook Owl

If they had been Roman, then someone would have  
Died every night for months on end as the Boobook  
Owl's chime coursed through the evening like a late  
Night telephone call's bad news. Metronome regular,  
The beat of its hoot shelled them relentlessly, enfilading  
Their ears from the patch of remnant blue gums across  
Waghorn Street. The book book of its mournful cry, as if  
It was a trapped sailor in an air pocket of a capsized ship,  
Beating a morse code tattoo with a leaden wrench. Inside  
Its tree's iron hull, the school ruler long bird received the  
Suburb's dying souls nightly, like an apprehensive mother  
Drawing up her child's medicine in a feather light syringe.  
When he heard it, fear suckled their young son who forbade  
The repetition of its summons & shrieked if he heard its call.

B. R. Dionysius

# Browning Street

Sometime,  
in the early hours  
of the morning,  
an albino cockroach

anointed his bare feet.

The world  
didn't miss  
a beat.

B. R. Dionysius

# Dark Thesis

(i)

The ocean is the oldest cliché.

When we came home there was

a dead bee on the windowsill –

its body a perfect death's head

question mark, its elements, sodium

calcium & potassium curled

halfway to the sea.

(ii)

This afternoon was as hot as Greece.

We missed the bee's last do-se-do -

distant arthropodic cousin in shell-shock

miniature. Dead from time's comical

Acme weight. Imprinted on our layers

of human memory & recorded thus.



Filed: insect sedimentary.

(iii)

A new home was sluiced on land.

Through the meniscus of coast, pods stuck.

The amphibians, neither here nor there

kept genetic 'get out of jail free' cards.

Some larger, more aggressive marine exiles

(pre-Cuban) returned to the aquatic fray.

Made use of their bulk, heavyweights

who outclassed all comers.

This primeval Bay of Pigs,

& pre-Darwinian back flip.

(iv)

It is the deep sea where everything stops.

Philosophy & sex coexist; a dark thesis writ.

Light mostly extinguished, but for some  
slight phosphorescence, evades touch,  
as sight demystified, reveals nothing.

In the ether of unlight, feeling is everything.

First racial memories – trilobites' dodgem car  
head-on into an armoured scorpions grin.

Cambrian sideshow alley adrenaline.

(v)

But we regress.

Our new home is closer to that first ocean.

Pre-salt, pre-water, more tanning salon

than 2 brd flat. The ants & their

artery/vein routine we notice, shift

their long march, include the kitchen sink.

The Silk Road to our bin is Semtex lined.

We've thrown in an oasis for fun.

Will they find the bee?

Our small deposit of platinum,

alloyed by the alchemical sun.

(vi)

Do they remember a mother, these  
full stops fossilised into the lining  
of our Westinghouse's air-tight door?

What good, hindsight?

After the Earth & Ocean

lodged their divorce papers

& freezing had begun.

(vii)

On St Georges' Rd

the stream of life

poured on.

B. R. Dionysius

# Darling Downs Earless Dragon

Darling Downs Earless Dragon

Tympanocryptis cf. tetraporophora

The arms of his spiral galaxy were not punctured  
With bright stars, but with buckets of bore water  
For his mother's native shrub garden. The immense  
Pull of drought confined the scraggily callistemons  
To a dense cluster in the house paddock, just beyond  
Where the hose's far-flung wavelets could penetrate.  
Here, the dark soil yawned like a grain sack spilt open  
As he poured the rusty swill into a black hole's thirsty  
Maw. It was here, one late afternoon at the absolute  
Horizon of the day, that he noticed a pale white glow  
Skulk into a crack's dim singularity, as if the icy tail  
Of a comet had been swallowed whole. The patterns  
Of the lizard's scales soaked into the gloom like water  
Into the earth; no light escaping extinction's pressure.

B. R. Dionysius

# Double-Eyed Fig Parrot (Coxen's)

Double-Eyed Fig Parrot (Coxen's)

*Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni*

For Jen

Look for the tell-tale signs of our existence.

Half eaten purple fruit dark as a shark's eye

Or the bruised thumb of an adult human,

That falls with Newtonian grace; an invisible

Thump; a musket ball falling onto the forest's

Soft eiderdown floor. Gravity dents the fabric.

A small emerald feather starfishing in a hiking

Boot's artificial lake, like green ink released into

A beaker; its fuzzy tendrils unfurling like a foot.

If your close encounter is more than this, if you

Have spied the fist-sized parrot skulking in tree-

Tops, or looked into its beak as it shears sugar-

Laden skin; you have written a rare communiqué.

A love letter so personal, it ignites at the touch.



# Eastern Bristlebird

Eastern Bristlebird

*Dasyornis brachypterus*

Fire cleanses more than memory; a bad  
Season will clear out tussock grass without  
A backward glance. The charred 'calling logs'  
Where males wrought sound waves into fine  
Invisible jewellery to hang their desire from  
A females' soft ear, will stain the forest black  
Like Hiroshima buildings, dormant in their  
Centuries' long grief. In the fire's post-coital  
Bliss these things will happen; a new city of  
Denseness will grow swamping the old lives  
Of refugees, shaken to their core by the blazon  
Plan. & their bristles will melt like flagpoles  
At ground zero, their plucky hearts reduced to  
Slag, some off-cut in the mind's hot furnace.

B. R. Dionysius

# Flow My Tears The Cs-X Said

Our car has been autumised.

The late twentieth century shitbox

adjusts to the earth's quick gear change,

filters reason's dead flakes between

its meniscus of windscreen & bonnet;

parasites wind-farm through tin gill slits.

Oak leaves finger it. Alien scales shaved

on pre-winters' kitchen bench. Materials:

organic matter on white metal background.

Our car has the mechanical equivalent

of bowel cancer. Rust cells eat into its arse end.

Salt, the micro-recycler, iron's crystalline enemy

gives rise to robotic Alzheimer's - production line

memories. The first time summer turned over.

B. R. Dionysius



# Geometrics

(Roxanne daydreams on Crete.)

There, that island crouched down  
ready to pounce on the blue Mediterranean  
bull, raising salt-dust off Crete with its stampede  
of breakers; that's a granite panther of some kind.  
Not the Eastern winged variety that hovered like an  
engorged dragonfly over Babylon's Hanging Gardens –  
but wingless, as in the carved reliefs that stalked across  
the Parthenon's archaic pediment. No, not the new  
monument raised by Pericles to Pallas Athena either –  
the earlier one, Geometric period frescoed with giants,  
harpies, tritons, snakes, deer, lions, bulls & of course  
panthers.

You can see the big cat's muscle tone clearly;  
the sun-dial snout pointed, a flick of bluff ear,  
ridge of terracotta neck, burial mound of shoulder,  
terraced spine jagged as a grave stele, haunches (inc. paws,  
knees & ankles) anchor strong. A proverbial 1970s  
Bridgestone Cat as a single promontory of claw  
extends down to a bay's water dish.  
This manx of the Minoan imagination.  
Formless now, occupied by a litter  
of blind poets mewling to be fed.

B. R. Dionysius

## Geometrics II

(Baldwin daydreams on Crete.)

Like Dionysius I & II of Greek Syracuse

Oh, to be a tyrant of wine, women & song

Now that's a career path even I could choose,

Free from that oppressive bureaucratic pong.

B. R. Dionysius

# Gone Shooting Ken And I Home Later Warren

(i)

Mr Warren Dionysius your appointment at the x-ray department is on Friday 27/8/76 at 12.00pm

sorry you're sick it must be a strange new feeling for you lying there in bed — by yourself! with lots of love & best wishes for a speedy recovery from rosemary and gordon get well soon

(ii)

BARIUM SWALLOW AND MEAL have nothing to eat or drink after the previous evening meal if the examination is to be carried out in the afternoon, nothing to eat or drink for six (6) hours prior to the examination.

get well soon "the eternal god is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" deuteronomy 33:27 a prayer for your recovery god bless you with his gracious love, his heavenly gifts increase; and in his tender loving care, may you find strength and peace; may god's dear prescence guide you, keep you ever strong, and grant the gifts that comfort & bless to cheer you all life long to dear warren big god bless lots of love mum and dad xxxxxx

(iii)

GALL BLADDER dose of agarol (1 tablespoon), or 2 "durolax" tablets, two nights before the day of the examination all tablets to be taken according to direction at 6 p.m. the evening before the examination no food to be taken after the tablets, but water can be drunk freely examination will be carried out at 8 a.m. all tablets to be taken after the 6 p.m. meal on\_\_\_\_\_

a get well push to help you get your health in tow...'till your motor's revved up and your gear's in go! dear warren, hurry up and get well love from joy and wayne xxxx

(iv)

INTRAVENOUS PYELOGRAM \*non-residue diet as far as possible two days before the examination two tablets of "durolax" to be taken with the evening meal on the day before the examination this should produce two or more bowel actions the following morning a suppository should be inserted into the rectum one to two hours before the examination this should produce one or two bowel actions

dear warren just wondering how you're doing and hope you can say that you are

really feeling more like yourself today and then, before you know it, may you be pleased to find you're happily enjoying health of the very best kind many many good wishes! our thoughts are with you every day and hoping you are feeling a little better each day mildred and vic

no fluid is to be taken for eight (8) hours beforehand a light dry meal may be taken four (4) hours beforehand, if desired only the bladder is to be emptied immediately prior to the examination walk around as much as possible beforehand

especially for you light thoughts bright thoughts gladden your day thoughts — sun thoughts, fun thoughts, coming your way thoughts! Hope you're feeling better from jack and mavis

(v)

INTRAVENOUS CHOLANGIOGRAM \*non-residue diet as far as possible two days before the examination two tablets of "durolax" to be taken with the evening meal on the day before the examination this should produce two or more bowel actions the following morning a suppository should be inserted into the rectum one or two hours before the examination this should produce one or two bowel actions fast on the day of the examination walk around as much as possible for 2 hours before the examination

hope you're feeling better certainly hope you're feeling just a whole lot better today, and hope you know you're thought of in the very warmest way to dear warren, thinking of you all the time and hoping you will soon be home all my love, fay, jack, and family xxxxx

(vi)

\*

"NON-RESIDUE DIET" should exclude all rough and stringy vegetables and fruit and breakfast preparations containing bran etc. fruit juices, milk meat and bread may be taken

get well real soon thinking of you a lot these days and sincerely hoping too that things are going smoothly and will keep improving for you pat budd

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO KEEP THIS APPOINTMENT, PLEASE NOTIFY THE X-RAY DEPARTMENT, ROYAL BRISBANE HOSPITAL, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TELEPHONE 52011 APPOINTMENTS CLERK EXT 591

(vii)

Gone shooting Ken and I home later Warren.

B. R. Dionysius

## Les Murray, Removalist

The freckled back of poetry  
flexes prismatically through  
the front door's stained glass  
kookaburra. Warped cells bunch  
with rhythm; a paper crease vein  
pulses in Antigone Kefala's tongue  
& groove neck. Melanomas gather;  
thick flies on the crust of art.  
On the enclosed verandah, spiders  
cocoon time's black idiom in bone.  
In the small bedroom, she moves  
a wardrobe language by rocking its  
silky oak feet from side to side.  
Hires a 'big dinger' for the real  
heavy lifting – weighed down with  
things she just can't throw out.  
Les Murray, removalist, drops  
boxes of books, bends the covers  
of new Icelandic translations,  
dog-ears modern Australian poetry.  
His workman's crack, book-ended  
between slabs of Boetian flesh,  
entrances like a CWA cake stall.  
Antigone tut tuts from the hallway  
literature's going to the gym now  
(another new year's resolution).  
A tai-bo of new terminology;  
the good fat stripped from obliques  
of 20th century vernacular, portly  
lyrical abdominals & quads of metaphor  
lean as the Thorpedo (our greatest  
cultural lungfish aside from Tangles  
& Tugga & that Warwick Todd guy) -  
all chucked on plastic.  
Les hitches his stubbies up, dumps  
Kefala's boxes in the new library,  
thumbs through a copy of Johnston's  
The Sea Cucumber he found hidden  
under the kitchen sink cupboard.

Digs out strands of Greek rhetoric  
from the plughole, a parting domestic  
gesture. Fingers the congealed  
plasticity of our final words  
on the subject. Charges \$25.00  
per hour for elite removal.

B. R. Dionysius

# Lords Of The Flies

This year was all memorial.

Wreaths belted every newscast

& PM's wrote to hoi polloi

c/- the dead letter office.

Dogma, the killing jar

of young culturalists bathed

prime time in cotton wool;

political spirit evaporated

in Kashmir, Chechnya, Bali.

Reason's abdomen skewered

by a box cutter. Remote trigger

thought. Nerves ran out of text

message. In theatres real drama

played for the first time in years

& states worshipped pig's heads.

Lords of the Flies who thought

they drove history forward, only

ripped the back of its shirt.

The cheap fabric made locally

(from imports!): hemp outcasts



wishing world events had taken

a different turn. Vanquished fads

eager for a new season's catalogue.

The hydrogen car garaged at Bethany.

Tesla grounded by the mainstream press.

The jet engine thankful for its chance.

The A-bomb still mystified

by its simple duet.

B. R. Dionysius

# Red Shift

Red Shift

For Judith Wright

Gravity is rolling her particles into a child's spit ball.  
Like a student chewing paper in the classroom's dark,  
There is something unlawful about our decline & fall.  
In her honour, eucalypts shed their clothes, dropp bark.

She has already touched the universe's filigreed edge.  
The red shift galaxies shine singularly as flame trees  
In a distant quarry; their blooms are a well-kept hedge  
That borders our knowledge; doubt swarms like bees.

She had long been a part of it; her hand me down cells  
She returned to the sun's up-market store. A dying star's  
Decaying gift signalled the blow of her heart's iron bell;  
As her last breath vanished like the atmosphere on Mars.

She is monumental now; as though there was a Marathon  
Mound of ancient Greek heroes piled up inside her head.  
She was the flint of eco-consciousness that was fiery born,  
When she struck at the builders who cleared out the dead.

Still, the Earth sucks in its belt-line & gyrates its middle age  
Spread. Forests recede like hairlines thinning out, as the hand  
Of progress combs through them. All that's left is hollow rage,  
As small groups of creatures turn & make their final stand.

Judith. Her poems are etched on the trunks of scribbly gum.  
Insect mouths chew through the grain of her poetic field.  
As they kill, borers translate her words into a universal tongue,  
& hollow trunks of eucalypts drum; never yield, never yield.

B. R. Dionysius

# Regent Honeyeater

Regent Honeyeater  
*Xanthomyza phrygia*

A power as diluted as the monarch's they were named for;  
Their colonial reach across the border, tempered by more  
Indigenous agitators, the great unwashed mass of noisy miners  
That carp at class barriers as though paparazzi DNA cavorted  
In their bloodstreams. Their black & lemon royally streaked  
Robes, no match for the plain grey dullness of the common  
Folk. The higher echelons of society; eucalypt canopy offers  
No refuge for the persecuted; the bland workers unite &  
Expel the divinely instigated elite. There is something  
To be missed though; a pomp & ceremony of the ages,  
The slender, curved beak like a tiny scimitar slicing into  
An ironbark flower's heart. A headdress of pollen sticking  
To the Regent's cheek like a kiss from a defeated people,  
The subtle dignity of slaves that nothing high-born can resist.

B. R. Dionysius

# Spotted Tailed Quoll

Spotted Tailed Quoll (Southern subspecies)

*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*

To some we're the polka-dotted red menace;  
We are feared for our beliefs, blood sacrifice  
Being so out of vogue nowadays, unless you're  
Licensed. We invade chicken coops because they  
Are there. You went to the moon once, so you  
Know how it feels, to long for the inexplicable.  
Our western empire collapsed & we were forced  
Into the hills & valleys like a lost tribe retreating  
From a glacier's swollen tongue. We are cuddly  
Nosferatus drinking up fear's salty brew; children  
Marvelling at a fresh wound. Our drive is an old  
One. To sink our teeth into everything; to spread  
Feathers out like tarot cards on night's dark table.  
Who else will upset your order; mess up the room.

B. R. Dionysius

# Strangler Fig

The light years of their birth & death. The immeasurable  
Expansion & collapse of eras, like a husband's stretched  
Snort of breath at his wife's nippy questions. A snail's oozy  
Diminutive progress in slow motion or a gradual weave on  
Time's parasitic loom, threads inflating like a clown's trick  
Balloon, the poodle twisting into place. Their millennial  
Embrace, as finally green fingers encircle & clasp, caught  
In mid-strangulation, a psychotic Daphne transformed into  
An aerial-killer or Bluebeard wrapping his cloak around  
His bride's bare shoulders. A Tin Soldier of sub-tropical  
Rainforest, the two hearts meld into one, then inexorably  
Decay sets in. The long marriage never lasts, as drizzle  
& borers carve out memory's core. Until, an open-air,  
Walk-in cathedral is all that remains of cellular union.

B. R. Dionysius

# Stung

Now I am milkweed silk, the bees will not notice.  
They will not smell my fear, my fear, my fear.

Sylvia Plath, "The Bee Meeting"

When he was a young man  
& the flower of his mind  
opened wide as a birth canal,  
a single bumblebee, pregnant  
with pollen landed a quick  
kiss on his cheek, laced  
with a fine golden down  
sticky as honey.

When he was a bit older  
a second bumblebee descended  
onto the stem of his thorn  
sharp nose, locked feelers  
with the first bee & began  
an elegant waltz. His legs  
moved like an insect's.

When he was older still  
a third bumblebee alighted  
on his forehead, crawled down  
the cleft of his eye & joined  
its two brethren, pirouetting  
along his jaw-line.

When he was older still again  
a flotilla of bees covered  
his chin like a living veil.  
Their wings interlocked;  
a phalanx of shields  
protecting him from the wasps  
that fled their nests of mud  
& were out to get him.

When he was in his prime  
a honeybee, blown far off course  
set down on the hive of his heart.  
She never flew away. Just gave  
order to the bees that streamed  
down his throat like a black  
& yellow waterfall.

When he was an old man,  
a thick beard of drones  
hung down to his knees.  
He tucked them into the  
belt serpentine his waist,  
constricting time into nectar.  
Not a single bee ever stung him.

When eventually he died  
a hundred thousand bees danced  
alongside the funeral procession.  
All the way to the gravesite, where  
they flung themselves like dervishes  
in after his Baltic amber coffin.

When he was honeycombed with mud  
tiny pairs of frosted glass wings  
littered the grave's edge. When dusk  
fell they twinkled like mirrored  
wall-tiles, illuminating  
the blood red roses that died  
with the light of the day.

B. R. Dionysius

# The Conference Of The (Underemployed) Birds

"It shows the top half of the workforce enjoying permanent, well-paid, full-time jobs,

while the bottom half can find only casual, poorly-paid, part-time work which, as Labour

market economist Professor Sue Richardson warned this week, was creating a class of

"excluded and dangerous" men with incomes too low to support a family." - The Age, October 04, 2003.

"My discourse is sans words, sans tongue, sans sound: understand it then, sans mind, sans ear."

- Farid Ud-Din Attar, The Conference of the Birds

(i)

A Willy-Wagtails' call intercepts the morning. Birds were real once, like jobs.

The modem's dial-up scream is cut short; why is our technology suffering so?

Fake, Australian accents in the call centre aviary: Calcutta nest robbers gloat.

A taxidermy of outsourced work: ditto, we're all stuffed on the global floor.



Bottom of the bird market. This new flu's crashed like tech stocks, Acme trap

For the Roadrunner managerial class, the coyote - disenfranchised American?

(ii)

Magpies don't attack in the open anymore, have you noticed: phenomena?

Phone tab's the way forward. Keep an eye on your receiver, not the skies.

There are new powers afoot for dealing with these full employment refos,

Our government issues wide-brimmed hats with strings of corks attached.

The contemporary job market has a thin eggshell; depleted proteins crack.

An excluded & dangerous class birthed? They backed job terrorism not us.

(iii)

I saw a hoopoe once. Was it Jaipur? Its crown of truth strutted on the lawn,

Painted a post-colonial green. What good is spiritual knowledge without law?

You will play an integral role in this dynamic environment by fudging your  
Work history for sure. Service orientate your brain - lively, world class, lame.

Dangerous as ideas? There's a metal storm inside your head. Try Sufism?

Was it John Lennon or Steve McQueen who went on about 'ism ism ism?'  
'&quot;

(iv)

There are nightingales here reputedly. Wasn't it someone from myth who  
Couldn't stand being unemployed anymore & turned themselves into one?

Hit an epic glass ceiling probably. Better to be amorous than under-employed?

There's no new twist in the figures though. The virtual exclusion of women

From net growth in full-time job mythology is eons old. Sumerians started it.

Gilgamesh's entrapment of Enkidu needed a woman's art: 'Wanted Harlot.'

(v)

Australia has plenty of parrots, but cockatiels inhabit our universal currency

Of shame. See them locked up in Athens, Rome, Madrid, Delhi & Bangkok.

Feathered service economies, budgerigars tell beak fortunes in Iranian streets.

Collars of gold chained to human profit. Flocks flee drought & agricultural rut.

We even killed off one sub-species called 'Paradise', cleared full-time underbrush.

& if they were flightless, then we paid out redundancies see: dodo, puffin & moa.

B. R. Dionysius

# The Ladder Of Creation

'You never get a second chance to make a first impression.'

## (i) Time And Relative Dimensions In Space

At lunch in the Clarence Corner Hotel,  
Mark, Misbah, Redhoun & Baldwin  
sit amongst the elderly, released from  
the Mater, clutching x-ray/E.C.G  
results like U3A Diplomas.  
Outside, the muted flow of traffic  
is harnessed to a spine of impurities.  
On Stanley Street everything  
seems brittle as a career in IT.  
The bitumen laid down over  
an Aboriginal pathway from West End  
to Woolloongabba, liquefies.  
A simulacra of industry occupies  
space & time like a TARDIS.  
Culture rematerialises as a pot plant,  
a Pokie machine or a jukebox.  
At the counter, the barmaid in  
tight Jim Beam t-shirt & blue jeans  
pours drinks down the day's throat.  
Mark & Baldwin hug their third beers.  
Misbah & Redhoun sit on their water.  
Barflies call her 'Michelle my Belle'  
& murmur something about, 'there's only  
two left on that friggin' submarine!'  
Near the front door, two plainclothes  
detectives from Dutton Park CIB  
frisk the jukebox for hits or prints.  
Interview a young woman who can't  
keep her eyes from going walkabout  
& protests about 'doin' nuthin wrong'.  
U2 mouths Sunday Bloody Sunday  
as the Manager, backed by the cops  
asks her to leave – one way or another.  
The Job Search trainees watch her  
migrate up the street, out of sync

with contemporary conditioning theory.  
The shadow of the Mater Hospital falls  
on her like a fifty ton cartoon weight.  
She is press-ganged by animation.  
The dead certainty of her role,  
in the flimsy ladder of creation  
preserved by formaldehyde clouds.  
She takes aim at a phone box & misses.  
The volcanic ash of her anger petrifies,  
her spirit doused in the gutter;  
a cigarette butt with a trace  
of red lipstick flicks out  
of a tinted car window.

Hits her square in the afternoon.

(ii) England, 1831 AD.

In the naturalists' mouth  
the rare beetle perches  
like an English toffee;  
stuffy Victorian juices  
start to pierce its hard  
exoskeleton (see the hunter  
/seeker 'squids' in Matrix.)  
Like Pythagoras' warm cave,  
the only pocket to hand  
as the specimens piled up  
around his feet, trekked  
under his suit sleeves  
& started to irritate  
the powers that be.

(iii) The Origin of Species, 1859 – 2002 AD

The Howardian edict:  
The preservation of favoured races  
in the struggle for life,  
or the White Australia Policy  
reinvented circa 1960's.

Crouched behind its Kennedy era  
tortoise-shell desk, cumbersome  
as a Magnavox, the blood-drinking  
vampire finch of Kirribilli House  
(once found only in the Galapagos  
Islands) but now firmly entrenched  
in Canberra, dips its razor beak  
into the popular inkwell & smears  
some more theories on who should  
come to New Holland & how over  
the plush Menzies upholstery.

The little dicky bird  
summoning all the charisma  
of a marine iguana, shuffles  
along its antique perch  
& chicken-marks its surface  
with pictograms of reactionary  
Malthusian policy.

'We decide who enters  
my fortress of plenitude,  
it chirps to a mirror,  
made of that radioactive  
element Hansonite  
(like kryptonite  
it renders powerful  
men helpless).

After all, it only  
takes what it needs to survive,  
& lets the host animal  
(see scapegoat) live.  
To be bled before another  
(s)election day.

(iv) The Lash of Primordial Milk

Job Club finally gets to Baldwin.  
At the mock interview he makes  
sure he turns it into a friendly chat.

Determined not to use those words  
from the 'negativity bin' (still  
up there on the whiteboard, albeit  
a bit smudged).

Makes sure to ask pertinent questions.

'So, Helen, I see you don't wear  
a wedding ring. Is there room  
for a Mister Job Network Member  
in your life?'

For ten minutes Baldwin  
is the 'star' jobseeker selected  
from his unemployed species.  
The others fail to adapt to  
the changing job search climate;  
fail to grow the extra long tongue  
they need for arse-licking.

B. R. Dionysius

# The Waste Stream

The collection & taking of pornographic material of any kind is strictly forbidden.

Magazines should immediately be placed in the paper chutes & all videos, toys, or instruments

of a pornographic nature are to be put into the waste stream. Failure to comply with these instructions

may lead to disciplinary action.

B. R. Dionysius



## Visy Recycling Memorandum, 2003.

(i)

This unwanted cornucopia - nickel-plated pears, bananas, grapes, apples, kitsch relic from some neo-classical age, saved from Terminator meltdown its metallic semiotics stalled on the conveyor belts' rubber-suited fascism. Universal bowerbird plucked from sexual obscurity - what a piece of work!

(ii)

All labour history is corrupt. Some American Vietnam War text claimed that no foreign journalist recorded the fall of Saigon; ditto Neil Davis' footage of the NVA's T-72 smashing Palace gates was doco-illusionary. Neil loved the East, Asian women & died in some shitty Thai coup.

(iii)

Next was coughed up a crouching brass cat. Sexless? Time-neutered. Sleek in its full metal jacket fur. Did someone switch over to dogs?

"Bob" ("Gollum") a famous cricket cat, farm-surrendered, now lives  
in the ginger generations doorstep mewling around my mother's feet.

(iv)

Why try to marry sex & Nazism? Partisans assassinated blond poster  
crew-cut boy Heydrich (the original Tommy Finland?) almost botched  
it, grenades destroyed his motorcades' armoured genitals, Third Reich's  
proto-Eminem. How many times can you say 'motherfucker' textually?

(v)

The head of a Roman centurion rolled out next. Plaster, nose-smashed  
by visygothic policies; modern archaeology's Liverpool kiss. Transference  
of sexual magnetism – Roman army defeats Macedonians at the "Dog's  
Heads", Thessaly 197 B.C. & the rise of Russell Crowe's rough trade.

(vi)

Then a statue of Dionysus, one horn snapped off, poetry books under arm  
mop head beard sadhu fixed to a hard face, sunburn plaster peeling white skin.  
His own dishevelled Dionysian nature got him expelled from his gnomeland,  
ostracized forever from some Heidelberg courtyard, the tyranny of fallen chic.

(vii)

Murray quoted, "I came from a hard culture", looking a bit like the jolly  
Buddha sculpture that humped down the waste stream, Eastern & Western  
burning want - striped woollen jumpers unpicking themselves: get knotted  
his thin red line of religion spake: the closer you are to Caesar the greater the  
fear.

(viii)

Trying to explain my personal ontology, the great man tranced through me,  
two brothers jumped ship South Brisbane wharves 1886, Baltic, Isle of Reugen.  
Dinnies used to be our name but it changed six generations ago, no one knew

why but Fredy Murray had been there; more literary Proteus than genealogist.

(ix)

The casualisation of Australia & 2.5 million workers suspicious rockabilly minds.

Strong magnetic fields pull artists into poverty, a labour hire shuffle & sucking

up to team leaders, Herr gruppenfuhrer gave needle-stuck Stacey her marching orders,

refused to climb down into a pit waist deep in glass; group signatures against porn.

(x)

On the phone the Manager said to her, "I can picture what you look like naked."

This, after she'd signed his declaration; harassment is any unwelcome, uninvited behaviour,

whether verbal, written or physical, against another person. Harassment offends, humiliates or

intimidates your workmates & colleagues. All faces are the same man, one big self.

(xi)

Then it was my turn down the pit & I knew why Stacey had rebuked her job satisfaction – part tunnel rat, part miner we dug out wine bottle shrapnel from sewerage water, Hien, Alfred, Hussan; Vietnamese, German, Turk & Australian all in the same trench, huddling from wage concussion; post-war economic boom.

(xii)

Makes one think of Fredy Murray's artistic dilemma. How he only worked the land in his head, his hands ploughing with a pen after he'd famously chucked in his public service job with the revolutionary decree – I'm going home forever! Who could blame him?  
Canberra in the 70's - a political climate polluted by staffers dancing on bits of paper!

(xiii)

In 8 Mile, Eminem or 'Rabbit' as he's monikered faces his own art versus employment

indecision. Garbled American obscenities mask his attempts to break dance on stubs

of bus tickets, slammin' at the Shelter, the Nuremberg Rally in his mind enhanced by

the Detroit car plant's ubermensch ethos; all rap lyrics are the same song, one big opera.

(xiv)

Notice to all staff. The Manager called everyone in for a rasp over the knuckles, man

of few words off the telephone pissed that someone had left a porno mag on top of a

needle bin, blocking access to the final come down of addiction; casuals poring over Jill

Kelly's physical assets than VISY's on paper profit; imagination lost in the waste stream.

(xv)

That's why I collected trophies; cornucopias, statues, sculptures, columns - my finger on

the end game of guilt, lust, greed, consumerism. Someone else's abject reality  
bound for

China's paper tigers, apathy's landfill. Davis, Murray, Heydrich & Eminem so  
screwed up

by jobs & sex, history's artery hardening; outside my factory gate work will set  
you free.

B. R. Dionysius

## Xxxxxxiii. The Enigma Of Adolf Hitler

In the Reina Sophia, Madrid,  
Baldwin can't help but think;  
What are these German tourists  
going to make of Dali's, 'The Enigma  
of Adolf Hitler'? Christ, they're  
all old enough to have been teenagers

at the fall of Berlin. He hovers,  
his voyeurism driving the spectre of  
adolescent ruin (A Tin Drum retarded  
work-in-progress, isn't he Dear  
Readers?) & waits for the first tear  
to churn up the snowdrift of faces  
grooved as tank tread. The gremlin  
is not disappointed.

"Gott in Himmel Rox", he barks  
out across the gallery courtyard,  
juggling two styrofoamed coffees  
like WW1 'potato mashers'.  
"I should have bought that  
second-hand record I found in Athens

you know, 'German Marching Songs  
1933-1945'. Would've been a blast,  
back home eh?"

Roxanne, perplexed, chooses  
to ignore her obviously insane  
husband – burns her upper palate  
as an elderly woman collapses  
into a bench chair beside her  
& weeps; a white embroidered  
handkerchief parachutes  
into her face.

B. R. Dionysius



## Xxxxxxv. An Allegory Of Time

No doubt some thorough American manual can give you the low down on Europe's margins but mine, designed for only one traveller is better written & much shorter. Besides, if you remove the art, Europe's like the US, more or less a dead loss.

John Forbes, Europe: a guide for Ken Searle

Three ruby jewelled seeds  
free fall between the pomegranate's  
cosmetically enhanced skin  
& the forefinger of the pre-pubescent  
Christ child. This fruit stigmata;  
pre-Christian underworld throwback  
makes Martin Johnston pause, smile,  
push his glasses back up the long  
wall of his nose. His left hand  
combs through black shoulder length  
Velasquez hair, stump-jumping over  
the Doric capital of a hidden mole.  
His Italian hiking boots squeak  
like a pair of Inquisition  
thumbscrews turned up to the max,  
inches across the polished beech  
fingernail floor. Bosch's demented  
figures take on more of that  
tortured look. Bite down hard on  
the afternoon's touched up flesh.  
Further on, St Francis dances  
on the head of a leopard to receive  
the crown of thorns from Jesus  
& Martin, turning a corner, enters  
a scene of true chaos.  
Two deranged men, a fat, thirty  
-something Australian & an elderly  
American tourist jostle each other  
over a plumb position to view  
Picasso's Guernica.  
Martin, distracted by the sound  
of security guards about to pounce,

doesn't hang around to see the fun.  
Splits this sad Western ex-pat scene  
& skips casually over the next  
couple of centuries; thinks about  
the five hours he queued once,  
to get into the Uffizi Gallery,  
& the one hour it took him  
to go through it.

B. R. Dionysius