

Poetry Series

**jerry hughes**  
**- poems -**

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## **jerry hughes(January 4,1931)**

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

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

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

# 2008

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

jerry hughes

# A Capricorn Bites The Dust

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# A Found Fragment

'the Somme 1916'

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

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

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# A Leaf

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# A Message To My Father

My beloved father, the last time we met  
in company with your confidant and friend Abu,  
we spoke of many things.

Most importantly the history I'd lost in the  
half century of not being your son.

You surrendered me for expediency  
because you were a man of peace.

The circumstances of then made me who I am,  
and not necessarily the son you wanted;  
But that's another story.

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# About Eric

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes



# Adieu Eric

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

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

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## After The First Death\*

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

Near by

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

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

Sans hands, sans eyes, sans-

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

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

jerry hughes

# Aftermath Of A Stroke

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

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# All But Two Years

January 4,2006

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

Adieu dear friend,  
until we meet again.

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# An Aussie Summer

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mum's set the table  
and prepared the tea.  
Dad the silly bugger

was stung by a bee.

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# Anaesthetist

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

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

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

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

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# Andrew

for Bruce Dawe

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

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

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

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

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

What's left?  
Check the list.  
Tell the neighbours.  
Warm the engine.



Don't forget to shut the gate.  
It's a long drive to the sunshine coast.  
Take it in easy stages.

'See, I didn't forget my glasses'

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

jerry hughes

# Angst

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

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

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# Ann T. C. Pation

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

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# Anyone, Everyone's Son

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

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

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

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

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# Argument Resolved

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

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

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

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# Autism

Autism  
a first cousin  
to Dyslexia.

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

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# Aye

Aye, joke.

Don't you mean, Jock?

Nooooo, joke.

Why?

Because I can smell fear in you.

Bullshit!

Nooooo, not bullshit, fear!

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

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

'Don't try to knock him out, out-box him'

Remember that advice?

You didn't listen then, try to now.

jerry hughes

# Bagatelle

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

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

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

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# Baz

Old friend

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

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

Old friend

it pains to see you now.  
Remembering you  
when you were brightly young.

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# Behind The Dark Door

'of cardio-vascular surgery'

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

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

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

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# Being Seventy Two

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

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

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# Beyond The Horizon

Yesterday didn't happen.

Tomorrow is but an assumption.

With the future of the world in the hands  
of morons armageddon isn't a possibility,

it's a certainty. Why you may ask?

We chose to ignore the Cree Indian proverb:

'You can't eat money'

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# Big C

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

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

Why?

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

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

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

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

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# Big Luci

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

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# Bleak House

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

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

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

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

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# Blind And Toothless

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

The end result?

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

See, nothing changes.

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# Bloody Disgrace

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

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

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## Bosko And Admira (1993)

'If thou must love me, let it be for naught  
except for love's sake alone.'

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Brain To Body Post Operation

Brain: Where have you been?

Body: Where I've always been.

Brain: No you weren't, I heard a machine clanking and hissing.

Body: Oh, you mean the heart-lung machine?

Brain: Is that what it was? You didn't ask if you could by-pass me.

Body: I had no say, they shut me down.

Brain: They? Who the hell are they?

Body: The surgeons.

Brain: Not good enough, next time ask them to get my permission.

jerry hughes

# Breaker Morant

Handcuffed, manacled and blindfolded  
he stood before a firing squad,  
awaiting the prescribed military execution.

A colour sergeant, inappropriately named asked:  
'Do you have anything to say before the sentence  
of the tribunal is carried out? '

Breaker Morant replied, 'Shoot straight you bastards.'

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

jerry hughes

# Brief Encounter

He saw her, and knew he had to meet her,  
this elfin girl with bobbed hair  
and an oval face.

Eyes as big as saucers, and lips,  
sweet jasus, her lips.

What's your name?

Helen, she replied.

Of Troy? he blurted foolishly.

She smiled, and her smile  
seared into his brain.

Have coffee with me?

I don't know you.

You will, by the second cup.

You sound so sure.

I am. I am.

Only for coffee?

For now.

And later?

Later is later.

Now is now.

And I have to tell you -

What?

I love you.

You're mad.

You're to blame.

Me?

Yes, you're so lovely.

I have to go, they're expecting me.

They?

My parents, for dinner.

Not yet.

I have to.

I've offended you.

No.

Then you don't have to go.

I'll phone them.

What can I say?

Tell them, you've fallen in love  
with a madman.

And you won't be coming home,  
ever.

You are mad.

Yes I am.

I love your madness.

Sanity can be so cruel.

Where shall we go?

Where would you like to go?

Anywhere, with you.

Are you sure?

As sure as I'll ever be.

I don't even know your name.

What would you like to call me?

Beelzebub?

And you'll be my, Lilith.

Are we going to hell?

Probably.

But heaven first, I think.

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# Bubbles

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

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# Bullocky

'win some lose some'

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

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

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

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# Bussie

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

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

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# Buttocks

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Capitalism U S A

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

jerry hughes

# Casanova

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

jerry hughes

# Ceausescu's Children 1996

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Charlie

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Christmas Carols

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Cold Steel

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

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

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

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# Conclusion

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

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# Consequences Of The Nek

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

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

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

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

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

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# Conundrum

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

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# Cosmetic

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

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

jerry hughes

# Crocodile Tears

'adieu the crocodile hunter'

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

Addendum: 'Death where is thy sting?'

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# Crowded Bus

'Sorry if I offend.' she said quietly.

'Offend? ' I asked quizzically.

'Your sensitivities, ' she replied.

We were strap-hanging in a crowded bus on a very hot day.

Her slim tanned arms merged into damp unshaven pits.

'I never use deodorants, and my olfactory offends some people.'

'Doesn't offend me, ' I said.

'In fact I rather like that funky woman smell.'

'Really? ' she smiled.

'Yes, really, ' I confirmed.

Ours was the next stop.

jerry hughes

# Dachau

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

jerry hughes

# Dachau 1933-1945

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

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

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

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

What did we learn from this horror? Nothing.

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# De Profundis

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Death Of A Daughter

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

I'd seen it all before.

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

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

jerry hughes

## Decade 2010

In a matter of hours I step into  
my octogenarina decade.

Scary?

You bet your sweet arse,  
1931 to 2010 is a long time.

Much longer than I expected,  
or deserve.

However, the French have an apt  
saying in the circumstances.

'C'est la vie'

jerry hughes

# Decision Day

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

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

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

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# Depression

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

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# Dig A Hole, Fill It In

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

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# Disconnected

Datconnected.  
Who gives a ....?

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# Dispossessed

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

jerry hughes



# Don'T Forgive Them They Know Exactly What They Do

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Doors

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

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

jerry hughes

# Duh?

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Dwindling Childhood

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

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

jerry hughes

# Ego

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

jerry hughes

# Eighty-One

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

jerry hughes

# Emily & Sylvia

EMILY in celebration

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

SYLVIA

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

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

(my humble tribute to these outstanding writers)

jerry hughes

# Emotional

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

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

jerry hughes



# Eucalypt

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

jerry hughes

# Evulsion

'in memorium Peter Shoobridge and his daughters'

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

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

jerry hughes

# Facing The Wall

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

jerry hughes

## Feint Praise

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

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

jerry hughes

## Feral Kids

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

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

jerry hughes

# Fidelity

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

jerry hughes

## First Born

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

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

jerry hughes

# For A Dancer

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes



## For Denis Joe

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

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

jerry hughes

# For Jack Kerouac

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

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

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

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

Guilt

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

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

So you drank  
until you couldn't remember.

Finally

You succumbed to booze, Jack.

But the road goes on.

jerry hughes

## For Ridge

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

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

jerry hughes

# For The Stolen Generations

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

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

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

jerry hughes

## For 'Tieeri'

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

And I (?) Well...

I am bleeding  
copiously -  
like a continual  
heavy downpour  
of rain

And...and, as  
far as I can  
make out -  
the 'Sky-piss'  
and its relieving  
(- relieving?)  
down-flow  
has no relationship  
to my tears  
for you...YOU,  
who have gone,  
gone, gone - leaving  
me, utterly bereft...

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

jerry hughes

## For Wilfred Owen 1893-1918

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

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

Wilfred Owen

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Forget Me Not

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

jerry hughes

# Friendship

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

jerry hughes



# Friendships

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

jerry hughes

## From Hamlet To.....

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

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

jerry hughes

# From Whence I Came

Me, myself and I.

The end of the line, the last Mohican.

So dust me over the pretentious grave  
where my grandfather F. W, my father Fred,  
and his brother Ben, cluster together.

They were believers - not I.

But instinct tells me I should be with them;

If irreligiously.

jerry hughes

# Gallipoli

'how we blooded youth for battle'

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

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

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

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

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

Ready, sir.

Oh, Christ, there it is.

Lead the charge with me?

I'm with you, Captain.

Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat.

They died with yells frozen in their throats.

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

Sir?

.

jerry hughes

# Gargantuan

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

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

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

(For Les Murray)

jerry hughes

# Girl Child

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

jerry hughes

# God

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

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

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

jerry hughes



# Goodbye

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

jerry hughes

# Goodbyes Aren'T Easy

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

Drive away,  
don't look back.

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

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

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

Goodbye dad,  
I'll see you soon?

jerry hughes

# Hand In Hand

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Heart-Lung Machine

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

Guaranteed for 10 years or 120 months,  
whichever comes first.

Big plus!

No oil change or filter necessary.

How good is that?

jerry hughes

# Hobbling

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

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

jerry hughes

# Hoddle Street

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

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

jerry hughes

# Holocaust A D

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Hone Tuwhare's: Rain

Rain

I can hear you  
making small holes  
in the silence  
rain

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

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

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

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

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

you would still  
define me  
disperse me  
wash over me  
rain

Hone Tuwhare 1922-2008



jerry hughes

# Hot Summer Night

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

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

jerry hughes

## How Many?

'Is that right, Chasso? '

'What? '

'Yer missus had another snork? '

'Yeah.'

'Ow many's that? '

'Eleven.'

'Gord stiffen the crows! '

'Nah - gord slacken me cock.'

jerry hughes

# Humpty Dumpty

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

jerry hughes

# I C U - Intensive Care Unit

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

jerry hughes

# Idiot

'no apologies to George W. Bush'

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

jerry hughes

# Illicit

HE BREW  
SHE BOTTLE  
NAUGHTY

jerry hughes

# Images

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

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

jerry hughes



## In Memorium (Port Arthur: April 28,1997)

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# In The Beginnig

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

jerry hughes

# In The Name Of The Father

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Inferno

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

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

jerry hughes

# It Is Writ

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

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

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

jerry hughes

## It's Said

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Jacemo

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Jacqueline Du Pre

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

jerry hughes



# Jaws Of Death

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

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

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

Addendeunm:  
Five bob - five shillings.

jerry hughes

# Jerzy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Juxtaposed For K

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Kerry Packer Haiku

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

jerry hughes

# Kindergedicht - Child Poem

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Kindness

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

jerry hughes

# Lest I Forget

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

jerry hughes



# Lines That Separate

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Love

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

jerry hughes

## Mark & Parkinson's

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

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

jerry hughes

# Media-Ocrity

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

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

Politically driven newspapers.  
Banal advertising of consumer  
driven products.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The air will be even more  
polluted than it is now.

jerry hughes

## Minus Howard

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

jerry hughes

# Mirror Mirror

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Misapprehend

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

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

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

jerry hughes



# Morning Glory

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

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

And she did

jerry hughes

# Morning Poem

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

jerry hughes

# Mortality

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

jerry hughes

# Mountain Ponies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He coaxes her with, 'go on girl, '  
and let's the reins go slack.  
With every stride she catches up  
until they clear the pack.

The steep descent down Blind Man's gorge  
is treacherous that day.  
The ground is hard, as hard as flint,  
and doesn't suit the bay.

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

## Mrs F

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

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

jerry hughes

# Much Loved

'For Alison'

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

Blindfolded

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

jerry hughes

# Naughty Boy

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

jerry hughes



# Never The Twain

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

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

jerry hughes

# Nil Desperandum

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

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

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

## SEQUEL

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Nothing Sacred

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

jerry hughes

# November 14, 1900

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

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

jerry hughes

# On The Irish

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

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

jerry hughes

# Orgasm

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

jerry hughes

# Outside Dunny

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

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

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

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

Revolting? Absolutely!

So during my sojourn in the bush of south-west Western Australia, I preferred not to participate in this 'outside dunny' mystique.

A kindly tree for # one, and a heel-hole kicked in the earth for # two became the norm.

jerry hughes

# Over The Years

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes



# Panacea

Panacea for the worlds ills.

Chicken soup in America.

'Mr President, the twin-towers  
were destroyed by el caida terrorists.'

The President replies:

'You wouldn't have any chicken soup  
on you, would you? '

A cup of tea in England.

'Prime Minister, the nazis have bombed  
the shyte out of London.'

Prime Minister replies:

'Bastards, we'd better have a cup of tea  
and think about this.'

jerry hughes

# Percentages

Fifteen per cent you'll get a stroke,  
five per cent you'll die.

They were my odds, and without  
surgery my aneurism would implode  
and I'd die a painful death anyway.

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

jerry hughes

# Persona Non Grata

I was.

I am no longer.

Neither am I shorter.

jerry hughes

## Poddy Calves

'Grab a hammer, ' the red-necked dairy farmer said.

'What for I asked, it's just six in the morning? '

'You'll see, ' red-neck said. 'They calved last night.'

'They? ' I asked.

'Yeah, the heifers, and we don't keep bull calves.'

'What do you do with them? ' I innocently asked.

'Use your hammer, wack 'em on the head, cut their guts open, here's a knife, and feed 'em to the pigs.'

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

jerry hughes

# Poetry

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

jerry hughes

# Progress On Peace?

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Prophecy

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Pub Brawl

'Wat'cha lookin' at?

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

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes



# Rain

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

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

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

jerry hughes

## Raptor \*

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Reflection

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

jerry hughes

# Remembering David

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

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

This was a good life.

jerry hughes

# Remembrance Day: 11- 11- 2008

'after the first death, there is no other'

Acknowledging Dylan Thomas

jerry hughes

## Riddance 2007

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

jerry hughes

## Robert Aka Rob

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

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

jerry hughes

# Rommy

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

jerry hughes



# Rwanda 1994

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

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

jerry hughes

# Sabbatical

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

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

jerry hughes

# Sadie

Sadie, my faithful, devoted, tortoiseshell moggie,  
sits in my den with me needing only an occasional  
touch of reassurance.

Other times she sits beside me on the lounge chair  
purring quietly, just happy to be there.

How lucky am I, how lovely is undemanding Sadie?

jerry hughes

# Saloth Sar Aka Pol Pot

Vile incarnate.

Are you really dead?

No.

Monsters like you never die.

The millions of souls you slaughtered  
on the 'killing fields' of Cambodia  
bear testimony.

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

jerry hughes

# Seascape

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

jerry hughes

# Seasons

## WINTER

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

## SPRING

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

## SUMMER

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

## AUTUMN

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

jerry hughes

# Semantics

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

jerry hughes

# Seventy Two

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

jerry hughes



# Shadows

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Sign Of The Times

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

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

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

Overdosed.

Leaving a beautiful little child;

Underloved.

jerry hughes

# So Mote It Be

'Adieu Kevin Smith'

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

jerry hughes

# Sojourn

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

jerry hughes

# Suddenly Silence

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

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

jerry hughes

# Sun Woman

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Supplication

Bless me father for I have blinged

jerry hughes

# Surgical La La Land

A calming, professional voice will say:  
'This'll relax you.' followed by a prick -  
in the arm that is.

It's the precursor to surgical la la land

I'll know nothing about it until -

(I've been there before)

waking up in Intensive Care with tubes  
of all sorts connected, doing all sorts of  
recovering things.

As the fog lifts and my eyes open I'll  
realise I'm alive, even if I feel, and I will,  
like shyte.

jerry hughes



# The Blue Horizon?

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

jerry hughes

# The Dream

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# The End Is Nigh

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# The Flasher

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# The Horror

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

jerry hughes

# The Long Drought

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

## The Mire - 1996-2007

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

jerry hughes

# The Mission

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

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

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

jerry hughes



# The Night My Father Died

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# The Numbers Game

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# The Shadow Of His Smile

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

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

jerry hughes

# The Well

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

jerry hughes

# The Wino In The Park

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# There

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# They

They

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

They

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

They

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

jerry hughes

# This

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

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

jerry hughes



# Tickets Please

Tickets please.

Sorry, what was that?

I said, tickets please.

Oh, yes, I had one.

Had one?

Bought it yesterday.

Did you get one today?

Did I have to?

Yes, you're only valid daily.

That's strange, I didn't feel  
at all valid yesterday.

Doesn't matter.

Tickets please.

jerry hughes

# Time Out

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

jerry hughes

# Times Are A-Changing

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

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

jerry hughes

# Tis So

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

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

jerry hughes

# To Jerry Hughes At 75

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

Everything is,  
everything exists  
only because I love.

Everything is united by  
love alone.

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

\*

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

Michael Shepherd: R I P

jerry hughes

# To The End

I was with him the day he died,  
still proud and stoic.

He was in pain, I could see  
it in his face. The occasional  
grimace, and sharp in-breath.

'Can I get you anything? ' I asked.

'No son, ' he replied. 'Just be with  
me to the end.'

It nearly broke my heart but I said,  
'Of course, of course.'

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

jerry hughes

# Toad

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

jerry hughes

# Tomorrow

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

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

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

jerry hughes



# Unequal Terror - Tory

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

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

This can't and must not go on.

jerry hughes

# Unsung Heroes

'to the memory of those massacred at the Somme'

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Urbie

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

'Who want's to know? ' says him with tattoos  
and scars everywhere.

Bloke says, 'not me, but there's someone  
in the dunny goin' - unbie, urbie urbie!

jerry hughes

## Vale Ronald Ryan (February 1976)

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Variation

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

jerry hughes

# Victory

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

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Voyeur?

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# We

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

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

After all, didn't we abandon god?

jerry hughes



## Weeks Later

It's been several weeks since I limped through the front door, joyous at the thought of being at home.

Beside beloved Alison, who'd sat at my bedside during the worst of my recuperation, I was met by Ella, our dachshund, wagging her tail so vigorously her rump threatened to fall off.

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

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

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

jerry hughes

## What's It All About Mal?

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Will It Hurt?

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

jerry hughes

# Within The Width Of My Hands

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

jerry hughes

# Wombat

'with apologies to Herbert'

Rollie-pollie, wobble-wobble,  
shuffling on your feet.

'Good morning Mr Wombat'  
the other creatures greet.

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

jerry hughes

# Yonder

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

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

jerry hughes