

Poetry Series

J.L. Nash
- poems -

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J.L. Nash((1969 -))

J.L. Nash had a transient childhood, moving between England and Africa, and as an adult spent time living on an island in the Pacific Ocean. She is now based in Australia. She writes short stories, flash fiction and poetry which often reflects this sense of travel, displacement and a lack of roots. Sometimes published under her maiden name (nee Hunter-Yetton) . Her work has been found in different magazines (e.g. Cricketer International) a Selection of Literary Journals and most recently attached to the exhibition PARANOID () . Her work can also be found on the net, usually in offbeat e-zines like Zygote in my Coffee. She performed at a few public readings in 2005 but prefers a more reclusive state.

A Moment

On the clock face, on the number four, rests two flies fucking
Their movements so tiny to be imperceptible

An eyeball moves upward, sweat accumulates between the lashes on the lower
lid
A scintilla of light catches the iris

John told the boy that he used to collect human tears before he lost his sight
Now he touches faces weeping at the loss

I ask my father for photographs of him so I can picture his face when I am far
from home
He gives me two brain scans

My friend has cancer and continues to smile when she sees me
Her skin no longer invaded by darkness

At night I wake to check if my lover is still beside me so quiet he sleeps
The nightlight is a blue yacht

The transience the suntans the shallowness of deep water adventures
Leaves holes in conversations

The out of order telephone provided an unfamiliar sense of isolation
Even on an atoll in the middle of the Pacific

A trigger fish loses its way, stunned by cyanide, there are no traces to follow
The coral beneath begins to crumble

The new order of management at a local community college begins to fire its
teachers
Free thinking and speech has disastrous outcomes

China tries to forget Tiananmen Square and invites the West to see its growth
Confident the Rooster motif never-the-less shows profit

Personal gain was never his driving force until he lost his home his job
Survival surprisingly steered towards compassion

Humility took me over one day when I had no ego no agenda no expectations
A sense of peace passed over mind and body

The need to dominate takes over her mind until she can no longer view the
horizon
Lies feed her tongue until it loses its edge

They smuggled a chameleon into the country but they kept it in a cage and it
died
There were not enough flies to eat

J.L. Nash

After

not sure why it is but it is
always after
that I feel
I taste
after watching the couple in the movie
make love
pretend to make love
I pretend to make love with you
and after
I slowly sip at the black cup
and it's sweet I taste candy
and after
I wish it was from your lips I was tasting
not mine

the rain is still here
prurient cool from the heat of my pretending
and after
I will return to the tv finish watching the movie
drink more
want you
pretend you are here
and after
I will fall asleep
waking to write down these words
imagine that you hear
this list of thoughts
which like the rain
will be gone

J.L. Nash

After Midnight Poetry Caller

And so you call me
now that I have given in to your
protestations, of poetry
you ring me at 2 in the morning
coining my own words
"did I wake you? "
and yes you did but that's ok

I was having a dream whereby my teeth
were falling out of my face
my gums were disintegrating
spitting out enamel, leaving stumps
Primal fear
but I have my teeth and you are on the other side of
the phone line, it crackles
I miss the odd bit of poetry
as you read to me
you always read to me

I read you a short one but I read it badly
and the meaning is lost in the self-consciousness of
my pronunciation
sweetly you give me a phone smile and thankfully you
continue to read your finds

A headache arrives, unannounced
and although I am in some discomfort
there's you on the other end reading to me
Of life, of Henry, of Mr Bones and of golden syllabled
pop stars, of Mark Halliday and I realise
you absolutely love the long poem
the many parts
the chapter and verse of it all
where I am more into the six liners
the swift thought that quickly pierces

Still the headache and
of course a cigarette doesn't help
but it's within reach and so I light it

by the punchline it's been tossed over the balcony
this dark and rainy night and my nose is dripping
I make you wait patiently as I retrieve an already used tissue
the next poem comes to me as I return to
my place on the mat, next 'the phone
although I must confess I do adore this time of
morning and I had only just put down my head
when the telephone rang with you
smilingly asking what I usually ask
"did I wake you? "
and yes you did and I am glad

Like the shopping lists all over America being a clue
to belonging
this telephone call is mine, my proof
I'm thinking we could form our own secret society
where our password will be
"did I wake you? "
and the content of our meetings would be
poems short and long by many voices
and it would be permissible
to ask for an encore or demand an extra voice
so that images of departure wrap around
toothless dreams and cast away all rotten flesh

I foresee one problem
and only one in such meetings
but it's so small and surmountable
that I'll leave you to find out for yourself
if you are lucky enough
to have an after-midnight
poetry caller.

J.L. Nash

Ars Poetica

Although she understood what it meant to be him
She saw earlier than he did what it was to lose everything
And so she tried to bury all that was within her
She threw it into the lagoon
Dug holes beneath coconut trees
But palms don't sit deep enough
And the tide brought everything back
She'd try to attend to it
In secret, behind a closed door
With music loud and images moving
But instead of keeping it all as some kind of manageable
Mass it grew, nurtured by the privation of light

Although she understood what it meant to be him
She asked for photographs of happy days
Of the conventional, as if this might reinforce some sense of normality
But he gave her scans of his brain
X-rays of his head
A spectral reminder of what they both shared
His faint facial contours wrapped around bone
Missing and replaced teeth testament to
Age and gnawing life through flesh her own teeth breaking
There was no escape from the emergent sense
Of fight within her

Although she understood what it meant to be him
Most of what she wanted to become
Involved her leaving traces of him
Behind her on the one road between the houses
Scatterings of genealogy marking the
Bends delineating which side
On which to drive
She was always confused as to which side was the right side
When the wind was pushing across her face her bones her brain
Scanned with her eyes to see if all the
Parts had fallen and if she was free
There is no escape from the DNA of creation

As He Lay

There's a shepherd's crook of gnarled and knotty wood
From his ankle bending in at the waist and fitting against the elbow point
That's the shape around him

A child's bird in flight, beak pushing against his thigh
Wings spreading out to heel and around drawn up foot
That's the shape around him

One isosceles triangle to the left and equilateral triangle to the right
Enclosed in biceps and triceps and ribcage
That's the shape around him

The slope of a horse's rump with gentle contour to the withers
Lying on the carpet, a thigh bone to knee
That's the shape around him

The outside of a pyramid, Mayan in scope and landscape
His feet are bigger than hers when together sole to soul
That's the shape around him

The inverse of choppy waves at Marlay Point
In high winds where even the seagulls cling to the rocks
That's the shape around him

The night sky around a domed temple
Spring from veined temples and over his nose
That's the shape around him

Discarded cape long after the party ended
On the floor cradles his head and shoulders
That's the shape around him

A chalice is held grail-like between
Upturned outturned calves and feet
That's the shape around him

J.L. Nash

Being Two

Featherhead
Don't call me that
I'm making tea now for spiderman
He's having a bar b q
And actionman so don't bother me with that tidying thing
Now I'm spider man
Look at me rolling around
I'm rolling like spiderman
Yes I am
I'm rolling on the floor like spiderman
Where's my gun
The gun's on fire
I'll have to fight the gun
I'm fighting a fire
I'm fighting the gun look
The water's coming out
I'm fighting fires
Is that Lazy Town on TV?
Look! It's Lazy Town
I like Lazy Town
But it's not time for dinner
I want to play now
Why is the car in the box
I want to play
It's not time for dinner
Woosh! The water's coming out
Hello! Is your leg hurt?
His leg's hurt,
I'm giving him a lift on the car
There you are
(His leg's better now)
What?
Dinner?
I don't want spaghetti
No!
Ok, just a little bit
And play later
We'll play later.

Can You Feel It

The absence of loneliness
Just when you are full of love for him or her
It strikes you like an empty bell
Where has that feeling gone to?

The one that led you to drink on your own late at night
And it was good red wine
The one that made you binge eat meal after meal after meal
Even when you were too full to move

Now the smells of both of you sit heavy upon your skin
Gone is the space that was your friend
And yet such a scent is both pleasing and comforting
No more empty nights lie ahead

Instead of a glass of red wine beside you or even some sweeter sour spirit
A cup of warm tea, fresh from the kitchen resides
And you can hear him or her sleeping in the room next door
When did you stop being so singular

The day was full of laughter and smiles
Little time for self-reflection or pity or loathing
Tomorrow will be the same jumble of happiness
And you will wake and sleep next'a face that cares for you.

Should you have difficulty at night
when every sense in your body tells you to sleep next to him or her
and relax into the holding and nuzzling,
dispel the guilt, walk outside and call into the night

O where is my empty soul?

Return to the arms of your lover
Knowing that this will surely pass
It will fade away and become a distant memory
As sure as love has become a blanket of reality

J.L. Nash

Canvas

His attention to detail
On the canvas that sits
Large in the lounge
That sits balanced on two chairs
Is indicative of the attention
He pays to their lives together
The slightest interruption of brush stroke to incorporate
A rosetta motif only seems
Haphazard
And it is in this alternation of expectation
She trusts her life to him.

J.L. Nash

Catfood

My boyfriend said the other night that if I hadn't been there
he would have eaten the tin of cat food from his cupboard.
He doesn't have a cat.

There has never been a cat in that house and yet
I have noticed a tin of catfood on the middle shelf,
slightly to one side of the condensed milk in the pantry.

It had been there for some time but since when
I really cannot say.

At a push I could imagine eating top quality dog food.
I mean, those chunks of meat, that gravy
the wonderful advertising campaigns.

It is perturbing,
no matter how many ways I try to think around it
that he would have eaten the cat food,
being hungry and too lazy to go shopping,
if I had not been there.

Telling me should give him bonus points for honesty.
But to be honest – it is still worrying me.
Like a nagging scratchy kitty litter tray kind of noise in my head.

He's often said that food is just fuel that
he doesn't really care what he eats – although he does
he likes no blends of things, no subtle hints of flavour
And there are no subtle hints of flavour in cat food
just fish.

Even if your cat has just consumed a tin of turkey special whatnot,
Your cat's breath will before too long still smell of fish

And I suppose I should be thankful that he didn't eat
the tin of catfood as there would have been no kissing for me that night –
And like the sickly trace of old chip fat
A particular flavour you never want to take the risk on again
Could have been on his lips

But it wasn't
and so I am sort of grateful but
Still there's that scratch scratch scratch

Then there was the time that I was sick
On the fifth day of my confinement
I rang him to say – I don't feel like going out to the movies but
ring me when you get home
It was the answer machine that answered me
11 o'clock came and went,
Still he hadn't rung to see
if I needed escape in the form of laughter from my
variety of virus laden moments

I must confess it was at this point
I did begin to wonder whether
in a fit of hurried hunger,
He had eaten the cat food and was
In absentia
Locked in a marathon of stomach cramps
Putrid belching

and did I want it to happen?

On that night... a little voice says ...

J.L. Nash

Clock

Everywhere I go there are clocks
But perhaps that's an exaggeration
In each house of his family
There are clocks
Pendulous reminders of each second ticking away
Each
Sec
Ond
Tick
Ing
A
Way
Un
Til
We
have
to
leave
This
Place
and
Then
We
Will
Have
To
Be
Some
Where
Else
but
Til
Then
It's
Tick
Tick
Tick
With
The

Oc
Ca
sion
Al
tock

J.L. Nash

Clutter Stutter

I have more clutter than you but if I filled this line to prove it
you would turn away
and read ee cummings or something like that
no there's nothing like that

just take my word for it
that this clutter is a stutter over life
unable to leave behind anything that comes to mind
heart
or eye
clutter stutter

it's not a speech therapist you need, but a skip
you said to me
and I laughed

and then took a piece of paper and typed your words
stuck them on the near-covered wall

I do that each time you talk to me
stuttering over the memory
the short term memory
wanting to imprint
but you are attached to various parts of my walls instead
all around the house
you are all around the house
and I can't stop

all that's implicit in this
isn't
it's just more of the same

the power of speech is failing fast as I type more and more
I type more and more
and fill my walls with stolen bits of you
fragmented images and recollections
stuttering over the fact that it's actually
nothing more than
clutter

J.L. Nash

Completion

Let there be none until we are dead
Let it wait until jackals scream
The scratching of their calls scoring across some brilliant sunset
which lies in the sky bleeding into the clouds
The last vestige of blue closing like grandfather eyes

For when the movie has finished, the journey home begins
Without a corner, the road is void of mystery
Sleep not only concludes the day but heralds the next
Without the moon, tides cannot turn

It is in itself a curse for the living
Too big a space to occupy without nightmares

Let there always be
Mangos on trees too high to reach
Poppies in fields too far to see
Bread in the oven, not yet cooked through

Let there always be
A flash of periwinkle blue in the waters
A book on the shelf unread
Chocolate in the fridge untasted

And
one more day together

J.L. Nash

Crabs On The Jetty

At least it's not on my face
She would say as if her face
Was some proverbial ticket
Could allow her to collect \$200
It had never occurred to her
Scars on the body were as much of a map
As the skin around the eyes of a face
Her face

Smooth skin and the familiar sound of
"I though you were younger"
Served to protect her blind view
In mirrors never full length
The body a shell to house
A smile, those eyes, that skin
And above all other things
Her face

In the glimpse of weeping skin
Caught briefly before it darted
From the fragments of someone else's mirror
Recollections of the phrase
Scuttled away like crabs on the jetty
After the rain before the sun
Grey and lined she saw for the first time
Her face

J.L. Nash

Eatin's Cheatin'

Eatin's cheatin'
You said to me
Then you grinned
In my kitchen
And that night
We feasted on each other
As you cheated on your lover

J.L. Nash

Empty

In a not dissimilar fashion to the way you pour your life in to me and then
I let it flow from me
Trickling until the river basin is formed
So I dispelled my words onto paper
And that paper gave back to me form and beauty

As you are gone from me
So I have lost my words
All of them

I thought they were in a clear plastic box in one of the sheds
But then I discovered
That they were gone
Like the best part of you
goes from me and it's still ok

Have to learn to replace one of those feelings with the other
Soon

I looked everywhere for those words
Under sheets, between the pages of other people's books
Inside your mouth

But in the shadow that lies over our bed, now that my brow is damp
my hair sticks to the back of my neck
And my mouth is dry
In that sweet shadow
which has pulled itself over your shoulders commanding you to sleep
I sit at the end of the mattress, under it, emptied of words

J.L. Nash

Fan-Tastic

Well, How did it happen?
I think it was when I was feeling kind of
A little bit miserable with life and I had
Waded into some kind of
Murky depth of the soul. Without nicotine but definitely
With everything else. I am not sure but when I play back
The video I can see how stoned I was
How drunk I was
And perhaps I was hallucinating
But it is amongst all this
I clearly saw him turn around
And smile At me
From the film
He definitely smiled At me
And for the film
I said to myself
On film and aloud
I think I am in love with Jackie Chan

At the time I am sure he was a little bit in
Love with me too. His little face
Stared right out of the tv
I know it's not meant to happen
But in the movies
I swear to you he was looking at me.
Everywhere I went, it was his face I knew
I saw his face in the restaurant at Uliga Dock
At the Chinese corner store
Around the aisles at the Formosa store
Each shopkeeper knew
But I had to keep my love a secret
After all
He is famous

I was bursting to tell and I told my friend
Lisa and she thought I was a little strange
But being wise she decided not to comment
On the plot or the fact that I might be losing it
Staying on a tropical island will get to you so everyone says so

I have been here the longest I am sure
Of those who've had a choice
And perhaps I have lost it but
Watching Rush Hour and Rush Hour Two and
Shanghai Knights and I want to see Shanghai Noon and
First strike. Let's face it I need to see him every day
I've got to see him
I can't go a day without watching him
Athlete actor director who saw me
Through the tv I know he did
And in that moment of mutual recognition
I knew he did too

You may think I'm crazy
But I'm going to check my emails
As I check them everyday you see
I contacted him and have to see if he replied
One day
He will

J.L. Nash

Getting Ideas

Searching for an original thought
was extremely difficult
on a Monday morning
after drinking half a bottle of chocolate schnapps on a Sunday
especially with my sensitive stomach
So on the toilet I sat, searching
The only thing
I felt I was skilled in
was crapping
Ah, Majuro movements.
Be honest, I said to myself
Perhaps you're just not that clever
You can't be to drink all
that filth again
you're hardly the practical type
you knew how it would affect you
and that you had (home) work to
finish

Perhaps I am just easily fooled
was my reply, remembering my intentions
of the previous night
(I do try to be affectionate with myself)
in times of stomach trouble, it
sort of helps ease the pain)
Slowly I moved off the pan,
flushed away today's reminder
of yesterday's excess and
decided to make my way
to a store
in a quiet back street,
near The Tourist Trap
that sells ideas
for \$3 a piece
It's good to have a
conscience
flexible enough to cheat.

Hide And Seek

If I hide my eyes with my hands
Like I am 5 or maybe 4
I can feel five or four
In the knowledge that I am safe
with you
And the games we play are real
Games of learning boundaries
but not testing each other's love

And so I stand here now
Waiting for you to find me
Or is it me finding you
I forget
but the feelings are the same
and my hands feel warm against my face
And my eyeballs feel wet in the corners
where the lids join
and touch against the fingers
My fleshy thumb bottoms hugging my jawline
Hands more relaxed than
when I was that child

A more relaxed version of me
inhabits this space
A happier child
playing games in the house
'Cause it's too late to play outside
and bedtime will be soon
'Cept that it's nine now
I have to go to work tomorrow and
be a grownup again

J.L. Nash

Holes

Two months of a house guest
and on the first day of sailing I am robbed
twice...and kissed ... and somehow
my grin has healed
over, made a new skin for
the old holes I had been avoiding
and now I don't have to avoid
I fall into holes
and let's face it I have been
falling
into holes for years and it's
part of the reason why I live
here less holes in the pavement
no pavement
no holes in the road except holes
in the bottom of my shoes
but it's warm and I don't notice

There's a hole in my balcony floor
I keep a piece of wood over it
to hide it
to stop me falling through
it's about 15 ft above the ground
That's a long way to fall
I think I fell last night
into one of the holes
because I'd had enough
enough to drink
enough to smoke
enough shit to last me until next Sunday
evening and that is when the memory of last night
will be set aside
and another hole will appear in
the side of a picture or
the edge of a story and it will
open up for me to fall into

I think I must have taken my shovel
with me last night when I was robbed

the second time
I dug myself in deep
and that is where I find myself
this morning but at least the hole is
big and I just have to perfect my style
of falling
Judo is too problematic
I mean I could break my arm
Falling in love takes away sight
and horses might hurt too
and I do know how to get out
but at time I
wish I didn't ~~to~~ I could
stay at the bottom of the
hole you know the one I fell into

I fell into the lagoon again yesterday
afternoon it's always a good sign
I visit the lagoon each time I am drunk
In the same way stumbling
and last night I stumbled
when I declared intention
Showed my hand too early?
Probably but I love the inflation
of odds because now
it really makes me want
to climb out of the holes

Shit did I just announce a hole
to fall into? (quick check
the previous stanza) yes
I did
I must be losing it
fast ~~to~~
Just the odd pair of footwear
here and there
generally in holes

Hold up there is something
you left behind
after you dug the last pit
and I'm not discussing the one

I created myself yesterday
but you did leave something behind
and I did have it in the corner box
on the sink shelf in my bathroom
and here it is but don't think it can be got
because I'm only giving it back
when you stop making those holes
You know not all of them
just the ones that have my name

J.L. Nash

I Dreamed Of You

I dreamed of you
Of antique books, misplaced
Honour and dark drawers in libraries
Inviting me inside
The space you live, was it here? There? Where?

I dreamed of you
You saw me, you heard me
Knew me in all occluded shadows
Returned to walled corners
Dim light hiding a thousand whispers

I dreamed of you
Lamplit pages opened
In the inky night. Familiar
Stories in leather bound
Books, shackled to your most secret place

I dreamed of you
Next 'ladies on buses
Holding keys to pandoric lockers
From a nearby railway
I asked you to pen one. You laughed

You told me to be free
So I dreamed of you, See?

J.L. Nash

Imf

I M F

(From "A paranoid selection")

The Inertia of My Fears makes me leave all the lights on
even when I'm sleeping
Makes me forget to close the toilet door when I'm shitting
Binds me to the armchair eating unnecessary amounts of food, smoking
cigarettes and drinking anything alcoholic
Forces me to lock myself deeper inside the already locked house
Bloats my eyelids until vision impairs itself
Adds tiny cuffs to the base of my fingers immobilizing
Heats my body until there is nothing that can cool it
There is no preference with the I of M F
It simply exists inside everything I do, grounding me in the filthiest of ways
Cups stand unwashed, plates smeared with left over grease from red cooked
sausages
The salad remains in the fridge, components separate.
The Ethelred of Salads
It's astounding how quickly
I become the Ethelred of all things

I've lost three days now, well two but
there's one more to go and I can feel it coming upon me and still I am...
In the I of M F, I find myself crying at nothing at imaginary situations as if
preparing
The mechanisms inside working overtime the body still the eyes fixed and
there's never anyone to talk to
It's got me again, in truth welcomed the old friend it is, not so much friendly as
familiar
My stomach hurts like I was in fourth grade before a Mathematics test
My hair is straight on these days, not curly as usual
The floor is strewn with broken jewellery and I see the rust stains when I shower
but do nothing to remove them.
There is a hundred dollar bill on the table and I don't want to own it
I have lost a half empty removable drive I removed and should have left in place
That was when I was fighting it for a couple of hours
At this moment I have already pretended that you are dead and I have said the
most eloquent eulogy for you

I have opened up and revealed all reason but 'twas to the television
The I of M F has its own rules I am compelled to follow
but I know if I can find the drive, I can close this sordid chapter
It's just the getting up that's difficult right now.

J.L. Nash

It Does

it does

left on concrete
a bloodstained chainsaw

it does

it's empty now wiped with antiseptic
the incubator

it does

crumpled inside another's pocket
receipts for flowers for someone else

J.L. Nash

Late Show

It's like this he said as he wandered down the street
It's like this and he held out a leaf on a tree
Took out a pen and wrote leaf
The road was cobbled the alleyway narrow
She looked at him
Missing completely the ink upon the green

The tenderness afforded quickly fell away
As taxis disappeared into black lit streets across the river
Leaves surrender at the end of the season
And although the changes were welcomed
Every now and then she'd hope to espy
A narrow alleyway at around 6.30 pm
As if it might lead to the river
As if it might show a taxi rank
As if that leaf might still be there

But leaves are like poems
Once written and read
Only the temporal remains
For a second the emotion accompanying the viewing
Stores itself away
And glimpses of life
Are like interviews on the Late Show
Funny in parts, fleeting, often inconsequential
Except there's still the memory of that leaf

J.L. Nash

Left Handed Batter

darling this
position
doesn't feel
easy or
good for me

I really
have listened
and tried for
you but it
does not work

let me face
the other
way and lay
my hands like
this upon

the handle
see! a much
better grip
now watch me
feel the ball

coming now

J.L. Nash

Love Thief

Love thief

You steal into my heart

And take away my laughter

You climb up over the fence

Of my thoughts and

Route through my knickers, taking

Hidden under your coat

The life juice from me

You are my love thief

J.L. Nash

My Favourite Souvenir

a fawn coloured camel leather shoulder bag
a pocket on the front precisely sized for my digicam
two zipped smaller pockets at the bag wherein my pills fit perfectly
enough room inside for the ever faithful notebook
mosquito repellent
a purse
several pens
and a picture of my darling
in a tiny little frame

It called to me
and i don't care if i could have bought it cheaper
as a design there's none neater
and i will carry it with me
until i am older
because i bought it in Luxor

J.L. Nash

Pollock

I used to think that seeing him would make me feel inadequate
But it doesn't
It's like the splashing of sunlight in seemingly rapidly succession
In seemingly random order
But together
it makes
a picture

This two year old fills my days with Pollock ways.

J.L. Nash

Pulse

I do have an enormous sense of self control
no matter what the guys might think
the ones who were drinking at the shoreline bar Saturday
I half fell into the lagoon
and had to be dragged into the dingy by Phil
the new dive instructor in town
you see I had planned to get drunk the previous night
in fact I hadn't stopped drinking
(since the previous night and there I was half wet in a dingy
hitching a ride around the corner)

I do have an enormous sense of self control
and my confessions of self denial on the Friday
proves this undoubtedly as it was on the Friday
late that I tore at my face
to reveal underskin blisters of inadequacy
hidden for three years past
there are no mirror in my house
I had done to another's to see
(where my reflection sadly looked like me
and not some other person I could ignore)

I do have an enormous sense of self control
despite what my cousin or best friend might say
if by chance you should see them together
and ask them about me but that's a huge
presumption on my part to think you have the time
or the inclination to know
and I may still fall into the lagoon or lose my shoes
in your presence one warm dark night
(when the stars are bright and when marlin have been caught
think of my action as a celebration)

I do have an enormous sense of self control
although I have taken flagrant liberties with those I should not
because my greed is always rationed
giving me bitesized pleasure
enabling a way of living free from vicarious pleasure
a life that holds each moment

and through momentary cleansing wet legs lost shoes and underskin blisters

I am celebrating my own pulse

(....

□)

J.L. Nash

Rowing Across The Channel

I'm rowing across the channel□
two oars a wooden boat and a simple sail□
touching dog blanket grey coat waves□
salt residue silently clings in the cold□
onto my knuckles□

I've touched the Pacific Ocean
before Now I know what unfriendly can mean
no point searching for warm womb wraps
this water will not offer me food play rest
Fighting to see you

Forgotten how hard these rains are
Missing the kissing of sun lip's humid breath
Thought my compass was waterproof
I might as well row backwards facing the sea
Need a windcheater

Subscribed to cheating death again
Feet nowhere near the ground nor floating in air
It's the icy water of Hades that holds
wood Never confuse fire with death when it's life
nor sadness for sky

Philosophy is of no use
when sailing, rowing or following a map
Knowledge of the distance between
my boat and your house the mathematics of it
steers straight and propels

I'm rowing across the channel
I'm sailing over the Atlantic ocean
I'm leaving all my books behind
I'm struggling against heaven heavy sharp rain
To hold you again

J.L. Nash

Scrap Merchant

Slow silent moments of longing
hang next to where I sit
The wind in coconut trees
can only blow these thoughts further out to sea
all that will be left
is the space between you and me

is there anything that I can see
with your tired eyes
or will your smile be ever correct
pushing all challenge away
until you sit, dying, alone

let me dive down to explore
the beauty that is in so many ways
your heart, and as I do
I will clear the wreckage and
feed the fish that swim there

J.L. Nash

Scratch

it's scratching at the insides of me
without even being near
your absence has become parasitic in its approach
to my self

haunting arias conjure only the most wistful of smiles
happy songs become signposts pointing in the direction
of time travelling adventures
the future depends on trees
and the stories our brothers write upon them

J.L. Nash

Sleeping The Sleep Of Angels Off Duty

SLEEPING THE SLEEP OF ANGELS OFF DUTY

Or

All at 6's and 7's

I

I am going to China
My flight is soon so I have
To say my goodbyes but
There is a block of flats
1970's style
Going up in the lift
Everything is dirty
Urine stained corner, run down
My father lives there but
I never get to see him
Everything is muddled
The apartment is old
Crammed with books next `peeling walls
The light is half light English
Grey light no light deathly
There is a large carpark
Beneath the building with
Many empty spaces and
Empty shopping trolleys
This building holds onto
A sense of abandonment

II

But then I am in China
Everyone has Fu Man Chu style
Wispy moustaches and beards
With old weights and measures
Apothecary shops
Offering me bowls of rice
With white and blue painted
Chopsticks too long to hold

Dusty wooden benches
I hate rice
Around the shop there are mountains
But on the ground everything
Is stepping stones in water
Just like a Japanese
Ornamental garden
Cherry blossom trees are
Painted onto the dreamscape
Water there is water
Trickle tumble cascade
Bright white new light like a film
Happy unreality

III

I am riding a blue
Motorbike small silver blue
Copac not Yamaha
I have to find my way to
The airport so I drive through
St Paul's School which is not
As it is, separate from
Other things but part of the shops
The boys are dressed like old
Etonians I drive up
Steps encouraging my
Mother to follow on her
Motorbike a but a man
Pushed it up the steps for
Her was it you Jimmy?
The police are at the top
Set of steps looking out
Over a road in Bedford
Not London more cobbled
I drive to a charity
Shop where I find 5 black
And white pictures of reef fish
Angel fish, barracuda
A Picasso fish and a
Spiny shell. Can't remember
The other but I know

They will look good in my
Bathroom while Jimmy is
Feeling the material on
An old woman's tee-shirt

IV

Look in the Tee-shirt section
I buy the pictures and a
Pair of beige corduroy
Trousers but the bill is
Over 60 Pounds I know
It is overpriced and so
I say so, I say that
I have new mathematical
Skills in my head I say
And I ask them to recount
To explain how much each of
The items cost they muddle
It takes time and I know they
Think I am mean but
I won't
Be cheated it seems they have
Charged me for a woollen
Kaftan I did not want
And I am right but don't pay
For anything but it is
Ok as I walk out I
Am wearing the trousers
But still I am getting to
The airport
I have seen this
Airport before in other
Dreams it is not Heathrow
Or Milan or LAX
But huge escalators and
Glass partitions I have to
Catch my flight to China

J.L. Nash

Souk El Talat In Qurna

Two uncloaked heads
In a sea of a thousand and one hijabs
in the market that Tuesday
stepping through piles of coriander
laid down upon sacs over dust
indicative of luscious gardens and hydroponics
out of place on the edge of the desert

indigo cloaks of prayer with
indigo framed faces staring out
at our nudity as we walked past
custom, ignoring common tradition
to move onto lunch in Africa
without chaperone or coverings

stepping into the past brings with it
clichéd senses of awe of wonder
grasping at threads of intellectual
expectation but it's not real
Not like the tired donkey in the corner
the truck rusted and broken
next to the picnic places
with their seeds and mini trees of green
next to colours and dried flowers
opposite chickens in their final hours

as the blood flowed
I looked to the dropping
Of little life into the dust beside the wooden crates
Watched the shuffles of indigo ghosts
Walking past piles of powdery blue
Carrying groceries to the quiet of indigo cornered rooms
Out of sight from the temples and tombs
Of Luxor

J.L. Nash

The Bluest Of Deserts

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wed

It's kind of quick it's
quick it's really
quick
Quicker than a
hot shower
Than the cold
shock of a cold shower
Than the bite of pain
when the legs breaks
Deeper than a
poke in the eye

And it stays with
you
After shock
Earthly tremors
Like after you heard
someone is dead
Or has died
And the world
stands still it's
kind of still

But something is
shimmering
beating and
standing
still
at
the
same
time

And it
makes you
feel
Dizzy without
falling over

And then with
the speed of the
first wave
and then
The shimmering of the
second wave
Then
then
then
There's
nothing
There's nothing
You just stand
there
Suddenly transported into
The most arid of
landscapes
The bluest of
deserts

J.L. Nash

The Sign

It was the sign
a post with a small board attached
that said nothing
up until then
I had seen ephemeral shells
a ray swim beneath me
a horizontal coconut tree
but it was the sign
that spoke to me
saying nothing

just lying there on the beach
beside discarded or lost
single sandals
empty bottles
broken coral we tried
to make it stand
built a base for it
a sign on a tiny island
saying nothing

but that was always
why I disliked her
because she would stand there
erect in posture
not unlike the little post
we left in the sand
on that tiny island
wooden and silent
no message to convey
saying nothing

The small island's
sign to nowhere
not directing anyone to
anywhere with its
blank face its
ambiguity of note
was more beautiful

on looking back as I
paddled away than any
lover's sleeping breath

was her silence
her emptiness of
conversation the
thing that made her
seem so beautiful
was the ownership of
my fantasy messages
unwritten on that
small board the same
to those who loved her

had I misunderstood her
silence her awkward
wooden poise Had others
found in her what I had seen
in my little sign post
my small sign
on that tiny island
leading nowhere
out of place
saying nothing

J.L. Nash

Two Pelicans

The bark on the gum tree hangs in strips like a torn dress
Flayed nightwear once of the silken variety
Pink hue of new flesh revealed beneath
spattering of colour freckles the limbs
while 2 pelicans, barely beyond, float upon the mangrove waters.

They're playing their own games,
Chasing and racing, this way and that way
Unaware of us watching them from under this
Burlesque tree out but also in place

We collect feathers from magpies without their knowing
Add one from an ibis
We are far from the Nile
I speak of making quills and you,
you mirror your pelicans
from the shell encrusted mud flats like eggshells underfoot

there is a smell to gum trees.
Woody, spicy and masculine that appears when
Warming the leaves by rubbing them together in palm
In the time it takes to inhale the aroma
I am she and he is he
Male and female
Like the redgum which pushes high over the banks of that
Murky water with the
Two pelicans a flock of ibis and old bark falling away

J.L. Nash

Urban

Deep within foraged images
Lie cryptic clues of streets
And unaffordable books
On shelves next' faces
Rather forgotten
Somewhere within it all
The grey streets, the traffic
The pollution and the people
Is the message, a truth
Divined but hidden

Cracked windows and broken pavements
Surround the only part of
What is left
Dreams of home ground
Familiar towns with busy streets
Through the eye of a traveller
All seen is undone

No-one has noticed the decay
Through which they run
'picture book memories of
Glasswalled castles
Make up the
Urban
Of grey street walkers
Not stopping to see but
Shopping to be

Emptiness on waking
There is only this
Half life of morning
To revive
Soul, desperate, dry
With its singular existence
From prophetic visions
'Neath the neon lights of a city

We Are Monkey

monkey gone five days food in fridge
monkey go boat lovely island lap lap waves
monkey friends make fire
monkey friends cook
monkey eat

monkey sleep hot hot night
monkey try catch fish no fish play
monkey read book monkey rest
monkey listen rain listen sea
no monkey business for monkey

monkey go small boat paddle hard
monkey find sign
monkey watch monkey friend wear shoe
monkey swim big sun
monkey no sleep

monkey talk small rat
rat scared monkey rat hide
monkey play cards long night
monkey sleep little light
tired monkey

monkey eat green salad
no banana for monkey
monkey want banana
monkey drink beer
banana beer banana beer

monkey miss bed
monkey love treehouse
monkey like island lap lap waves
hot hot island think cold cold treehouse
monkey too much hair big sun

monkey meditate in dark
monkey qi bigger than moon
monkey steal starlight

monkey free swish swash wave
wind kisses monkey when monkey friends make monkey business

monkey work hard
monkey think long time
monkey struggle too much word
monkey dream peaches
monkey wake big dribble

J.L. Nash