

# SAMPLER

*Selected Poems 1971-2017*

Also by Laurie Duggan

*Poetry*

East: Poems 1970–74 (1976)  
Under the Weather (1978)  
East and Under the Weather (2014)  
Adventures in Paradise (1982, 1991)  
The Great Divide, Poems 1973–83 (1985)  
The Ash Range (1987; 2nd edition, 2005 \*)  
The Epigrams of Martial (1989, 2010)  
Blue Notes (1990)  
The Home Paddock (1991)  
Memorials (1996)  
New and Selected Poems, 1971–1993 (1996)  
Mangroves (2003)  
Compared to What: Selected Poems 1971–2003 (2005) \*  
The Passenger (2006)  
Crab & Winkle (2009) \*  
The Collected Blue Hills (2011)  
The Pursuit of Happiness (2012) \*  
Allotments (2014) \*  
No particular place to go (2017) \*

*Cultural history*

Ghost Nation (2001)

\* *Shearsman titles*

Laurie Duggan

*Selected Poems*  
1971-2017

SAMPLER

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One

1977-1984

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# Cockatoo Draft

*for John & Lyn Hughes*

How can I comprehend

Christmas morning  
cloud across the Dandenong Ranges  
sponge squeezed over the tilled field  
the back hills under mist  
foliage dense, clotted,  
a treeline like brushed ink,  
lit shafts of trunk stripped of bark.

Hack down berries round the fig tree,  
shovel scraps, old toy vehicles, bottles

lean on an N-frame gate in a swarm of flies  
(a tractor, distant in the gully)  
long black-tailed birds pick strawberries  
whole rows rot.

Night frogs in the dam  
the galaxies explode  
in a room painted black  
I read Adamson's Rumour

difficult, without a survey map

to see where I will be taken,  
adapting Wordsworth or Snyder to see those blue ranges toward Warburton.

\*

Areas of ploughed, cleared,

& wooded land,  
thick bush of the state forest,  
walking up Mountain Rd. curve a lone tree  
dipped in the landscape.

Sit on a pine trunk at the road's junction,  
a dam in the cleft southward

chrome yellow flowers on a slope due east;  
Cockatoo, a clearing on the opposite hillside

A spiderweb shines from its frame of thistles  
the 'sole arabian tree' bursts from confinement  
watch the hills  
move into their stillness  
work against the light  
pick on the downward slope  
wild strawberries  
between the rows.

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## Post-War

Lights burn in houses we are not, through  
fear or ignorance, permitted to enter;  
the hotel we visit in darkness  
remains nameless        streaming from the balcony  
expensive underwear of *übermenschen*,  
clown masks, balloons, whistles.  
A blind accordionist floats across the suburbs  
as if, from the brick and bone-dust, something  
more than tangible can emerge.  
In Berlin the balloons drift upward  
on the pitch of a tide, as biplanes  
descended on Lens.  
Lost for images, we become the fleeing crowd:  
a mouth swallowed the whole picture.

Years after the promise receded,  
through the hard winter, men wander  
aimlessly by the tracks, boxcars  
branded by number,  
convicted,  
sentenced:  
Scott's Run, West Virginia, 1937.  
Figures in a caravan, huddled in pale incandescence  
as whores who spurn commerce  
summon a trite poetic.  
The movement is into form;  
the flux contained, the moment passes:  
subject, object, fall into place as  
starched gestures of shirts over the hotel.

# Bridge Road

save the language from poetic tongue

'milk bar' is accessible but  
'tangible' is not

Hello Lenin!

help, I'm trapped in this  
chip packet

right you are, son

he wiped his moustache

the cat nuzzled the chips box

it was 11.40 p.m.

\*

'Could you work in  
a place like that?'

(a paper factory)

outside it looked  
& felt like rain

'it always does  
in Alexandria'

\*

In a strange way  
I like this place.  
Cook spaghetti Bolognese

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Eat it to 'Books and Ideas'  
spit and swear at  
Roland Robinson

Tom, you shit  
(the cat) . . . out  
of the sink!

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## *from* A Skater on the Sara River

Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>

white mist in the gullies near Jerusalem Inlet  
the radio fades,        cuts out  
Bob Evans passes a plastic bag  
chicken & ham pieces

\*

Singleton lights up ahead

we wake up  
                 with the first joint.

\*

trace marks in sand  
                                 bright weeds  
         the morning red  
         under rain  
the 'Guy Fawkes' or 'Little River'  
down on the flood season  
         insects float above the Sara  
         light up in the air  
         orange on the far bank,  
the directional sense of a caterpillar  
         on a trunk, shadow side  
         from the rain  
everything specific.

a skater on the Sara River  
hovers on a flat of granite

# *from* North

*for Lesley Gilette*

sleet over the orchard  
cut loganberries  
dry later in the sun

& rain on the roof.

the Post Office  
minus furniture. walls painted ivory.  
through the window Terry & Steve  
chop a truckload of wood.

At night  
wind comes from the west.

Armidale  
airfield blown flat  
pink blossoms.

driver of taxi reckons a tyre  
of the Euclid setup worth more than  
his whole outfit.

\*

mountain

& rocks

ridge

a

on

town

a

North

South

so.

sunrise & sunset painted  
on E & W shopfronts

the light over a  
verandah  
descending into  
hotel rooms

bed on the floor; the iron sagging

& the doors left open  
faced with hillsides towards  
Tunttable Falls

\*

north: the peak of Mt Warning  
volcanic plug like the toe of a giant  
or (Lesley): peaked & bent hat of  
a witch. directions difficult  
in the almost complete circle of  
mts round Murwillumbah. even the sun  
seems to confuse here.

a train cutting  
through the landscape to the north  
sounds out over the valley.  
dust of stars on the porch,  
Stoker's Siding

in the pub, between sets  
Dave Kelly plays Ray Charles  
the band at beer

# *from* More North

*for Terry Larsen & Lorraine Osborn*

10/1/76

a stormy sky like Elsheimer's  
– moon riding on a bank of cloud  
Movement across from (Jess:)  
    'the dirty corner' (E. - S.E.)

& the next morning  
    heavy rain  
                    from the cot  
                    in the old post-office

early daylight  
                    thunder  
Lorraine & Bob still asleep

(Jess on the party slowly breaking up:)  
'It's like having teeth out  
one at a time'

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## *from Spleen*

my birthday  
a hangover  
& the drums upstairs!

on the ferry  
Ry Cooder's 'Dark End of the Street'

outside Luna Park  
'hello pussy cat'

I eat a birthday dinner  
in the Malaya restaurant

4,000 CAR DEALERS QUIT

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## A note

Huntingdale & Metropolitan golf links / bunker fuck mythology

Doveton High's  
amazing pregnancy ratio

and the naked Mr Clayton who  
rode buggy to the beach over swampland  
– this all we got of local lore  
to present/know that much of an area  
as Alan Wearne, his poems,  
their real history

Windsor Rd  
& the legendary Forbes –  
golf-links perve  
nobody ever saw

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Simon Stevens  
– Sex Pistol before his time