

# *The Pursuit of Happiness*

*Also by Laurie Duggan*

**Poetry**

East: Poems 1970–74 (1976)

Under the Weather (1978)

Adventures in Paradise (1982, 1991)

The Great Divide, Poems 1973–83 (1985)

The Ash Range (1987; 2nd edition, 2005)

The Epigrams of Martial (1989)

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 Epigrams of Martial (2010)

Allotments (2011)

**Cultural history**

Ghost Nation (2001)

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1



## Letter to John Forbes

lit up in a window  
with a burger & glass  
of African *chenin blanc*

I'm reading the later Creeley  
on Charing Cross Road

you, ten years back  
in limbo (Melbourne)  
of which you made the best

I inhabit an England  
you mightn't recognise  
though you would have read  
the fine print that led here

(the market *didn't* decide  
in your case).

will I echo Le Douanier, who  
celebrated Picasso as 'traditional',  
himself as 'modern'?

maybe

this notebook's  
no 'art pad',  
nor is this place

(everyone behind the counter  
is from Poland)

the music:  
'I am a cauliflower'  
misheard from the Stone Roses

opposite: BUDWEISER,  
ENGLISH BREAKFAST  
'OPEN',

the only art here  
is civic (a 'water feature'  
from the seventies)

the buses all head north  
to Clapton Pond,  
but I'm southbound  
for The Cut, Southwark,

poetry, spotlit  
on a tiny stage

## Angles 1-18

1

to be sensible  
of cold, the decay  
of light

2 (Uplees)

a silence  
on the Swale,  
or near enough:  
incoming tide,  
bird calls

cement slabs, on which  
black-faced sheep forage

the explosive factory  
blew up in 1916

3 (London Victoria)

the shake-spe-herians  
rant at a neighbour table

(as the deaf would drink  
at the Forest Lodge, their signs

speedy, erratic)

(poetry is not  
endless speech)

the roaring queens roar on

we in the pits  
put up with it

then head out for Kent

4

on Clapham High Street:  
– VOLTAIRE –  
– drycleaners of distinction –

5 (Brighton)

the Sunday market:  
battered legs of a shop dummy  
fireplaces  
a broken exercise machine  
Cliff Richard's 'Hits'

6

ice expected  
the night of the launching

long shadows across fields  
a hint of mist

sunset, south of Rochester  
a sickle moon over Westminster

7

the door knob  
cold to touch

frost on the western rooftops

ethereal blue plastic  
on rows of vegetables

8

past the shortest day  
at last

arthritis  
apparently

the writing, shaky  
the fog

(at least)  
lifted

9

I'm not allowed to be ill  
I oughtn't be, shouldn't be

lying on my back in late sun  
it's chill outside, then dark

take meat out of the refrigerator  
chop the Chinese cabbage

(movement of leafless vines on a neighbour wall  
a rusted blue ventilator

the head of Gautama  
transported into the yard  
stone among the shoots

an old filing cabinet  
moved to the garage

10

hop poles recede in fog  
'a delay in services  
due to a fatality  
in the Meopham area'

11

hail over Ferry Marsh  
mud underfoot at Halstead  
fields of chipped crockery and stoneware

12 (Chanctonbury Ring)

after the Great Storm a broken crown  
wild anemonies under the lip of the hill

13

At night

all things sleep  
save rats

in the walls  
(wondering if

they're any good  
or not)

outside, yellow  
streetlight on gillyflowers

a moss rooftop,  
who knows what con-

stellation overhead  
or the whereabouts

of ducks at 3am

14

a sky  
full of

small  
movements

15 (May again)

creeper on a wall  
turns ochre green

a young blackbird  
becomes  
a black  
bird

16 (Imagined America)

Confederates take over the village square  
guitar, snare, voice and double-bass  
twang, reverb & hiccup from the pub

17

a large chick balances  
on the edge of a bucket

18

late light  
hits the bar window

# Written in a Kentish Pub on Hearing of the Death of Jonathan Williams

a  
generous man

a modern  
epicure

gone from  
our midst

(I could knock  
together something

like gammon &  
mushrooms

(here, the schoolteachers  
figure pints will

write reports.  
another Bishop's finger?

yes, and  
in memoriam.

for J.W.,  
what?

photos of  
Kent's finest?

(this Thatcherite  
province, its

councils  
comprised of

Tory  
stayputs

the idiots  
of small business?

(blue bins  
appear

then dis-  
appear

the populace  
have no-

where to  
put them

plastic bags  
resume).

what's for  
Jonathan here

the gastro-pub?  
(fine unless

you contract it  
(gastro)

a walk, coast  
to coast

drive, for coffee  
fuel

(‘O’NAN’s  
AUTO SERVICE’?

it’s a world  
of open

parentheses  
a world

minus J.W.  
‘You can tell

white trash, but  
you can’t

tell it much  
...’

(or you could  
give it

the Bishop’s  
finger?

a man  
in absurd

green hat  
represents

St Patrick's Day  
(when is it?)

now, here?  
nowhere?

or a joke  
(I don't know

as I don't  
so many items

of customary  
ritual

(no hot-cross-  
buns

in this town,  
Monday,

the bakery  
closed.

tonight, here  
in the pup

(the 'pup' . . .  
no, the pub

(in the Sun  
where I sing

escaping  
plumbing

re-  
sponsibilities, re-

views, a Yeats  
biography

the drummer  
from Caravan, again?

(the sadness,  
progressive rock

in the provinces  
in, on

or about  
the premises

incognito no less  
(a glow

of light  
behind glass

over the bar:  
pump

& circumstance,  
a trail (trial?)

of spilt beer  
(spilt images?)

*lachrimae*  
*rerum*

& death  
(over all)

jamon?  
gammon?

(on the Ham  
Marsh?

J.W.  
R.I.P.