

Review - Australian Love Poems

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A book with a sexy matt cover and sensuous red-gold embossing crosses my desk and yep, you guessed it, I'm already in love. After all these years it turns out that you can judge a book by the cover (especially if the cover is so full of promise, so inviting and so very, very beautiful). The poems inside this collection live up to the promise. Sometimes, real love does that.

This is a book into which to dip, to reminisce, to savour and revisit. It is a well-crafted collection, and I think it's fair to say that editor Mark Tredinnick has created something quite special in his selection of these contemporary Australian poems, from verbose and passionate declarations about lust and sex to the pared back, almost painfully refined, reflections on love and loss.

The poems take a myriad of forms; there are sonnets here, as well as haiku, prose poems, ghazals and villanelles (always handy for teachers looking to introduce poetic form). And the poems are arranged into sections with evocative titles like 'Unruly days', 'A betrothing rain' and 'But I have known you in the winter, too'. Each title is a writing prompt in itself.

Ben Adams' 'Love' and Kevin Brophy's 'Dead Dog Dumped' were two of the more powerful moments for me. Brophy has long been an institution in my classes and Adams' piece is haunting in its tragedy. 'Text poem' by Stevie Nicholson 'plz tz me/ download me/ bcoz we totes sync' walks that fine line between clever and cheap. It just makes it over the line. In a form where the economy and value of words is so central, 'Text poem' is a useful departure point for discussions about what constitutes poetic language.

Gregory Day's 'My Kind of Wheel' is dense in its imagery: 'Far from the bridal rice of town/ this dusk is large/ as we walk on'. Another of his poems, 'Epithalamion,' is equally rich, yielding more and more with each read. Kristen Roberts' 'Wedding Photographer' weaves the everyday into a poetic meditation in time while Bronwyn Lovell's 'Running into your ex' is almost guaranteed to appeal to the heartbroken teenager. To explore personification with students, see Theodore Ell's

'Alone'; for haiku, turn to Mark Miller's 'Loss'; for Paul Kelly, only because I have long loved him from afar, see 'Haiku' on page 237.

Of course, there may be one or two disappointments. Tredinnick, in his introduction, explains that although 1501 poems were considered for the book, only 200 were selected for the final cut. He admits he might have made mistakes. It is a subjective business, this loving thing.

That said, there is so much to recommend a brief or more sustained love affair with *Australian Love Poems 2013*. The editor and publisher hope the love in this book will help spread the poetry far beyond poetry's borders. I hope so too.



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Edited by Mark Tredinnick