



**PASTURE
AND FLOCK**

NEW & SELECTED POEMS

**ANNA
JACKSON**

***A time-spanning collection of sequences and poems
from the poet of the everyday extraordinary.***

There are some poets you travel the routes of
so often you could feel your way in the dark,
that turn, that corner, and then the plummet
towards the end. What does it give you, after all,
to meet in person in a room? A thought
the dog doesn't share, when, having known
the followed route, the stored scent,
an affair of the air, here is
the other dog! Incarnate! Guessed and host!

– *'Poets know words, know routes, know ghosts'*

Uneasy nights out with dead Russian poets, dalliances with German gasfitters and emotionally fraught games of badminton are brought together for the first time, along with a brand new body of work, in this time-spanning selection of Anna Jackson's poetry. Local gothic, suburban pastoral and answerings-back to literary icons are all enhanced by Jackson's light hand and sly humour.

Pastoral yet gritty, intellectual and witty, sweet but with stings in their tails, the poems and sequences collected in *Pasture and Flock* are essential reading for both long-term and new admirers of Jackson's slanted approach to lyric poetry.



Anna Jackson made her debut in *AUP New Poets 1* before publishing six collections with Auckland University Press, most recently *I, Clodia, and Other Portraits* (2014). She has a DPhil from Oxford, and is now an associate professor in English literature at Victoria University of Wellington. Jackson is the author of *Diary Poetics: Form and Style in Writers' Diaries 1915–1962* (2010) and, with Charles Ferrall, *British Juvenile Fiction 1850–1950: The Age of Adolescence* (2009).

The invisibility of poets

Mayakovsky's an exception
with his yellow and black striped shirt
and his smile flashing
like a simile –
most poets are invisible.
Or why write poetry?

Some poets invent an imaginary
visibility – Bella Akhmadulina
went round for years with
an invisible visibility
flung over her shoulders
like a ray of sunshine.

Till she caught a fever and saw her GP
forgetting he couldn't see her –
so embarrassing, though
he was kind,
really very kind.
As embarrassing as going to a hair salon
with head lice (*they* aren't invisible).

And so at last you see
you will have to
become, in the words
of the poet, Khlebnikov,
'a sower of eyes' –
tossing them into the future's
black sky,
hoping they will land
somewhere
along their long
projectory.

Amanda in the mirror

Pink cheeked, dark browed, scowling
at herself the way people look
at themselves in the mirror, as if we were
our own worst enemies, rehearsing
a German phrase, ein bisschen Hoffnung, a
little bit of hope, this is Amanda, the night before
she sits the German exam that results in the letter
she holds in her hand, weeks later, the letter,
weeks later, everyone is asking about
and no one knows has arrived.
She has won a scholarship.
She had described ein rosa-beige Haus,
a pink-beige house, knowing beige
was the word for beige and risking her use of it
looking like a guess, intent on capturing
a dream, the black tree trunks, a whole landscape
in shadow, the sense of sunlight falling
elsewhere, a *dank* feeling
which she used the word feuchtes – humid –
for, anxiously, the taste of pencil
in her mouth. She sees herself now
looking anxious in the glass, the feeling nowhere
apparent of sunlight in her heart – das Gefühl
des Sonnenlichts, she thinks to herself
with a smile that doesn't appear on her face.

Saoirse at the fridge

Saoirse weeps at the fridge door
removing nothing, the cold air
on her tears, her feet in socks
from Singapore Air. There's a pink stain
on the shelf where the milk sits seeping
and outside the window someone
is sky-writing something in the sky
she cannot read – there are two planes, one
undoing the writing of the other.
No one knows she is there,
even she herself feels more like a butterfly
dreaming it is Saoirse . . . surely
when it woke up it would feel
as light as air! And full of fear.
Quickly, lay your load – those eggs
that hatch into hunger machines.
She is hungry, oh she is hungry,
but does not want to think about for whom.
She picks out her coldest onion,
her tears tight on her face.

Flammable

The world was flammable, we knew it was.
Our hair lit up with candle-light, we peeled off
the wax from the table and made it into
something beautiful, tender as the high voices
of the castrati, fine as smoke through the grain
of an old LP, a radiance through their song
like the flame of a wick slowly burning,
burning in its casing of wax. We all felt it.
We all had wine to drink, the dregs
in our glasses covered over with a new tide
of wine from a new bottle, a taste
like the tone of a clarinet with an old reed, old
but not frayed, pliable as smoke and thick
as wax. And then the morepork in the pine forest
sounded its two sad notes, singing
its 'I-Thou' song to an absence,
an absence felt by every one of us, our futures
dark to us, so close and so alight.

Mornings are sudden

You call me from far down the path that was
less travelled once: following it now
I tread in the mud made by others since, pushing
aside blackberry vines all blossom, no fruit.
This is the time of year there are no cicadas, no
flies, no crickets at night, no fruit flies on
the fruit, no fruit on the ground and
the ground is sodden. Mornings
are sudden, storms come on slow.
Following you means going anywhere
to its *end* – if I cut across the field
I'm heading to the horizon, if entering this cave
I'm entering the grave, in measured steps,
your absence my metronome.

AUCKLAND
UNIVERSITY
PRESS



9 781869 408794

\$34.99

Paperback

210 x 135mm, 148 pages

ISBN 978 1 86940 879 4

8 March 2018