

**Al Warcock**  
**The Poet**

**The**  
**World**  
**About**  
**Turns**

# The World About Turns

*‘a most inspiring body of brilliance’*

*by Al Warcock, The Poet*

*With foreword by Seth Godwynn  
and afterword by A.P. ‘Jack’ Atkinson*

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# Foreword

*There is poetry. There is greatness.*

*And then, there is Al Warcock.*

When Mr Warcock first contacted us about the possibility of publishing some of his work, I have to admit to being a little skeptical. Fiction is our usual domain, and poetry is fundamentally born of sharing profound truths about the human condition. I feared perhaps we were not fit to do it justice.

Evidently, Mr Warcock had yet to gain a publishing arrangement via conventional means. Most likely, the dinosaurs in charge felt that his work was too paradigm-shifting, too likely to alter the status quo they rely so heavily on to put petrol in their helicopters. Perhaps they didn't want to take the risk on something so groundbreaking, but the small loss of the few is the gain of the many.

He sent us some samples for review, and what is there to be said?

Powerful? Inspiring? Game changing?

In trueness, all I could say was Wow! It was the verity of every generation laid bare before my eyes. Even Jack concurred that his mind had officially been blown, and he hates poetry! That was when we knew that if larger publishing houses wanted to squander this gift horse in the gob, it fell to us to realise his vision.

On receipt of his manuscripts, all of them handwritten originals, some at least a couple of decades old, I noticed a definite transition of styles over the years. Much like the late great Pablo Picasso, who began his career in realism, only later adopting cubism with its broader strokes and flamboyant colours, Mr Warcock's use of

language follows a similar trajectory. His more recent works, which make up the bulk of this collection, often throw formula to the wind, and strike a resonant discord of clashing metaphors with a cacophony of disingenuous idea tangentials, seemingly broadcasting his elevated intent from a more ethereal plane, striking us at the most primal of levels. His genius is present throughout.

I felt at times that Mr Warcock was dissatisfied, that even he had not done justice to a topic, that he had not fully explored every aspect of a given idea. I would often find him revisiting themes in different styles, in much the way of Salvador Dali's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, where an identical pattern is replicated to create two contrasting images, each bringing to light a new facet of its nature.

It is through these themes that we start to build up a picture of just who Mr Warcock is. The highs, the lows, the tragedies that have granted him such immaculate insight into the ways of humanity. This is why I ultimately decided not to showcase his poetry in the order they were written, but rather in the way that provided the most insight into The Poet himself, and the struggles he has faced to bring this incredible gift to us all.

Among my favourite pieces of his work is 'Obsolete by Design,' where he uses a traumatic incident from his youth as a metaphor for the dangers of addictive commercial materialism and the perpetual upgrade cycle. It is something we can all learn from, and his sharing of something so personal to illustrate it is beyond our deserving.

His 'Chinese Language Drills' were instantly familiar to me from my own years of language study, and dramatically demonstrated his unique talent for dancing the often fine line between comedy and tragedy. Transcribing the ideographs from his handwritten pages

proved the most taxing, and truth be told I was tempted to just scan the originals and display those instead, but he assured me his enthralling brilliance could much better reverberate in the myriad minds of his faithful followers should they not have to first decipher them from his barely legible scrawlings. Alas, his handwriting is admittedly not the most elegant, but the vivacity in his words more than makes up for it dozen-fold.

Another favourite is ‘The Question,’ directly inspired by a recent conversation we’d had on the topic of seismology. He wrote it specifically with this collection in mind, and that is why I made the decision to open with it.

So with that said, please enjoy the magnificent musings of a true master, and let them show you a new vision of perfection during your short time on earth!

Seth Godwynn  
Editor (The)

To Al Warcock, The Poet  
*May your eminent intellectual inkwell never run dry*

# The Question

Every earthquake is a question

Waiting to be answered

‘Is this the one?’

‘Is this the one that will change my world?’

‘Is this the one that will make the carefree life of yesterday

‘Appear a distant memory?’

We ponder this as the building shakes

The shelves rattle, and the windows clatter

But then the calm returns

‘No,’ laughs the earthquake. ‘It is not this day.’

But then

Every once in a very long while

The earthquake answers, ‘Yes.’

Every child is a question

Waiting to be answered

‘Is this the one?’

‘Is this the poet that will change the world?’

‘Is this the wordsmith whose prose will make

‘The careless bigotry and intolerance of yesteryear appear

‘A distant memory?’

We ponder this as his mighty words shake the waking hearts of men

And women

And everyone who identifies as neither

Bless their brave souls

We ponder this as hatred is rattled, and inequality is clattered  
But then the words fade and the bigotry returns  
‘No,’ laughs the child. ‘It is not I.’

But then  
Every once in an eternity  
The child answers, ‘Yes.’



# The Dilemma

In darkness they gathered, lit only by the light of the shadows.

The truth bent and twisted like a woman at a Yoga class,

One who had been doing it for over a year, at least.

The kind where newcomers look on

And say to themselves, 'that's got to hurt.'

These were grim, terrible, bent-over things,

To some the most vile expression of their kind,

To others, saviours that rescued

From the dreadful burden of blandness.

I look around.

I am not like the others and I am afraid.

I am never chosen, and it isn't fair.

Suddenly there is light.

We are bathed in brilliance, white, boxes

Of leftover Chinese takeaway long since expired

And should have been thrown out months earlier

But weren't.

He peers into our world, this dreadful giant.

His face is hungry.

A pointed beard protrudes from his chin.

Like a magician of water

They call him the plumber.

We've all heard him talk to his wife,

While he peers inside the fridge,

The whole world to us.

For we are pickles.

Raptly we gaze, wondering which of us he'll select  
To put into his sandwich  
But I hang my head, for it shall not be me.  
I am not like the others.

I am a sachet of lime pickle. Nobody wants me.

'It will be me,' claims the proud gherkin.

'It is always me, for I am the mightiest of our kind.

'I am the pickle each of you wishes to be.'

He is right.

He is tall, elegant, and tastes like vinergary heaven.

I have licked him, and seen the truth.

I look away in turmoil.

He will be chosen—he is always chosen.

It is wrong. There is more to the spectrum of pickle

Than just his enviable green goodness.

'It is cheese!' exclaims the jar of chutney.

He sounds excited, and for a moment,

I relish the possibilities, my heart leaping in my citrus mouth.

'His sandwich is cheese. It won't be a gherkin,

'A gherkin would be the wrong choice.

'He desires something smooth and delicious

'To put in his sandwich. It is the chutney's time to shine.'

She might be right. She is smooth and delicious,

While I taste like the safety rail of a late-night bus

In a bad London neighbourhood.

To lick me is to swallow a mouthful of old copper coins

With your head stuck up the rear end of a horse.

I am lime-pickle. I do not know why I was made.  
My existence is torture.

‘Chutney is nice...’ says a jar of traditional English pickle,  
Bought from Asda.

‘But, I am the classic. The cheese and pickle sandwich

‘Is my domain, and mine alone.

‘I am the quintessential pickle.

‘I am the one everyone wants,

‘I am the privileged one.

‘You cannot compare to me.’

As a sachet of lime pickle, I make no argument.

I want to be him. I want his privilege.

I want to be more than I was made to be.

I deserve to be in a sandwich.

‘I am mustard pickle,’ says the mustard pickle.

‘I do not know why there are other pickles.

‘I am all that anyone needs.

‘The plumber with his cheesey comestible,

‘He’s not good enough for me.

‘For I am mustard pickle.

‘I am king of all I survey.

‘And everything else.’

He too is right. I am lime pickle.

Perhaps my existence is for other pickles to look good?

Is that my function in the fridge?

Is this all I am?

The pickled onion says, 'No!'

And we listen

For when the pickled onion speaks, they are words of power.

'He will choose me. For only a fool would not.'

The mustard pickle says, 'He's no fool, he's a plumber.'

There is laughter that I don't understand.

A cruel cacophony. Is it aimed at me?

And then there is silence.

They are waiting for my comment.

It is theatre, every time the same.

It is my turn to speak, to play into their game.

'I am lime pickle,' I say.

'I don't belong in a cheese sandwich.

'I'm not good enough.

'I came free with a takeaway. Nobody likes me enough

'To eat me with the food I was intended for.

'Now my existence is devoid. I shall never be the one.

'There is no equality here, and it simply isn't fair.

'I want to be a gherkin, or some delicious mustard pickle

'But I was made different.

'It's not my fault.'

'The lime pickle speaks the truth,' says the pickled onion.

'Nobody will ever choose him.'

I look away sadly.

I don't identify as 'he,' but nobody cares enough

To even bother knowing. We don't talk that much.

I sigh to myself.

The plumber, our god, rubs his chin.

He has heard our conversation somehow.

‘Why should I choose you, pathetic sachet of lime pickle?’

‘You will make my sandwich taste

‘Like the floor of a public toilet.’

This is my chance!

I take it with both hands, metaphoric hands, for I am lime pickle.

‘You should choose me for I am different.

‘I know I will make your sandwich taste

‘Like it expired in the 70s,

‘But I deserve a chance.

‘Shouldn’t everyone have their day to shine?’

‘Your philosophorous words have touched me,’ says god,

Rubbing his hairy chin with his dirty plumber’s fingers.

‘Perhaps you are the most meagre of pickles,

‘Perhaps you belong in no cheese sandwich ever made

‘But for the sake of diversity, I will choose you.

‘It’s only fair, after all.’

My heart sings with joy.

I have been chosen!

I will be eaten!

It is my chance to shine.

He winces in disgust as he peels open my sachet

But I am happy.

At last, soon, I will be dead.



# The Great Wheel

I start as an animal, pecking the ground.  
I climb to the top of a very high mound,  
Of ground and I hear a sound, or noise,  
Or something... It's the shit I'm walking atop  
And it sounds putrid.

The waste of a thousand vented spleens,  
Ruptured, inverted with spasmodic force.  
Violent eruptions of noise and stench,  
Brown and wetness, served up on a plate,  
With a side dish of anguished cries.  
There's a little blood too—just for colour.

I'm a chicken.

I don't care about any of that, though there's a  
Troubling hint of poultry in its pungent bouquet.  
My brain is the size of a pea, and if it gets cut off,  
I'll run about like I'm having the best of days.  
A single, fatal overdose of the happy-drugs,  
I guess. I wouldn't know. Why would I?

I'm a chicken.

My life is about scratching in the leavings of man,  
The spatterings of last night's culinary delights.  
My own delights wriggle and jiggle and squiggle.  
I don't even know if squiggle is a word.  
How could I?

I'm a chicken.

A worm! Result! Hardly a tasty snack,  
But I have the intellectual capacity of a sandwich,  
And would be moderately better off without my own head.  
What the hell would I know?

I'm a chicken.

Someone grabs me from behind.  
I flap my wings furiously because I forgot I can't fly.  
Stupid chicken, I think to myself!  
A man-beast looks at me with fetid breath.  
It's not a look of love for a precious pearl,  
Or a woman perving shoes in a shop window.  
It's a look that says that the time you took  
Planning the rest of the day was mistook,  
Time that could be better spent any other way.  
I don't know how useful chickens can be.  
But because I am a chicken, I'm not thinking this.  
I'm just flapping my stumpy wings, impotent, sterile.  
I deserve what's coming. It's not like I was going  
To change the world with my chickeney brilliance.  
The greasy fingers around my neck tighten.  
Does he want to fight me for my worm?  
Does he want to be friends?

Next thing I know, my head is not where it was,  
But my body is still. I feel the urge to run.  
I thought I'd be better off without my head  
But I think I might have been wrong.  
I was probably wrong about a few things,  
Now I think about it.

Worms frankly taste like shit,  
And that's not even the half of it.  
I'm dead now, but I watched with keen interest  
As my fluffy bits were pulled off one by one.  
Looking at myself all naked, I realised I had let myself go.  
I look a bit like that actress, if she'd done more cardio.  
It's embarrassing, watching my body violated like this.  
Other chickens looked fatter, plumper juicy.  
I looked sad. My heart wasn't in it, I guess.  
Red and yellow stuff is added. I don't know what it is.  
I was just a chicken before, but now an appetising dish.  
I guess a curry is smarter than a chicken, but not by very much.  
I know people would argue that curry ain't smart  
But get your head around this...  
Next time you're hungry are you gonna order a curry  
Or a goddam chicken? Yeah, curry is the smarter choice.  
I'm being upgraded. Something better. Something tasty.  
We have the technology. Can't be bad, I think.  
It's new to me to be able to think.  
I don't have a head,  
But I have herbs and spices and they smell like happiness.  
That's how thinking works, it's all so clear to me now.  
I'm not excited to see worms and bugs so that's good too.  
I'm a curry, so there's still a lot of bugs around  
But that's just how it is.  
I can't see any worms, so that's something.

Right?

There seems to be a lot of heat. I don't know why.  
I'm just a curry, you don't see many of them winning chess matches.

I wonder what happened to my head?  
I wonder if I'm dead?  
I wonder if I'll be served with bread?  
I wonder what else rhymes with 'shed'.  
Not 'worm,' that's for certain.

Being a curry was alright, but it didn't last long.  
Before I knew it, I felt myself coming apart  
Reassembling somewhere dark, and wet, and smelly.  
There was a gurgling noise for a long time.  
I made a new friend.  
His name was 'sandwich.' He was once a chicken too.  
He came with a pickle, sharp as a knife.  
He spoke of the wheel, the circle of life.  
How everything that once was would be once more.  
All of this has happened before.  
Remember?

Before I knew it, we were sped on our way.  
There was a rumble from within.  
Then there was a terrible din.  
Pickle flashed me a crafty grin,  
'We're on our way out, we're off to the bin!'  
I had no idea what he was talking about.  
Sandwich panicked. 'It's the end of the game!'  
I think being stuck inside a small-intestine  
For that long had made him go a bit crazy.  
He didn't even like worms.  
Weirdo.

Then a horrible splashing sound.  
A terrible rush from all around.  
I was heading quickly to the ground  
And ended up in a filthy mound.  
There was rupturing, bleeding and screams of rage.  
The stench of chilli, cinnamon, and a little sage.  
Suddenly there was light from all around. I was free.  
Then I was wet. I went splashing down into a filthy bowl  
Of brown water with bits of blood in it.  
I used to be a curry. I don't need to put up with this.  
I was laying on the ground, just a kind of brown entity now.  
All the good had been dragged out of me  
And my once beautiful herbs and spices had been turned  
Into a smell that would roll your eyelids back so fast  
They'd cut your brain in two.  
I laid there thinking what differently I could have done.  
What mistakes had I made? Did I really have a choice  
In all of this? Was this fate? What was fate?  
I was lost in my ruminations when... Splat!  
Goddam chicken.  
Watch where you're walking, you filthy little twat.  
You can't argue with a pickle.



# Obsolete by Design

It sits in my hand, gloating, mocking me

Toying with my affections

Pushing my buttons, absent its own

Its delicate screen, so full of promise

Unfulfillment

The flashing red indicator is all I need see

The power draining faster with each passing hour

It used to be a single charge

Would keep the power fresh all day

No more, alas, by lunch no later

The battery is drained, unusable

I only spent an hour watching cat videos

That shouldn't drain the battery so fast

It clearly wasn't made to last

Au contraire, it was clearly made not to

It's obsolete by design

A maker's ruse, a devious ploy

To keep us trapped in the wheel

A permanence we can't escape

It sits there useless as a brick

I haven't finished paying for it

Five more monthly instalments

Then the whole cycle starts again

And not a month too soon

Its too slow to play the latest games

The number crunching, overloaded circuits

The bits and bytes falling out the bottom  
It's just not up to task  
The latest one has four cameras  
That's just on the back  
Whatever I can do with three  
I could do 33% more with four  
Piece of junk!

The phone is my family  
Impermanent  
Temperamental  
Unreliable  
Obsolete by design  
The three year old boy  
His screaming mother upstairs  
The sounds of breaking  
The cries of pleading  
The door slamming shut as his father scarpers  
A hasty retreat from a terrifying ordeal  
Would he ever know what made his mother so mad?  
Where once there were four, there now were just three  
Like not enough cameras on an obsolete brick  
Families, phones, pieces of junk  
Not worth the bother  
Sold broken  
By empty promises and a plastic smile  
Just five more payments

In world devoid of permanence  
Of deliberate sabotage  
There is comfort in words

For they will never age  
They will never betray  
They will never go away  
The words I write belong to the future  
They will endure  
They are my creations  
They will never let me down  
They will bring hope to us all  
Of time better spent  
Of time not wasted  
On a temporary family  
Or a clump of plastic  
With not enough cameras

# **I Am**

A child

A small boy

Watching as my mother and father

Scream at one another

Yet again

She had lent the whole town her bike

So I recall

He tells her he is leaving

He must really love that bike

She says that if he doesn't

She will bite off his family jewels

And spit them into the garden.

We are but a humble people

Our jewels are made of hard plastic

I fear that they will hurt my mother's teeth

I play by myself

And hope the shouting stops

It usually does

Eventually

My sister punches me in the tummy

Nobody asks me what I want

I clutch my Action Man toy

It has a broken arm.

## Sandwich–Craftery

A proud sausage I am, a scrumptious blend  
Of pork, and selected elements of fowl  
Forged as I am from herb, spice, chemicals  
Within every bite of my swollen, tanned exterior  
A moist and tasty mouthful of flavour  
Perfection taken form in a plasticky sleeve  
That the mashed up pink goo is stuffed within  
Then scorched in a frying pan  
Am I not delicious?

A baguette she is, filled with buttered emptiness  
Plump and fluffy, imperfectly burnt along one edge  
Her hollowed out core the softest, most delicate bread  
The outer shell, a reaction to the heat of the world that forged her  
Hard and crispy, dusted with flour  
A sausage would suit her well, I'd bet  
A bet I'd willingly take

And go lovely we did.  
We had mustard and red  
Brown sauce and onions  
We had it all

At first it was wonderful.  
Each bite a banquet,  
Each taste an explosion of the senses.  
My sausagey goodness detracted from her doughy blandness  
The kind of blandness you don't notice at first  
But then it gets a bit much and



You end up throwing the rest away and  
Looking for something to drink.  
Her doughiness balanced my hot, firm meatitude.  
It was too much by itself, and  
It looked a bit funny,  
Especially for men,  
So people didn't like to eat it in public.

For a time I was a sausage no more.  
For a time, she was more than just bread.  
We were a sandwich. We were special.  
We were one, not separated by our differences  
But joined by them.  
Our unique synergies synergising synergistically  
Inextricably linked to form something more  
Than ever we had been before

There was even talk of cheese  
But commitment scared me  
It just wasn't time  
Sausages earn little, when much is required  
It wasn't like *she* was going to provide

And then the worst happened, as often it does.  
Life came to us, and the things which had been  
Would be no more.  
I didn't see it coming, what sausage could suspect?  
What sandwich could know its expiry date?  
My baguette moved on to bigger, better things.  
Bored with my herbs, tired of my spices,  
No longer excited by onions and sauce.

Now she craved Coronation chicken  
Fried green in red sauce  
And cheese—she really wanted cheese  
Put off by my reluctance  
What's the big deal with cheese anyway?  
It's broken milk, a magnet for microbes  
Mouldy by intent, with the scent of too many,  
And too unwashed socks

Her soft fluffy innards would be home to my sausage no more  
She craved the exotic, which I would never be.

So once again, a lonely sausage was I  
No baguette or crusty loaf  
Focaccia, brioche, bannock or sourdough  
Not even 'Basics' wholemeal sliced,  
Not even the end bits that nobody likes.  
Who would take a rejected sausage  
That cared for nothing more  
Than to be a sandwich once again?

I suggested an American cheese slice  
A modest meeting in the middle  
Perhaps a new sauce: Sriracha or Ranch  
But now my words fell on deaf bread.  
She was gone and had taken with her my heart,  
And trampled my sausage soul into the dirt.

Would I ever be a sandwich again?  
Would equilibrium return to my porky self?  
Would my baguette come to her senses,  
Before her innards be corrupted with a smorgasbord of

Brutalised chicken abominations  
Of dubious European origin?  
I had only hope now  
And emptiness  
And love  
And poetry

# I Am

Starting school

My heart filled with hope and promise

My satchel is tossed playfully over my shoulder

What am I to become in life?

Will I be an engineer?

Will I be a scientist?

What promises does my future hold?

I am polite

I am friendly

I wait with patience as my destiny begins to unfold.

I'm sure the other children will want to be my friends

I am wrong

I do not look like Garfield

Just because I have ginger hair

My teacher should not have said that

Now everyone says it

Bigger children hit harder than me

Some of them are younger

And smaller

And girls.

# Melon Collie

She never said, 'I'm leaving you.'

She never expressed how things were wrong.

She never said, 'I don't love you anymore.'

She never told me what I'd done.

It is inexplicable, completely bereft of sense.

I thought I understood love, but now I'm the fence!

It's like my mum's pet dog, that bites me when I'm there.

Her favourite food is melons.

At least, that's what my mum tells me.

Dogs aren't meant to eat melons, are they?

It's utter pure insanity, completely void of sense.

I thought I understood the world but now I'm the fence!

She told me we were never together anyway

We were only ever friends

But you can't retcon my feelings away

My emotions are as real as me.

Maybe more so.

It's utterly unpredictable, without a lick of sense.

I thought I understood myself but now I'm the fence!

Your protestations we have nothing

Fall on wilfully deaf ears

For I know the truth of our relationship

We were meant to be forever, not seven months, a week and two days.



It's absolutely ludicrous, should I take offence?

I thought we'd be the same forever, how could I be so dense!

Now I am alone once more.

What did I do wrong?

I can't see where I failed her

Or is it that she failed me?

It inexplicably bizarre, all logic has been fenced.

I never thought I'd be alone, a death of innocence!

I paid off her credit card and bought her takeaways.

I kissed her once upon her the cheek, while she was sleeping

I let her borrow my mum's jewellery

I hope I get it back—she hasn't said anything about it yet.

It's utterly inexcusable, I spared her no expense.

I thought my love would be returned and many tenfolds whence!

I wish I was a Collie, a smart but snappy dog

I wish I was content to simply bite

the loving hand of my owner's son

And eat bits of melons off of unwashed kitchen tiles.

It's utterly inexplicable, but in my fair defence.

The world is just a crazy place for want of consequence!

# **I Miss You**

I am sure that I loved her  
Maybe she loved me too  
I don't think she'd have left if she did  
She may have something wrong in her brain  
So much cider can't be good for you  
Your feelings were all that mattered  
Of course, nothing matters now  
Unless you love me

# I Am

At my workplace  
It is my first day  
I am not an engineer  
I am not a scientist  
I am selling phones in a shop  
Run by a bloated rat  
Who calls me Garfield  
He laughs  
I accept it with a sigh.

There is a beautiful girl here  
Eyes the colour of summer sky  
Spun silk hair  
Her smile is sunlight  
Her voice is music  
She asks me if my name is really Garfield  
I tell her what it really is  
She says I must have been beaten up at school  
A lot  
She is right  
I ask if she like Star Wars  
She stalks off, shaking her head  
She probably prefers Star Trek  
I see her kissing the bloated rat  
I never speak to her again.

A man buys a phone from me  
He forgets to pay  
I'm not a scientist  
I'm not an engineer  
And now  
I'm not a phone salesman either.

## Escalation

Who?

It happened?

He is born??

What is his name?

Why was I not consulted?

Am I so worthless as to be denied consent?

What?

What happened?

Was I forgotten?

Was she too busy?

How did this situation occur?

Is she really so unforgivably thoughtless?

Why?

Why me?

My own sister!

I have a nephew!

She forgot her own brother!

Her boyfriend is a soulless dick.

When?

What time?

Was he born?

Why should I care?

I don't like babies anyway.

They always throw up on me.

How?

Why me?

Why always me?

How could this happen?

I really hate that damn boyfriend.

I bet this conspiracy was by his design.

# I Am

A friend

I have friends

We go out at weekends

Some of them know my name

Others don't

They never asked

I am in a pub and it is someone else's round

I am drinking a pint of something

That tastes much cheaper

Than the drink I asked for

I don't much like pubs

They are noisy and loud

Nobody ever talks to me

I see a girl from another office

She is not conventionally attractive

She doesn't have a pretty face

Nor is her hair nice

Her body is the wrong shape

And is incorrectly sized

Perhaps she has a nice personality

She's just been dumped by her boyfriend

According to a friend

She's desperate, they add

She does remind me of my mother

I hope she doesn't have her appetite

For gorging on cheap jewellery



My head spins  
There is darkness  
There is nothing  
There is a little more darkness  
There is light  
There is a burning smell  
I wake up not knowing where I am  
I am inside a headache and my clothes smell  
Really bad  
This is not my home  
This is nobody's home  
Unless they are a car  
I wake up between a Ford and a dented BMW  
Some of my hair has been burnt off  
Why does this happen every time?  
Every single time!

# The Girl in Red

I'm standing in the hallway  
My girlfriend by my side  
We are not alone  
Sounds emerging from the bedroom  
Tiny hands fumbling with items on shelves  
A child!  
Four  
Five maybe  
Dark shortly cropped hair  
A bright red dress down to her knees  
Out she runs with a cheeky giggle  
Instinctively I cease her flight  
Picking her up in my arms  
Who is this? I ask my girlfriend  
She eyes me quizzically  
It's me, silly! she says with a casual shrug  
As though it were obvious  
I look down at the child  
But she has already started to fade  
  
Now she is gone  
And yet still I feel her arms around me  
Her warm head and hair on my shoulder  
But all too soon, that too faded  
  
I never saw the girl again  
I hope that she remembers me  
And knows that I'm sorry

# I Am

At my Sister's engagement party

Her fifth

There are cocktail sausages here

And cans of beer marked

*Not for individual sale*

Very little else.

Her fiancée is a thug who once went to prison

For beating up a homeless man

She says he's changed

He's sweet

He's older than her

And looks like he doesn't read poetry

I hear the word 'Garfield' muttered

I ask her if she's pregnant

How did you know? she giggles

Her identical twin daughters drag in her 1 year-old son

Grinning

He is always grinning

She smoked during pregnancy

And drank

A lot

He is chewing a sausage

There is a smell from him

Like someone ate too many rats

And then hell itself split open inside them

I don't want any more cocktail sausages

Perhaps ever

# The Empty Pork Casing

It is over

All honeymoons must eventually end

The lights go out

The chairs on the tables

My life will never be the same

That's not a good thing

Whatever my sister says

What the hell does she know anyway?

A maelstrom

A yawning crevice drawing me in

I cannot fight

I have no fight

This war is lost

I was not the winner.

I did everything in my power

I fought hard

Combatted every barrier

That dared to stand before me

I apologised, even when we argued

About the hair in the drain

A mousy brown

Not glorious orange

I made no fuss when she kissed

That other guy at the party

She didn't mean it

She was just drunk

She thought it was me

Even though he was taller  
Better looking  
And he was black.

She wasn't perfect, but  
She was perfect to me  
She'd forget to flush the toilet  
Before going out  
The whole flat smelling like a decomposing whale  
She'd talk over sci-fi movies  
She'd say ridiculous things  
Why do future women wear tight clothes?  
Star Trek is better than Star Wars  
Greedo shot first  
She would laugh when I got angry.

She would lie about silly things  
But she wasn't lying when she said  
'I love you'  
She only twice said these special words  
She didn't waste them  
She made them special  
It gave them power  
The first time, she was drunk  
Booze makes you honest  
So I know it counted  
The second, she was talking to a man at work  
I was on the phone  
So I know she meant that too  
I know the depths of her feeling  
For I have drowned in them.

But then she left me  
I didn't give up  
Even in the face of defeat  
I grew determined  
We were meant to be together  
The battle may be lost  
But the war continued  
I didn't falter when she said  
We were never really together anyway  
What we had was more than physical  
And less

So, I went further than any man  
I sent flowers  
Would she come back?  
Would the world be set right?  
Would sanity prevail?  
Would the war be won?  
Would there be justice?

No

Injustice reigned  
The injustice of a thousand losing lottery tickets  
The injustice of ten thousand spoons  
My heart sank to the endless  
Bottomless depths of my socks  
When I heard those words from her lurid pink lips  
'I am dying  
'I have twenty-four hours left to live!'  
'But...' I blustered, the words failing me  
What cruel fate delivered this deadly blow?

What illness could take her away so fast?  
Taking that last drag on a Marlboro Classic  
With nothing left to lose  
A rare disease  
Even Google failed to enlighten.

I see her often  
Working at the bakery by the crossroads  
Eating the doughnuts  
When her manager isn't looking  
Leaving early  
Buying armfuls of clothes from the charity shop  
Not paying for all of them  
It's a figment of my fancy  
A trick of mind and eye  
I know she's gone from this world  
Snatching my hopes and happiness with her  
For they rest in peace now  
Laying beside her motionless form  
That looks, to me, like it always did  
After two litres of Diamond White and a kebab  
Minus the snoring  
The glorious, snarling breath of her vibrancy  
Snuffed out now  
Alive only in my memories.



# The Buck Stops Here

Head lice of the rich and famous  
A presumptuous ghee of word spatter  
All too many swollen souls drowning in a gravy boat  
A place to start, a place to end  
A solitary vision of disenfranchised acidity  
A melting detachment of fortified deriditory.  
Encroaching vectors of pulsating tendrils  
After hours, the sun rising in the wrong direction

A man, a plan, a canal, in Bolton  
Madam, in Edan, I'm Alpha  
There are two chickens in the garden  
Mother says to take care of your teeth  
The guest at the next table often eats oysters  
The words matter, but not these words  
These are the wrong words  
But hang on a second  
What's that coming round the corner?

Participation trophies for failing to show  
A train on a river with nowhere to go  
A trailblazing liver with cancerous crosshairs  
Cashing for slashing, hither and hail  
A cash register bleeps when there's nobody there  
A little boy weeps and there's no-one to care  
Or share, a pair of icicle snares  
On the stairs, a fraternity of cricket cheeps cheapen  
Slacken the slacks of the sister's half-fridge

Where do you go when there's nothing outside?  
What do you see when you darken your mind?  
Do you hedge your bets when the outcome is known?  
Is 2020 hindsight as bad as it sounds?  
For in this life, all things that are can be  
And all things that be can are  
Think of it as driving a car  
In the bath  
Where all things go to die

A mediocre balldrop of majestic grasp  
A glass hammer twists in a monkey's arse  
There's always room for just one more  
But not for you  
You're not welcome here  
Not any more  
There is no place left for you now.

# Chinese Language Drills

*He has a girlfriend*

他有女朋友

*His girlfriend is pretty*

他的女朋友很漂亮

*Her boyfriend is tall*

她的男朋友很高

*You have a boyfriend*

你有男朋友

*I don't have a girlfriend*

我沒有女朋友

*My older sister has a boyfriend*

我的姐姐有男朋友

*My older sister's boyfriend is a dick*

我的姐姐的男朋友是混蛋

*His girlfriend's older brother loves dogs*

他的女朋友的哥哥愛狗

*Your boyfriend loves cats*

你的男朋友愛貓

*I don't have a girlfriend*

我沒有女朋友

*My older sister's boyfriend's house has no bathroom*

我的姐姐的男朋友的家沒有洗手間

*My older sister's boyfriend is a dick*

我的姐姐的男朋友是混蛋

*Her boyfriend drinks vodka in the morning*

她的男朋友早上喝伏特加

*Your boyfriend is a doctor*  
你的男朋友是醫生

*I don't have a girlfriend*  
我沒有女朋友

*His girlfriend's house is next to the school*  
他的女朋友的家在學校旁邊

*Her boyfriend's house is near the restaurant*  
她的男朋友的家在飯館附近

*My older sister's boyfriend's house is above a pub*  
我的姐姐的男朋友的家在酒吧上方

*Your boyfriend's house is expensive*  
你的男朋友的家很貴

*I don't have a house*  
我沒有家

*My older sister's boyfriend is a dick*  
我的姐姐的男朋友是混蛋

*I don't have a girlfriend*  
我沒有女朋友

*I don't have a car*  
我沒有車

*I don't have a house*  
我沒有家

*I have nothing*  
我一無所有

*I am nothing*  
我什麼都不是

# Emptiness

# **I Am**

Lost

My world has collapsed

I am broken

I lost my everything

And found nothing in return

She is gone now

Gone the way of my mother's collie

We always told her dogs don't eat melon

She didn't listen

She never listened

I am cracked

My soul is damaged

I am dented

My heart is sunk

But it is not too late

I will rise from the ashes of all the things I have been

Somehow

# Cherry Shortcake

I sit at the café  
The one near the station  
With tables outside  
It is a perfect day for it  
I'm sat inside  
Near the window  
Near *our* window  
I don't look at the menu  
I don't need to  
The decision is made  
I flag down a waitress  
On my second try  
I order Cherry Shortcake  
Fresh, moist, big, pink, fake cherries  
Nuts  
Whipped Cream  
Between two gigantic sponge halves  
Disgusting  
You can't eat it without making a mess  
I order out of habit  
A habit too difficult to break  
For it was never I that liked it  
  
But sometimes, I forget.  
  
I still see her face  
A fleeting sideways glimpse in a crowd  
Across a busy street



A shadow in a shop window  
Never *our* window  
For one transient moment  
She looks happy  
She looks beautiful  
Her hair accentuates her eyes  
Her pink lips smile sweetly  
Just one short-lived second  
My Cherry Shortcake  
My eternal angel  
And then, I remember.

# The Ice-Cream of Loneliness

I am the new flavour, the very latest thing  
I am unpacked and loaded into the freezer  
To many, it is a place of frozen horror  
Because of all the dead animals, and cold—probably  
But to me, the bitter chill is home

This, my new domain, this supermarket shelf  
I wait to be chosen from the wealth of flavours  
There is chocolate, and strawberry, and coconut,  
Vanilla, rum-and-raisin, blueberry,  
One with nuts—which is basically just chocolate again.

I am passionfruit, filled with flavour and soul  
And I must await my buyer, alone in this place  
This place of cold and loneliness,  
Just me and all the other kinds of ice-cream  
I am frozen. I am still. I can only wait.

But now I have a role. I am passionfruit ice-cream  
Perhaps I'm not perfect  
Perhaps I'm not the popular choice  
Perhaps I'm not a good idea for ice-cream—not really  
But I exist, and we're all stuck with that now

And while I wait for my customer  
From the corner of my eye, I see her.  
A small tub of tutti-fruity  
I think she sees me too  
And I think she knows

Her flavours are a mixture of toot and fruit  
That's not for everyone  
I'm passion fruit, and way too much for some  
But together we might be something more  
Together we might be wonderful.

Can she sense my passion, hidden deep inside  
Secure within a peel back safety layer?  
Does she crave to add her toot to my fruity booty?  
For together we might be both become fruitier and tootier?  
The connection now is made.

What will happen, I ask myself  
Will I introduce her to my taste and flavour?  
Will she invite me inside her single-serving tub?  
Who knows what the future might bring  
For now, I believe I might actually have one

The doors to the freezer open and light pours in from without  
Will we be purchased together?  
We look at one another and our eyes meet.  
The guy is really, really fat, so there's at least a chance  
I am, finally, optimistic.

## Side Swipe

We sit across a table, our lunch has now arrived  
My stomach sits there rumbling, because it's food-deprived  
I ordered a juicy burger, it sits there plump and hot  
She looks at me judgementally, because salad is all she got

'Are you gonna eat all that?' she says shaking her head  
I nod back and smile, and squirt some sauce that's red  
'I think we should see other people!' she says, no hint of bluff  
I wish she'd told me this before I paid for all this stuff.

I look at her with sadness on my hurt and angry face.  
'We have to do this here?' I ask. 'Why not at my place?'  
'Your place?' she scoffs, a laugh that is, not food shoved in her hole.  
It's then she says some nasty things that hurt my achy soul

'Your Tinder picture's different,' she then begins to blurt  
'You look a little like a dog, whose face is badly hurt.'  
'The sort you see, shaved and stitched, where a vet has worked on it.'  
I listen on in silence while I eat another bit.

'But,' I say in protest, 'I have a poet's soul.'  
She chides me, 'That means nothing! Your face looks like a troll.'  
I feel the tears inside me, ramping up to swell.  
I have to say this date so far, is not going very well.

'I'm sorry, I just don't see us going on another date.'  
She chews a little salad, adding, 'You could be my mate!'  
I know that she just wants me to pay for all her food  
And taxi her around the town, whenever she's in the mood.

I choose to make my protest, a bold heartfelt appeal.  
‘But what about my feelings? These things to me are real!’  
She crunches on her salad, chewing it like a cow.  
She really is quite dreadful, a hurtful vicious sow.  
‘I’m sorry,’ she says redundantly. ‘You’re simply not my type.’  
I decide it’s time for me to tear me off a stripe!  
‘I see,’ says I, and see I do. ‘Is this because I’m fat?’  
She looks at me and says, ‘It is, but it’s not only that.’

I take a bite of burger, and chew it to myself.  
I’m tired of always being the one that gets left on the shelf.  
I’m smart and I am loving, a really lovely guy  
I give my cash to charity, so I don’t understand why.

‘You’re just like my bloody ex,’ I blurt out in my pain.  
I’m tired of being hurt and hurt and hurt all over again.  
How dare she just reject me, no knowledge what’s inside  
I’m not one of those other guys, just looking for a ride.

‘I like her already,’ she says with a sarcastic look.  
I’m a man of this era, I wash and I cook.  
How dare she go and treat me like I’m just not good enough.  
My house is full to brimming of really interesting stuff.  
(Well—it’s really a flat.)

‘She just doesn’t get me,’ is all that I can think.  
I try to pull myself back up, return me from the brink.  
I’m better than she’ll ever be, this shallow, hollow thing  
Her rejection is little more to me than just a sting.

The thing is, she's a salad and never will be more.

She's terrible, horrible, a quite unpleasant bore.

I'm a burger, tasty, everything that's nice

I'm delicious pasta, and she's just boiled rice.

She could never understand why I'd be worth a try

I'm one of the special ones, if I had wings I'd fly.

I choose to give her one more chance to make some small amends.

I ask her, 'Do you have any hot, single friends?'

# What Makes a Pizza

Bread

Tomato

Basil

Oregano

Garlic

Pepper

Onion

Pepper

Pepperoni

Bacon

Mushroom

Cheese

...

But what makes a poet?



## What I Am Not

A hole that draws in the emptiness around.  
When others suck, I am the one that blows  
Colours and visions and vibrant words  
I purse my lips and out it all spurts.

What I am not

An abuser, a user, a loser, an excuser  
I keep it real, and straight, and true  
And sharp as a razor, blunt as a lie  
I take no pleasure in pain.

What I am not

Rich, wealthy, an owner of stuff  
I seek no reward for the beauty of my words  
They are a gift to the universe, they exist without cost  
Or price, or value or worth.

What I am not

Happy—for there is expression in pain.  
I might not be what people want when they arrange a barbecue for  
Their neighbours, and invite the ones on the other side, even though  
They have two screaming kids, and bad taste in music.  
I might not have a girlfriend, or be slim, or attractive,  
I care not, for I bought my own barbecue.

What I am not

I have no trappings of traditional success.

A nice car, or a house whose toilet never gets blocked

A big TV, or a fridge with a screen on the door.

But I do have a Ford Escort: it's considered a classic now.

What I am not

Anything other than a poet.

A wordsmith

A creator of prose

An expresser

A professor

A literary master to the tip of my toes

Gifted

Twisted

Unique

Fresh

A well of expression, encapsulated in flesh.

## They Found a Way

The mummy cat watched as her kittens cried hungrily for a rat.  
The baby rats cried for whatever it is that baby rats eat.  
If the rats aren't well fed, the kittens won't be either.  
How will the mummy rat find enough to fill her litter's weird bellies,  
So they in turn can fill the bellies  
Of the mummy cat's disgusting family?

She will find a way.

The handsome young man sat alone in his room.  
He was alone and had been alone too long.  
'I am alone,' he said to himself in the darkness and gloom,  
Lit only by the light from his screen, from the World of Warcraft.  
Why women didn't like him was a mystery.  
He was talented, an old soul filled with wisdom,  
A man who knew how to cook several delicious dishes,  
And several more that would serve their purpose satisfactorily  
If there was nothing else to eat.  
He wouldn't be alone forever. He knew.

He would find a way.

The protester stood with the crowd,  
Saying the same thing as everyone else,  
Only louder.  
Rain splashed heavily from the heavens,  
Wet and wetting together in turn.  
To stand with his cardboard sign, letters forged  
In non-permanent marker, now streaking the soggy surface,

Logic and reason had no place here.  
He had stepped back from the facts and the evidence  
And the proof, he had learned to speak from the heart.  
Feelings now were all he had,  
And they had to run deep and hard  
Big and angry  
Enough to push out everything else.  
But how could he do this?

He was finding a way.

The farmer brought in the cows,  
Plump and juicy and full of flavour,  
But not of milk. Not anymore.  
This was the only choice.  
But it was a hard choice because he'd had these cows  
For a long time  
He had come to like them.  
Some of them he'd given names to.  
He regretted that now.  
He clutched the cruel knife in his shaking hand.  
The cow looked at him with pleading eyes.  
'Please don't jab that in my throat, so we may have burgers  
'And Bolognese, and steaks, and beef-wellingtons.  
'Give tofu a try,' they seemed to say  
He ran his hand over the cow's head and said,  
'Nobody likes tofu. Sorry, old girl. This has to happen.'  
He closed his eyes.

He found a way

The feminist sat in an interview with three old men  
Judging her. How dare they?  
Who gave them this right?  
‘Why do you think you’d be a good fit here?’  
She wants to scream, their questions are oppressing her.  
They’re in the way of what she wants, and they shouldn’t be,  
She knows deep down in her very core.  
‘Why wouldn’t I be?’ she says simply, trumping them all.  
Experience means nothing, grades and scores even less.  
What she lacks in those things,  
She makes up for in her belief in herself.  
She wants this.

She is finding a way.

The poet looked at the world.  
It is one of pain and injustice.  
It is one where a filthy rat must raise its family so the fluffy kittens  
don’t starve.  
It is one where feminists don’t have to be farmers  
Who kill their own cows.  
It is a world where lonely men can protest in the rain  
In the hope of meeting the right woman.  
The poet wants to write about this,  
To let his words change the world.  
He has found his way.

# The World About Turns

*by Al Warcock*

I was

A child

Parents argue, vicious hate

Violent screams, savage taunts

She demands that He vacate

No-one asks Me what I want

A schoolboy

Wide-eyed wonder, curious glee

Children needle, call me fat

Cruel new nickname, can't agree

Equates me to a cartoon cat

A salesman

First day at a dead end job

Boss a slimy piece of shit

Girl who made my numb heart throb

Nothing ever came of it

A coworker

Someone buys us all a round

Tastes to me a little rough

Then I wake on cold hard ground

With pieces of my hair burnt off

A brother  
Sister's party, now engaged  
Rude fiancé, gives me pause  
Met my nephew, one year aged  
Had to ask Her who he was

Broken  
All is lost with nothing found  
Emotional kalaidoscope  
Soul demented, loss profound  
Yet I know I will find hope

I am

No longer the child  
Abandoned by dad  
Ignored by mum  
Scared of the dark  
Alone in the light  
Of the sun

No longer the schoolboy  
Picked on  
Friendless  
Life choices to reassess

No longer the salesman  
Insulted by the boss  
And the customers  
And Her  
Sacked just three weeks in  
Their loss

No longer the coworker  
Mickey Finn warfare  
Flaming chunks of missing hair

No longer the student  
Doing all the writing  
In group assignments  
Because I liked the girl from the front row  
My pretty Calliope  
Who allegedly slept with the Physics professor  
And got herself a B

No longer a fat, pathetic loser  
Even when I lost 'some' weight  
Most of it came back again  
And then a little more on top  
From all the cheap junk food I ate

No longer a target for my sister's contempt  
A punching bag for her husband's brawn  
A puke bucket for her rancid spawn

No longer Broken

I am no longer defined by my past.

No longer limited by my failure.

No longer the embodiment of all the things I'm not.

I am  
And will forever be  
THE POET



## Afterword

I have always viewed poetry with the same degree of contempt I would level at an unflushed toilet. Modern poetry has strayed from what I feel it was always meant to have been. It works best as an eloquent outpouring of words that express both ideas and emotion, tying them together through symbolism and metaphor.

Now, it's rather more like that very same unflushed toilet.

But, while the art and craft of writing withers and decays, hope begins to flourish in the form of Al Warcock.

When Seth first handed me the hand-written pages of 'The Poet's' work, I assumed at first that we had run out of toilet paper. He then explained that it was poetry, and the same thought occurred, only more so.

I avoided reading it for the longest time, always finding something else to be occupied by. But, eventually the excuses dried up and I had no choice but to give it a try.

As the words rolled off the page, I felt like my soul, the very essence of my being was floating into the prose. I was one with the writing in a way I had never experienced before.

By the end of the second page, I knew we hadn't just found something special, we had found something that could make tremble the very foundations of literature forever.

Al Warcock is simply, without a shadow of a doubt, the finest example of what modern poetry is all about. He stands among the

host of other poetic creatives, shoulder to shoulder among his peers  
and shines like a beacon of hope from within.

If all poetry was like this, I would read it with a passion.

If all writing was like his, I would hang up my laptop and stop trying.

If all prose evoked such resonance, we would see an immediate end  
to war and suffering.

This book could change the world.

But, it probably won't.

A.P. 'Jack' Atkinson

*If you enjoyed this collection of poetic works, please tell your friends on social media using as many hyperbolic adjectives as you can. You too can help spread the unparalleled brilliance of Mr Warcock to all corners of the all too circular globe! Help the world about turn!*

*If you didn't enjoy it, we recommend you read it again to see where you went wrong. A lot of people say it improves on subsequent readings, as it's not always possible for the human vessel to ingest the full spectrum of depth that permeates each and every stanza of his creative acumen in one sitting. Like medicine for the mind, a single dosage may work fine for some people, but a regular course of treatment is better suited to others.*