

Classic Poetry Series

Margie Cronin
- poems -

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Margie Cronin(1963 -)

Margie Cronin, who writes under the name MTC Cronin, was born in Merriwa, New South Wales, in 1963, and grew up at Caloundra, on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Following school she went on to the University of Queensland, studying Arts/Law, with a double major in political science. She has also studied at the University of New South Wales, the University of Technology, Sydney, and the University of Sydney. Through most of the 1990s she worked in the field of law, but during this time she also began to establish herself as a poet. More recently, she taught creative writing at the University of Technology, Sydney, and worked on a doctoral thesis exploring the intersections of law and literature. She currently lives on an organic farm in Maleny, Queensland, with her partner and three children.

Cronin began publishing her poetry in the early 1990s, and her work has since appeared in a wide range of Australian and international poetry magazines and literary journals. She published her first collection, *Zoetrope: We See Us Moving*, in 1995, and has gone on to publish a dozen further collections, in Australia, the UK and the USA. A prolific poet, she has worked within lyric traditions as well as in the prose poem, and in more innovative forms such as that of her long poem *More or Less Than 1-100*, which won the Victorian Premier's C. J. Dennis Prize for Poetry (2005) and the South Australian Festival Award for Innovation in Writing (2006). She has also published a volume of critical essays based on her doctoral work, *Squeezing Desire Through a Sieve: Micro Essays on Judgement and Justice* (2009).

Anna And The Green Jug

Any girl could seal his poems
with her lips; he would call a poem about her 'Anna
and the Green Jug' -
it's all in the motion, the flux:
her skin passed before him fluty-toned, coming out
and calling inertia to follow -
one and long,
water fell into her throat like a specially skilled diver
while nervously he poured
and swallowed the lyric.

Margie Cronin

Azuzena ('Purity')

August
and the white lilies are born
with me.
By day I am carving men in stone;
of a night I bake pastry
into shells
where the fish might swim
and settle their bones
like new fossils.
I have notoriety.
For years
they have been calling my breasts
gold
and my body pregnant.
Orants!
I never have been on my knees
and capture the sun
like dew
with my hands wrapped about
my own creation
and my face like clustering
glass.
There is no blood here I say
to the prayerful, but all the same
a bloodless war.

Margie Cronin

Blue Flower (Second Version)

for Georg Trakl

Autumn can last a lifetime.
There can never be enough blue and black.
Wandering has a passion of its own.
A suffering without direction.
There is only one month.
There is only one large death.
The country opens onto its unploughed fields.
A short lyric is one who passes.
Made of earth and coarse poetry.
No longer ears and eyes.
No longer indignance and inclination.
What sort of desire is unreasonable?
What sort of living?
Landscapes occur as if they were limits.
Repentance seeps from the body in breath.
Winds have speech with shadows.
Paths break into the infinity along their sides.
Autumn again after the last Autumn. Beyond, a man's back.
He is always walking away.
He turns many times to glimpse his executions.
Empty.
The world is empty of him.
Only time is filled to the brim with his unending selves.
Everywhere they vanish like fallen snow.

Margie Cronin

Carnation Of Spain

for Federico Garcia Lorca & Richard Mohan

Because of his deafness
he misses the fighting of the cats
(on the stairs). What else
does he miss? All
the other flesh-colours
for this one flesh colour,
the excellence of its hunting
blood, perfect condition,
extreme, exquisite
pink; on the thirty-first day,
bodies kept only the allowable
thirty days; things not written,
fleeing (in to and out of
the throat) the vanity of the limited
edition fountain pen, the
cenotaph of paper? I turn to his brown
face, his ordinary grin. I hadn't
been close enough to him to know
he had chipped a tooth. It
upset me more than it should.
Who was he? It
wasn't until fear registered
in their faces that he recognized
them. Those people are recognized
by their fear.

Margie Cronin

Fool, Imbecile, Thinkhole!

People can think about you even when they can't see you.
Remember this the next time your cowardice comes
To wind you down.

Upholstery doesn't make you a better person
And you're not at fault because of a soft bloody wart
On a horse.

All nudes are big because our clothes take us away
From the world.

The clothes might just be our bodies stupidly put.
We are like containers for jellyfish and damaging stones.
These thoughts are like all the inhabitants of a big country
Illegally living in a tiny town.

The immigration official calls and calls.
We get scarer and scarer as time runs out.
This is the same time that will reveal both foolishness
And death.

There is a state of enmity that exists forever
Between fear and relief.

Never look to a method if a purpose is already
Jumping up and down with a torchlight
In the toolshed.

Silliness cannot be measured by the use of adjectives
To describe such a state.

Like an emerald
Neither sunshine, shade, nor artificial light has any effect
On its appearance.

You need to be brave despite your guts.

Like a cow with an aneurysm
Or someone the same as an uncle
Each of us is called to his or her own life.

What calls you is the sound of a thought trickling down
Through being.

You're an imbecile if you think that's invented because we
Disappear.

People can think about you even when they can't see you.
Remember this the next time you fall down a very big
Hole.

Garden Flowers (Las Flores Del Jardin)

for Peter Boyle

In Spain, the Bougainvillea entered
by smell and sight and filled his body
with attention and a sickness for home;
carried him to a Sydney garden
where in the night behind his eyes
a yellow flower glowed.

Just to the left of it had been
the cover of an apricot tree -
cut by his wife to open the yard
to the invisible face of the sky.

While along the fence and in the cracks
where the concrete denied its strength,
was the everywhere pink
of a beautiful weed

that left him cradled and careless
with names. And he a poet!

What are they, the wild bright yellows?
The reds and the blues and the purples
jostling for precision and ancestry.

His is in this latest book -
and what a remarkable life!

Working on nothing right now
but finished a few short things
a few weeks back - waiting
for something to germinate...

Margie Cronin

God's Silence

for Jack Gilbert

The fog in these mountains
is a reminder
of how far up our feet are
when they are on the ground.
As the baby has aged
she has taken up wrestling
with my breast.
As if the milk had bones.
The gorge is like owning something
frightening, merging with the self
what won't sustain life.
The stars' odour.
The man who felt so keenly
that all around him hearts broke
like the tears of a young girl
for an animal.
Occasionally you hear the gunshot
and yellow-headed birds
with the fan of their wings
spin fear into beauty.
The children don't remember the city.
Its expensive horizon.
Here, they listen to a history
of sing-song in the rain.
Here, where God never says anything.

Margie Cronin

Indications

Everyone accepts.

~*~

Someone tells a story comparable
to any that's happened.

~*~

A language that survives
not being understood.

~*~

In poetry, dashes that follow a full-stop. -

~*~

Any euphemism.

~*~

Signs of something definite. (A howl, a wail,
mischief or skill.)

~*~

Things like motmot, fylfot, ambo and orlop.

~*~

Ergo, the beauty
of an upside-down ear.

~*~

Bright shining purpose with no fear
of inevitable exposure.

~*~

Quoting from reality.

~*~

Building sentences solely from magnetic phrases.

~*~

Speaking to the world in complete secrecy.

~*~

Saying only and nothing
without having to practise
some sort of unintentional
sorcery.

~*~

Then spontaneity.

~*~

An empty knowing.

~*~

Remembering more
than what could not be forgotten.

~*~

The acquisition that comes from no-one.

~*~

Born simultaneous.

~*~

Stranded in what happens.

Margie Cronin

Lindsay The Persimmon

He climbed a persimmon tree
And became a persimmon
For four and half hours
And when they came
He had to question them
If they were human
Because their names
Were in their pockets.
As a persimmon Lindsay
Was very successful
If out of season
And heavy for the branch:
When nameless they came
To lay the tree down
He was as sweet
And without fear as a fruit.
Becoming a persimmon
Is good for a man
And becoming a man again
Is like something
You must admit.
The persimmon in its skin
Unlike a man knows
Exactly what destiny
Is doing today.

Margie Cronin

Poster Flower

for Octavio Paz

Little plant without electricity, my
heart is full of heat and dust and
what is left. Everywhere
I see what I love but all is restricted
to risk. I don't know if you are drawn,
captured or computer-generated. You
are like the mystery in the mirror
under the steam; the flower
in the flower; the gaze to where
I take myself... Your time is different
to the living and dying. To those
eternally born with the visceral smile
of mauve-petal gums. To those
that toss their heads like first shadows
to the ground after showing their faces
to the homeless moon. You find
your place with the arbitrary hands
that paste you to so many walls and
windows. With the advertisements,
missing persons posters, rock
bands and rooms vacant. Looking
at you I wonder if there is a world
of thought to support me. Who makes
a flower like this, stolen
by so many eyes?

Margie Cronin

Seven Mysterious Songs I: Belonging

for P.B.

'I am looking for sunlight'

I saw your world begin
A night of dawns
Time kept coming round to that
Our reception of the light
The silence of the sun
As it crept spectacularly
Towards us

When I saw how it revealed you
My own paths curved
To find the circle
They had once been

Words here are simply sighs
The hums and satisfactions of animals
Click in the back of my throat
That might be the cricket or cicada
In Summer ventriloquy
Or the snake becoming new
Over the friendly rock

It has become simple for me
To think of these things now
That the idea of the fragment
Has given its secrets
To the whole

The leaves which feared separation
Fell
And the water telling and retelling
Itself passes by the place of this event
Only to pass again
The sky with that big voice saved
For the moments its own story is known

Whispers
The earth:

Come on little bird
The trees are holding you up
Come possum
With your hearty feet leaving prints
On the porcelain roofs of dreams
Come grains
And mountains, lakes, orchards
Leave your importance
And follow these clouds
To where they have no meaning

Turtle
Are you coming
With your knowledge of origins and regret?
Children, bring the hearts
Of forests
And the abilities of the sand

We'll walk over that hill
Where the path curves out of sight
Do not rush
It is not the future ahead of us
But a slow becoming
Time weaves itself
Into the very swing of your arms
That space left
Where you lift your foot

Margie Cronin

Seven Mysterious Songs II: Loneliness

Where am I going with this pain
Marvellous for a lot of things
– for climbing walls
– and crawling scalps
– for leaving the moment
out of pure desperation
But with my mind packed up,
where do I go?

to a church?
No the church is full of glassblowers
this pain is not fragile enough
for their pursed lips to blow

to a butcher?
No there they have red hands
this pain is too raw and lonely
for their sharp blades to cleave

to the town hall?
No the town hall echoes with excuses
this pain is too forgetful of its host
for apologies

So I took it to a bridge
And half way out –
with the prospect of somewhere to go –
that crazy pain jumped!
And I went in after it
believing that even this death
should not go
unaccompanied

Margie Cronin

Seven Mysterious Songs Iii: Sleep

Half the Shadowed World

Sleep, like peaches
fallen to the ground
(hand pressed to the

cheek), boot-bruised
side cannot feel.
Juice in the earth.

Shadow of a Unicorn

This horse on its knees
in the field
Pretending to be a unicorn
As horses play and imagine
Another day
A night
Black trees . . .

The horse on its feet
has grown a horn and saddle
Imagines the voice
Of a rider:
Those far hills
Are simply shadows
Of these you stand on . . .

The Doorweb

Listen at the keyhole of light.
The doorweb.
Shimmering across.
Shimmering like a cocked horse.
Ready to fire.

Hot hooves are on my head tonight.
The room's flat and dark as ears.
On the roof the cumquat tree.
Offering sweet peel to the moon.

My bed.
Is filled up with time.

Margie Cronin

Seven Mysterious Songs Iv: Contraposition

sun & rain

'What is there here but weather, what spirit
Have I except it comes from the sun?'

I have grown my wisdom
on summer days

and watered it with both rain
and melting snow

I have helped it
up ladders

and sat with it
still upon a tired step

I have tasted it like a bite
of fruit and unlike fruit

savoured that same bite
over and over

I have moved it
within my arms

and of nights cried for it
to leave me sleeping

and then dreamed it
to take a different form

something now unknown
and not like any shape

I have whispered or word
I ran my hands about

I was shocked but don't know why
I should have been

when I looked in a mirror
painted over

and I let my wisdom die
with the relaxing cells

that slow upon my body
and quickly fall aside

I use it to discard myself well
in the world

and when the world
is not mine

I will have no need
of the glorious shelter it will erect

in the place where that which
has sheltered me now stands

in the end I will sit down
without it

and know nothing
of the weather

sun & rain 2

Are sun and rain narratives
that focus on collective experience
or does this warmth
on the bridge of my nose,
this droplet hanging

from the hair of my brow,
weave itself from a story
that needs no universe?

I honestly don't want
to muck around with the weather.
It seems to have
such a nice indifference.
Like the storm that just came in
and destroyed all our hopes
after such a beautiful Summer.
Remember our sincerity.

Margie Cronin

Seven Mysterious Songs V: Fortuity (Sheel Of Clouds)

1. one excuse

One excuse was to say
I forgot the time
(or you simply ran out
of time)

Time, for something so
relative;
(lying on the beach):
works remarkably well
(we always used it
instead of humour)

There was always plenty
of it
to fight in
And none left
to quickly make love in
the morning (before work)

(We'll make up for it
later)
But there was a storm
(and you had to spend
the night)
in another town
looking over the sun

But rain rains down
inside my ear
With that noise
inside of shells
(It never changes)
and I can't hear
(that you are waiting)

But I don't need

any evidence to know
that time
is culpable

2. two ways of arriving at surrealism

How many dreams
present the life of the protagonist?
the girl with only one heart?
someone on the run?

He was standing on the corner
miming a scene of torture
when he heard the first sound
(more like somethin' bashed into somethin'
than somethin' bashed loose)
and his leg fell into the gutter
He had his foot in the stream
The sun, just pulling up its toes
under that cloud
At that moment he knew
just what that leg was worth
(he had no idea, exactly,
what a leg was worth)

The girl was walking,
so slow down the beach
Crying. Her tears
delivered up to her
by clouds
with tiny hands of salt
She's got straight hair
and a new nose
(they bashed it with a little hammer
till it came loose)
It was worth a lot to her –
she even gave up
being the Queen of Egypt

And it was only by accident:
the car with a scalpel;
the surgeon losing control;
inside a shell, the sky –

3. three times around the moon

And it's just a game
Put it up to your ear

Out driving
the shadows rush to meet us
Our mistakes

He asked
Can we still be in love
when dirt is falling
from the sun
With the moon
rolling its knuckles
over my back

And she was slow
like a snail
to answer
Go another three
times round
the sky
It's safe –
we live inside

Margie Cronin

Seven Mysterious Songs Vi: Authorship

Mountains, valleys, rivers merge
The land hides itself
in landscape
The day's form buried in my eye
like a grandmother in her coffin

The havoc of life is closed to the look
The shadow has taken to one eye
Ancient nights are never as old
as the days, simply light
all seen, unsaveable

The bitterness of her face
Madarosis and skin submerged
in sweet lake of destruction
deeper than this time
I note with now

The book that is better
tells of your embrace
The rockweed and the small fish
being careful in the nooks
of tossed waters

Death is not sudden
like stumbling into this love
but takes every beat of the heart
Joy married over and over
to the cough, the wheeze, the biographer

Margie Cronin

Seven Mysterious Songs Vi: Conduit

Water, water song
my body flows with
thoughts and blood

Remember the sickness
when my body would
allow not even water

I would die in a place
with no rustles
no movement

A bird would come
without moving
its wings

Perhaps in the
transubstantiation
of fire

There would be so much
life in it
Like a stream it could tell me

where it had been
What other kinds
of love it had known

Margie Cronin

Star Jasmine

Some smells are like a question
to which you know there is no answer.
The brilliant burning oil of the star jasmine
caught like a miniature swimmer
in the blue glass bowl of the sky today
is asking all the other flowers why
they have dropped their petals
in my poems. We will settle with the book,
I say, and see if these words can shake
themselves loose as musical notes; can pattern
themselves as the mathematics of love.
But the star jasmine will not sit,
joins the nervous creeper on the fence's
doodle-edge and freezes the drunk cat
with its stark white scent.
It is the most jealous of all the blooms
I have captured in language and delights
in giving frights to the little white ghosts
of the savoury and pulling the lamb's ears
until all their rosy purple flowers fall
into the margins of my page.
Should I untype it? Take its vanity
by the delicate line and shake it?
Alas, these questions smell sui generis.
My nose is, quite simply, in love.

Margie Cronin

The Mistake

Irresistibly changing.

I was silly in my mind. A mistake. At first being a child and then trying to be something else. I really should have kept the red blocks and the two plastic funnels that fitted so perfectly over my forearms and hands. Later, when I could no longer run in circles, I even gave up screaming.

The world, of course, is never bothered with silence.

Margie Cronin

The Specifics Of Love

for R.M.

I love shaking the bones in your arm
the humerus, radius and ulna.

Some people have such bones –
men, like you, across the top of the back!

I love you at the train station
so young . . .

The song of that bird
executed only in the morning and evening.

I love the way
you just do it!

Perfect commas, two profiles, eyelashes
moles and turtles in your smile.

I love the movement between our reality
and imagination – that gold step

then my head empties into the whirl of the day
all brain stem!

I love your judgement: chaise-longue
in that spacious room of possibility

filled with sun and poetry and music
and the pain you will not deny.

I love the little red hat
that makes you look like someone else

and the early fruit you pick for me
when I am overcome by ripeness.

I love fucking you
most of all:

there is no corresponding analysis
and we become very old and not yet born . . .

I love wrapping the bones of my legs around you
femur, tibia and fibula –

only with you
can I feel my heart.

I love its weightiness
that I have learned

through the long, slow practise
of you.

Margie Cronin

Waterlily

Real
walking on water scenes!
Nine monsters are crawling up out
of the pond.
All but all are evil.
Each loves us.
White, yellow, rare -
pain is in flesh like moisture
gathering for an unknown
flood.
Whip and laughter, the woman's noise
and song; lightning weeps
into thunder
and the scream is long.
O this is too hungry, too much
thirst without the tongue
working and too many breaks
in the skin through which we see
and hear and feel
the walls of a distorted
room.
Float by me torpid boat
for the human monsters are rising
from the womb.
Suffering, growing...

Margie Cronin

Wet Clover

for Pablo Neruda

The baby's hands on my leg are like
wet clover. Like Neruda, I want to lay
my head on it, a pillow, a new earth
that sees only stars along its wobbly path
to sleep. That sleep is like my shadow who,
knowing I am lost, has come to find me
and explain - in riddles to be solved
tomorrow - how I came to lose my way
in the business and brightness of the day.
I shake a bit when first it touches my hand,
the skin instantly paralysed and dark,
but release my nerves to the cool rest
of its head when the dimensionless body
embraces me. Turning my eyes to the utter
blackness of an inner sky, I see small
white flowers which explode sonorously
into the striped vibration of a field of
bees. The dew on my face is like tears,
but cool ones, tears that had their birth
in a waterfall and have grown smaller and
smaller until they have no more memory
of sorrow. In these dreams, suddenly, I
remember the baby's hands and wipe them
with a towelling cloth. Like Neruda,
every action becomes a poem.

Margie Cronin

Wild Rose

for Pablo Neruda

Blood too
travels with the adventurous thorn
and this life began in randomness -
colour born
on a day when every colour
was practising white.
This is the way to understand
how the world was here
before you
and there are variations
on this discovery -
only one person lives an age
that has never been lived by another
you do not need to know you are learning
to learn
and you cannot cut
mirrored flesh. Beginning
always encompasses mastery
and this rose too
is attracted by the names of life.
Its appointment is with the birth
of significance
and the stems of its plant hide
in something old that mimics death
our debt to time.

Margie Cronin