

Poetry Series

Ron Price
- poems -

Publication Date:
2007

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Ron Price(23/07/1944)

EMPLOYMENT-SOCIAL-ROLE POSITIONS: 1943-2013

2009-2013-retired and on an old-age pension

1999-2009-Writer & author, poet & publisher, journalist & blogger, reader & scholar, editor & researcher; retired teacher & tutor, lecturer & adult educator, taxi-driver & ice-cream salesman, George Town Tasmania Australia

2002-2005-Program Presenter City Park Radio Launceston

1999-2004-Tutor and/or President George Town School for Seniors Inc

1988-1999 -Lecturer in General Studies & Human Services West Australian Department of Training

1986-1987 -Acting Lecturer in Management Studies & Co-ordinator of Further Education Unit at Hedland College in South Hedland WA

1982-1985 -Adult Educator Open College of Tafe Katherine NT

1981 -Maintenance Scheduler Renison Bell Zeehan Tasmania

1980-Unemployed due to illness and recovery

1979 -Editor External Studies Unit Tasmanian CAE, Launceston; Youth Worker Resource Centre Association Launceston; Lecturer in Organizational Behaviour Tasmanian CAE; Radio Journalist ABC Launceston

1976-1978 -Lecturer in Social Sciences & Humanities Ballarat CAE Ballarat

1975 - Lecturer in Behavioural Studies Whitehorse Technical College, Box Hill Victoria

1974 -Senior Tutor in Education Studies Tasmanian CAE Launceston

1972-1973 -High School Teacher South Australian Education Department

1971 Primary School Teacher Whyalla SA Australia

1969-1971 Primary School Teacher Prince Edward County Board of Education Picton Ontario Canada

1969 Systems Analyst Bad Boy Co Ltd Toronto Ontario

1967-68 -Community Teacher Department of Indian Affairs & Northern Development Frobisher Bay NWT Canada

1959-67 -Summer jobs-1 to 4 months each- from grade 10 to end of university

1949-1967 - Attended 2 primary schools,2 high schools and 2 universities in Canada-McMaster Uni-1963-1966 Windsor Teachers' College-1966/7

1944-1963 -Childhood(1944-57) & adolescence(1957-63) in and around Hamilton Ontario

1943 to 1944-Conception in October 1943 to birth in July 1944 in Hamilton Ontario

2. SOME SOCIO-BIO-DATA TO 2011

I have been married twice for a total of 44 years. My second wife is a Tasmanian, aged 65. We've had one child: age 34 in 2011. I have two step-children: ages: 45 and 41 in 2011 and two step-grandchildren, age 18 and 15 in 2011. I am 66, am a Canadian who moved to Australia in 1971 and have written several books- all available on the internet. I retired from full-time teaching in 1999, part-time teaching in 2003 and volunteer teaching/work in 2005 after 35 years in classrooms. In addition, I have been a member of the Baha'i Faith for 52 years. Bio-data: 6ft,230 lbs, eyes-brown/hair-grey, Caucasian.

My website is found at:

A Celebration: In Memory Of Hayden Carruth

Today in New England a celebration is taking place to pay tribute to one of the most astute poets of that region: Hayden Carruth.¹ Until two days ago I had not even heard of this poet but, while waiting in the Launceston Tasmania library at mid-day(21/11/'08) before going for an ultra-sound at a local hospital, I picked up somewhat at random volume 84 of Contemporary Literary Criticism, a useful encyclopedia of analysis and commentary of the works of writers and poets, biographers and autobiographers as well as novelists and journalists. I had been dipping into this encyclopedia in the last fifteen years(circa 1993-2008) , beginning in the last several years of my employment as a full-time teacher in Western Australia.

In the same spirit of randomness and, perhaps, serendipity, as someone might browse through a magazine while waiting in a doctor's reception area, my eyes casually fell on the pages devoted to Hayden Carruth. I found out very quickly many things about his life, about his poetry and his general writings. When I got home I looked him up on the internet. I found out he had just died and that this celebration I mention here was taking place today. I write this prose-poem to contribute my part to a celebration of someone I hardly know but with whom, in only the last two days, I have developed a sense of a spiritual, an intellectual, kinship. -Ron Price with thanks to 1Times Argus 15 November 2008.

I often write with a certain weary ease,
Hayden, not like you.¹ I often write, too,
with an overt utilitarianism but, like you,
it is often indirect and as subtle as I can.

My criticism is, like yours, a verging on
philosophy, indeed, a deep-down thing.
There is for both of us, too, a subjective,
an objective, communalism in my openly
transcendent prose-poetic acts. You wrote
things about poetry, Hayden, which I can
only quote and will quote to end this verse:

Poetry is the reason for all things humanly
true and beautiful, and the product of them—
wisdom, scholarship, love, teaching—Love
of poetry is the habit and the need of wise
men wherever they are, and when for some

reason of social or personal disadjustment they are deprived of it, they will be taxed in spirit and will do unaccountable things. Great men will turn instinctively to the poetic labour of their time, because it is the most honourable and useful, as it is the most difficult, human, endeavour.²

.....and on and on you went as if the poet Shelley had been reborn as a result of your painful but incredible trip backwards toward the evolutionary roots of poetry in a politics of poetic spirituality and its politics of love. I wish you well, Hayden, in that Undiscovered Country, as Shakespeare once called the Land of Lights which, perchance, you may now enjoy.

1 Judith Weissman quoted in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Volume 84, p.116 from an introduction to *Working Papers: Selected Essays and Reviews* by Hayden Carruth, edited by Judith Weissman, The University of Georgia Press, 1982, pp. xv-xxiii.

2 Hayden Carruth in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Volume 84, p.117.

Ron Price
23 November 2008

Ron Price

A Narrow Beach On An Autumn Evening

The poem below is by William Wordsworth. It is entitled 'A Narrow Girdle of Rough Stones and Craggs.' I tried to place his poem in italics and the verses of my poem alternating with his, but was unable to do this with the fonts available at this site. I have taken Wordsworth's poem and directed its content toward my own life.

I remember my mother reading Wordsworth in the 1950s, but I did not read him seriously until the early 1990s when I was nearly fifty. The events in my poem took place, but in quite a different way than I have conveyed them here. I have taken some poetic license in writing what follows; or you might say this poem is semi-autobiographical. I write this prose-poem on the eve of another school year in the northern hemisphere as primary and high school students go back to school tomorrow. Down here in Tasmania where I now live I do not think about teaching any more since I am retired.—Ron Price, Pioneering Over Four Epochs, September 4th,2005.

A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,
A rude and natural causeway, interposed
Between the water and a winding slope
Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore
Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy:

It was a few hundred yards from the big lake.
I'd never measured it exactly, but a straight
street on level land interposed itself
between my house and the huge bulk
that was Lake Ontario in the middle of
North America so very far away now.

And there myself and two beloved Friends,
One calm September morning, ere the mist
Had altogether yielded to the sun,
Sauntered on this retired and difficult way.
-Ill suits the road with one in haste; but we
Played with our time; and, as we strolled along.

And there myself and a friend,
more beloved now after 50 years,
walked and ran as we so often did

down to the powerline to play football
on an autumn evening or on our bikes
to the lake to swim on a hot summer day.

It was our occupation to observe such objects
as the waves had tossed ashore: feather, or leaf,
or weed, or withered bough. Each on the other
heaped, along the line of the dry wreck. And, in
our vacant mood, not seldom did we stop to watch
some tuft of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,
that skimmed the surface of the dead calm lake,
suddenly halting now-a lifeless stand!

And we did observe, although not finely
for we were always on the run and missed
much that was in front of our nose. But you
could not miss the sun and sky and all the
houses down below where we lived our lives
and got our start on the long road that was
our life, a road we hardly knew and hardly
ever gave a thought to-mostly back then.

And starting off again with freak as sudden;
In all its sportive wanderings, all the while,
Making report of an invisible breeze
That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,
Its playmate, rather say, its moving soul.
-And often, trifling with a privilege
Alike indulged to all, we paused, one now,
And now the other, to point out, perchance
To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair
Either to be divided from the place
On which it grew, or to be left alone
To its own beauty.....

So much starting and stopping in all our
sportive wanderings and reports, though
I can not recall making many/any to anyone.
Yes, we noticed the wind, the heat, the rain,
if any: you'd have to be blind and deaf not to.
We plucked few flowers and the only weeds
we worried about were on someone's lawn

we cut for a few dollars spending money
to buy baseball cards, candy and soft drinks.

.....Many such there are,
Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall fern,
So stately, of the queen Osmunda named;
Plant lovelier, in its own retired abode
On Grasmere's beach, than Naiad by the side
Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere,
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.
-So fared we that bright morning: from the fields
Meanwhile, a noise was heard, the busy mirth
Of reapers, men and women, boys and girls.
Delighted much to listen to those sounds,

The lawns along the street were all clipped
and green with flower beds, tidy at the edges.
Maple trees and cars from the fifties lined
the driveways as did hedges and neighbours'
kids only some of whom we ever got to know.

And feeding thus our fancies, we advanced
Along the indented shore; when suddenly,
Through a thin veil of glittering haze was seen
Before us, on a point of jutting land,
The tall and upright figure of a Man
Attired in peasant's garb, who stood alone,
Angling beside the margin of the lake.
'Improvident and reckless, ' we exclaimed,
'The Man must be, who thus can lose a day
Of the mid harvest, when the labourer's hire
Is ample, and some little might be stored
Wherewith to cheer him in the winter time.'
Thus talking of that Peasant, we approached
Close to the spot where with his rod and line
He stood alone; whereat he turned his head
To greet us-and we saw a Man worn down
By sickness, gaunt and lean, with sunken cheeks
And wasted limbs, his legs so long and lean
That for my single self I looked at them,
Forgetful of the body they sustained.-
Too weak to labour in the harvest field,

The Man was using his best skill to gain
A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake
That knew not of his wants.....

And as we fed our fancies and breathed our
unarticulated assumption that life was one
long indulgence, through a thin veil of
glittering haze we saw coming toward us
two young, beautiful girls and we, having
just passed through the puberty pickle,
were drawn to them as bees to a honey pot.
Seeing as there was no one around
and the beach was as empty and deserted
as it ever could be, we toyed with them
as best we could to see if they would comply
with our youthful lusts and hot desires.

.....I will not say
What thoughts immediately were ours, nor how
The happy idleness of that sweet morn,
With all its lovely images, was changed
To serious musing and to self-reproach.
Nor did we fail to see within ourselves
What need there is to be reserved in speech,
And temper all our thoughts with charity.
-Therefore, unwilling to forget that day,
My Friend, Myself, and She who then received
The same admonishment, have called the place
By a memorial name, uncouth indeed
As e'er by mariner was given to bay
Or foreland, on a new-discovered coast;
And POINT RASH-JUDGMENT is the name it bears.

I will not say what thoughts were ours that day;
I'm not sure our thoughts could have been put
into words, only feelings rushed through our
young bodies on that hot summer evening.
But we did not fail to see within ourselves.
We knew too well the rush of heat on the tongue.
Love had not yet done with us, had only started
as a seed in our veins, as it raged in those moments
and continued over the decades to subdue us

and still we hardly knew the process at all.

There was much need to be reserved in speech
and action that evening but reservation was not
ours that day. Our thoughts were far from tempered
with charity. Golden light articulated their breasts,
fragrant as oranges in our mouths; their outspread hair
in the wind, dark and supple as the cyprus and our
expectant eyes so luminous with lust.

Their limbs so lithe and slight, their thighs so promiscuous
as orchards and so unarguably compelling and warm.

Ron Price

Comments On Consumption And Communication

CONSUMPTION

Consumption is a significant part of the circulation of shared and unshared, harmonious and conflicting, significant and insignificant meanings. Meanings in their various shades and intensities are at the core of what we call culture. We communicate through what we consume and we consume, in one way or another, an immense variety of material products. Consumption is perhaps the most visible way in which we stage and perform the drama of self-formation. In this sense, then, consumption is also a form of production, the production of self,¹ so argues John Storey, Professor of Cultural Studies and Director of the Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Sunderland. As a writer and editor, as a scholar and poet, I consume and produce ideas on a daily basis.

The primary activity of some social spaces and places is interaction, and the contrast with places where communication is actually discouraged could hardly be more extreme. Disneyworld and Disneyland, as well as American shopping malls, are designed to encourage consumption but, as Ray Oldenburg Professor Emeritus at the Department of Sociology at the University of West Florida in Pensacola emphasizes, they discourage interaction between customers. Marketplaces, clubs and sports stadiums have some social as well as monetary value, but shopping malls have no social value, according to Oldenburg.²

"The imaginative hedonism of the urban setting in its theatricality is employed as a way to stage-manage oneself. Most urban places and spaces, like the markets and clubs referred to above, serve less as places of communication than as stages for cultivating one's image."-Ron Price with thanks to ¹John Storey, *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization*, Oxford,2003; ² Ray/Rothauer Oldenburg and Doris Rothauer, "Third Places. An Email Conversation", Doris Rothauer (ed.) : *Third Places: Fußball, Videospiele, Musikvideos in Graz-West, Frankfurt/M.* and ³Sonke Gau, "Die Theatralisierung des Städtischen", Doris Rothauer (ed) : *Third Places: Fußball, Videospiele, Musikvideos in Graz-West, Frankfurt/M.*,2004.

If I look back on seven decades
of my consumption-production,
communication....dramaturgical
stage-management, I can see that
there have been many places that

discourage communication of any kind and....in retrospect, that was okay since they helped to balance those other places in life in which words, endless words....filled the spaces and places of my heart and mind giving me the feeling that.... perhaps, I was experiencing that excess of speech, a deadly poison.

Ron Price
24 August 2010

Ron Price

Communication Wanted

Speak to me of freedom
Midst liberty confounded
Of politics and pragmatics
And tyrannies surrounded.
Speak to me.

Talk to me of principle
Of rights fundamental
When seen from above
There are abuses phenomenal.
Talk to me.

Write to me of morals
Albeit morality is rejected
Encompassed by the opportune
Yet ethically suspected.
Write to me.

Proclaim to me ideals
Globally perceptive
Though now of such gravamen
That realism is deceptive.
Proclaim to me.

Teach me of oneness
In an age of boxed speciality
Matter combined with spirit
A euphonious synergy.
Teach me.

Ron Price

George Woodcock: Canadian Poet(1912-1995)

GEORGE WOODCOCK

Editor, poet, critic, travel writer, historian, philosopher, essayist, biographer, autobiographer, political activist, university lecturer, librettist, humanitarian, gardener-George Woodcock(1912-1995) seems entitled to wear almost as many hats as there are works to his credit-which stand at somewhere between 120 and 150, not including his radio and TV plays, documentaries and speeches. He no longer wears any hats, though, having gone some fifteen years ago to that mysterious and undiscovered country, that hole where we all go and speak and write, eat and drink, no more.

In the wider world Woodcock was and is most well-known for his books on the philosophy of anarchism and its history as well as for his well-received biography, *The Crystal Spirit*, on his friend George Orwell. From a Canadian perspective he was a literary champion and the founder of the journal *Canadian Literature* in 1959, finally passing on its editorship eighteen years later. The journal was the first of its kind and it provided a much-needed place for the exploration and celebration of the works of Canadian literary authors. In 1959 I was in grade ten, in love with Susan Gregory and baseball and I had just joined the Bahá'í Faith. Fifteen years later I was living in Tasmania as a senior tutor in education studies at the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education. -Ron Price with thanks to *Canadian Literature: A Quarterly of Criticism and Review*, Spring 2009.

You were not known to me, then,
George; my life was filled with so
much else even until just the other
day, when into the early evening of
my life when I chanced upon a short
bio-piece which introduced you to me,
to your life and work. You were born
just four months before the Master went
through southern Ontario while you were
out in Winnipeg that summer before going
to England and spending the next 35 years
and then returning to Canada to lay your
bones at the age of 82. I shall say no more
about your life, George, only to thank you
for all that you did in your years of living.
I hope to get to know you better in these

lengthening years of the evening of my life.

Ron Price

1 September 2009

Ron Price

Intimate Commerce

INTIMATE COMMERCE

Every poet follows his own genius, his own poetic inclination and every poem dictates its own laws. For this reason poetry is, for me, an experiment. I exult in the freedom of the poet and in the independent, elastic and prodigious literary form that is the poem. I do not use the word 'prodigious' loosely. For I have now written some six thousand poems and two million words. I find this result, this productivity, 'marvellous' and 'enormous, ' two of the meanings of 'prodigious.' I employ whatever terms and ideas are available to suit my needs and match the performance that evolves during the poetic exercise I am engaged in. The 'form' of each poem is its shape, a shape that results from the unfailing cohesion of all the ingredients in the poem and from the germinating idea or ideas at the centre of the poem. The success of each poem results from its intensity, its coherence and its completeness. During the writing of each poem my motive provides an intimate commerce, an avenue, a vehicle, for the flow of ideas, for the growth of taste and the active sense of life that each poem engenders. -Ron Price with thanks to J.A. Ward, *The Search for Form: Studies in the Structure of James's Fiction*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1967, pp.4-9.

So many years of incessant labour
and a particular kind of observation
surely will come to something-
all this poeticizing,
some peculiar affection
for those leavening forces.

So many years of incessant labour
for this international spirit
breathing forth the perfume
of His Cause so that, one day,
it will not be passed over
by the thoughtful.

So many years of incessant labour,
one of the antennae of the race,
but the bullet-headed many
do not trust this antennae
and the slough of despond
continues with troubled

forecasts of doom.

So many years of incessant labour
to create means of communication.
This is the struggle,
the struggle of great art
to describe the different,
to write of it in poetry.

Ron Price

4 October 2002

Ron Price

Jack Brabham

BRABHAM

Part 1:

I was never that interested in car racing, racing teams, Formula One world championship driving and drivers; indeed, sports in general after my teens took a distant place in my interest inventory. In addition, I have always had a low mechanical interest and aptitude. I never did well in basic woodwork and metalwork, what we used to call "shop" in high school, and I had little interest in cars and mechanics, in motorcycles and, indeed, anything, any gadget or appliance with a lot of parts. If any of these things needed fixing it was off to the repair man. In my second marriage, my wife had a high mechanical aptitude and interest. She took care of all the stuff that needed fixing. I did not marry my wife for her skills in this area, but marriage to my second wife, a Tasmanian, has proved useful on many fronts, fronts I knew little about when we married some 40 years ago.

So it was that, in many ways, Jack Brabham was not a likely candidate for my poetic package of interests as they have evolved in the last 20 years: 1994 to 2014. Some five years ago, though, I watched with interest a brief life-story of Jack Brabham.⁽¹⁾ I won't give you all the details of his life-narrative, just a few highlights.

Brabham enlisted in the RAAF the year I was born, 1944. He was then 18. In 1959, the year I joined the Bahá'í Faith, Brabham won the World Championship in car racing, after winning the Monaco Grand Prix. Fifty-five years ago, as I update this original comment on Brabham, then, this racing legend cemented his name in motorsport history by becoming the first Australian to be crowned Formula One world champion. In 1962, the first year of my own travelling-pioneering away from my home town in Ontario, Brabham drove for his own team, the Brabham Racing Organization. More than 50 years later I am still travelling but, for the most part, it is now mainly in my head, in my literary life.

Part 2:

The 1966 Jack earned a further place in motorsport history by becoming the first, and so far the only, driver to secure the F1 championship in a car of his own creation. It was a feat unlikely to be repeated. I graduated from McMaster

university that year in May in sociology and for ten weeks that summer I sold ice-cream for the Good Humour Company at 80+ hours per week. On average new employees with this famous ice-cream company lasted only two to three weeks because of the long hours. Good Humor became unprofitable beginning in 1968 and by then I was teaching primary school among the Inuit on Baffin Island. -Ron Price with thanks to (1) ABC1, "Australian Story, " 8: 00-8: 30 p.m.,17 August 2009 and updated to 19/5/'14.

You were only a name on
the very periphery of my
life back then the 1960s,
Jack, along with Stirling
Moss & the many Grand
Prix racing-men around
the world. I had my hands
full with just getting through
my days: my studies, my psycho-
emotional life, the embryo of
my career, my new religion- I
was simply too busy, Jack, to
include you in my constellation
of interests. You've become an
Aussie hero, Jack, goodonyer.

There will be millions now who
will have their emotions stirred
on hearing of your passing, Jack.

I wish you well as you race on
to another world where, who knows,
you may have some new formula
to keep you busy speeding through
the immensity of space as you
create your own vehicle for the
journey ahead, Jack: goodonyer.

Ron Price
17/9/'09 to 19/5/'14.

Ron Price

Jack Nicholson: You Can't Win Them All

You made it big, Jack,
in the last half century
as I went from my teens
to two old-age pensions.
I had my ups-and-downs
in the world of romance
and marriage, but nothing
like your slings-&-arrows.

And your millions, Jack,
what have you done with
all the millions? Bought
Marlon Brando's house &
had seasons' tickets to the
Yankees and Lakers games
so I have read.¹ Go for it...
Jack. You were a likeable
chap in the movies, a very
popular guy, a real winner
by the 1970s. And so was I,
Jack, a real winner in my own
way from one end of Australia
to the other from kids to adults.

Of course, you can't win them
all, can you, Jack? Can you?
No way....eh Jack?

Ron Price

John Ashbery: Some Personal Reflections

JOHN ASHBERY

Part 1:

Stephen Burt, a poet and Harvard professor of English, has compared the now famous poet John Ashbery(1927-) to T. S. Eliot, calling Ashbery 'the last figure whom half the English-language poets alive thought a great model, & the other half thought incomprehensible.' Ashbery's ncreasing critical recognition by the 1970s transformed him from an obscure avant-garde experimentalist into one of America's most important poets, though still one of its most controversial.

I am in the group who has always and at least, thusfar, found him incomprehensible. He and his work intrigue me more and more since I first came across him while teaching English Literature in the 1990s to matriculation students in Perth Western Australia and now, in these years of my retirement from the world of FT, PT and casual-paid employment: 2006 to 2014.

The play of the human mind, which is the subject of a great many of his poems, is also the subject of my poems. Ashbery once said that his goal was 'to produce a poem that the critic cannot even talk about.' I, too, find it difficult to talk about his poetry, but I talk about what others say and have written about his work because I find their talk, their writing, throws light, in an indirect sort of way, on my pieces of poetic-writing.

Part 2:

John Ashbery's poetry is about the experience of having subjective experience: Ashbery's poetry is about 'aboutness'. This is an obscure way of putting it, but Ashbery's ways are obscure. My poetry is also about my subjective experience, but in quite a very different sort of way to Ashbery's. Both he and I recognise that poetry is a vehicle for thinking about mental action; his poems live in the history of poetry the way a turtle lives in its shell. I am not sure how my poems live in the history of poetry. Time will tell when I leave this mortal coil; for now, though, I and my work are as obscure in the fame and celebrity world as Ashbery's poetry is obscure in popular culture.

Though he has always had a goofy and difficult side, Ashbery is one of the great poetic explorers of the human interior, diving into the human cognitive wreck and returning with weird phenomenological salvage. On the cover of his second,

highly disjunctive, book, *The Tennis Court Oath*, he announced: 'I attempt to use words abstractly, as an abstract painter would use paint.' That book of poetry came out in 1962, the year I wrote my first poem at the age of 18. That same year I: entered matriculation studies, brought my eight year baseball, hockey and football careers to an end, went a little further in the intimate world of sex than I had done to that point in my adolescent life, and began my travelling-pioneering life for the Canadian Baha'i community.

Part 3:

Not a straightforwardly autobiographical or confessional poet, Ashbery has kept his real self withdrawn from the poems. Both W.H. Auden and Marianne Moore, with their ironically projected and protected poetic personae, have been important in this respect and they are acknowledged by Ashbery as major influences. Ashbery clearly does not revel in self-promotion. Although I do not aim at self-promotion, my work is explicitly autobiographical, and mildly confessional. Ashbery's poetry has always accepted the aspiration of music toward a degree of formal perfection and toward maintaining an air of making sense without incurring the obligation of any particular meaning. That is also part of the aim in his poetry.

Helen Vendler, the famous poetry critic, sees the development of 'poetry' as a form of re-negotiation of the self's relationship with shifting 'reality.' She is interested in the nature of renegotiation itself rather than in the terms arrived at in the end. Vendler says that most contemporary American poetry wants to offer 'an interior state clarified in language'. In Ashbery's case the wordage trembles with a perpetual delicacy that suggests meaning without doing anything so banal as to actually attempt to introduce meaning and narrative, direction and purpose. Poetic syntax for Ashbery is constructed to express, with a certain intensity, a notion of the meaningful. But it does not actually convey any meaning. My poetry, too, is a continuous renegotiation of self with the shifting reality of existence, although I do not eschew meaning.

Part 4:

Ashbery's poetry is warmly admired by that erudite Harold Bloom(1930-) , the American literary critic and Sterling Professor of Humanities at Yale University. Ashbery's work perfectly illustrates Bloom's own thesis that 'the meaning of a poem is another poem.' The ghost or shadow poetry of that other famous poet of recent times, Wallace Stevens, as well as Ashbery among others, can equally claim the title of art, but that claim is based upon the premise that: we can never see the object or the poem as it really is; we can never quite know what we see

or see what we know.

Such art in modern times is born from a uniquely American mixture of at least two influences: (i) the metaphysical climate of Coleridge's, of Wordsworth's and of Shelley's poetry as transmuted by Thoreau and Emerson; and (ii) the scientific climate of physics and semantics which has de-stabilised the confidences of art. The American poet knows that nothing exists on its own and in its own self; Heisenberg's electrons cannot be objectively observed because the act of observation changes their nature. Such mental attitudes produce their own techniques, which rapidly become as conventionalised as any other attitudes in the history of poetry.

Part 5:

John Berryman and Robert Lowell were great contemporary poetic narrators who I came across long before Ashbery; they were compulsive tellers of stories about the self, and their style was sharply and wholly comprehensive, comprehensible, and perfectly expressing what Berryman's mentor R.P. Blackmur called 'the matter in hand', as well as 'adding to the stock of available reality'. This is not where Ashbery is at. His stories do not add to the stock of available reality and, if it is argued that they do, they do so in a highly complex and highly convoluted way.

I have begun to read Ashbery's prose, and I've had much more success with it than with his poetry. Ashbery's art criticism has been collected in the 1989 volume *Reported Sightings, Art Chronicles 1957-1987*, edited by the poet David Bergman. This prose came onto the market just as I was settling-down to teaching a range of humanities subjects at a Polytechnic in Perth Western Australia.

I have no intentions of trying to read his novel, *A Nest of Ninnies*. I have never been a novel reader at the best of times, and especially not now in the evening of my life. I do not intend to have a look at his several plays which he wrote in his 20s and 30s, three of which have been collected in *Three Plays* (1978). Ashbery's Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University were published as *Other Traditions* in 2000. A larger collection of his prose writings, *Selected Prose* came out in 2005. I'm on my way through these works. His poetry volume *Where shall I wander?* appeared in 2005. In 2008, his *Collected Poems 1956-1987* was published as part of the Library of America series. But they will both go unread.- Ron Price with thanks to 1several reviews of Ashbery's work in the London Review of Books, 28/11/'14, and 2that useful encyclopedia, Wikipedia.

Part 6:

Some people find my poetry strange but, compared to this work of John Ashbery I'm as clear as the sun at noon-day.

I, too, have been writing for a half a century, but, compared to this poet, I am an unknown poet about as obscure as this poet's incomprehensible work.

Some find him maddeningly beautiful....like some diarist with an intriguing charm & an elliptical text with some psychic history implicit in his multitude of metaphors.

He is like an autobiographer in an abstract form telling us where we are and where he is. Sadly, he's so indecipherable in his obscurity; he perplexes, neither serenades nor comforts, provides no vision or chronicle of our time as he thrives on the oddities, slang, slogans, jargon of our age, difficult to penetrate.¹

¹ Helen Vendler, 'The Democratic Eye, ' The New York Review of Books, 29/3/'07. This is a review of *A Worldly Country: New Poems* by John Ashbery.

Ron Price
29 November 20 14

Ron Price

John Keats: A Retrospective

JOHN KEATS

Coming in at last from the Periphery

Part 1:

In the sixties, when I was just beginning my poetic life, three scholarly biographies of the poet John Keats appeared within a short time. They were: W.J. Bate's and Aileen Ward's, both in 1963, and Robert Gittings's in 1968. Each is still very useful; all were admirable, if in different ways. W.J. Bate, who had been interested in Keats ever since he wrote his undergraduate thesis on the poet in 1939, paid special attention to Keats's stylistic development in a discussion that has never been bettered.

Aileen Ward brought to the study of Keats an almost clairvoyant psychological understanding, drawing on, but by no means limited to, Freudian insights. Robert Gittings who, before he wrote the biography, had published three short books on Keats, displayed an unexampled mastery of the facts of Keats's life and its English context.

Part 2:

I was far too busy, during the 1960s, getting my B.A., my B. Ed. in the social sciences and in education studies, starting my career in teaching and my life in my first marriage, sorting out my pioneering-travelling trajectory for and in the Canadian Baha'i community, and dealing with the first episodes, the rigours, of bipolar disorder. The poetry of John Keats was far out on the periphery of my intellectual and academic life, my reading and my first pretensions at scholarly work.-Ron Price with thanks to Helen Vendler, "Inspiration, Accident, Genius: A Review of Andrew Motion's 1997 book Keats, in the London Review of Books, Vol.19 No.20,16 October 1997.

My poetic life did not really take-off until the '90s when Andrew Motion's Keats¹ was finally published, but it would be another 15 years before I was able to finally appreciate the work of this poet who has come down to

us in an inevitably incomplete state.

Life has been busy even in retirement from FT, PT, life's more casual work, all that volunteer stuff that kept me as far as possible from any serious study.

But, at last, in the evening of my life, I can finally get my teeth into works of more writers and authors, poets & publishers than I ever knew existed.

Ron Price
6/10/'13.

Part 3:

1 Thirty years have passed since those three studies of Keats during the 1960s. During those 30 years my life has taken more directions, more studies, life in more towns and communities, more relationships: deep and meaningful, shallow and trivial than I could possibly summarize in this small space. Keats remained outside the ambit of my interest inventory and study.

Andrew Motion makes the remark, reasonably enough, in the Introduction to his new life of Keats, that 'the lives of all important writers need to be reconsidered at regular intervals, no matter how familiar they might be'. And a good thing that is, too.

"The Keats that has come down to us, " says Motion, "is finely figured, yet incomplete. Embedding his life in his times, I have tried to re-create him in a way which is more rounded than his readers are used to seeing. Examining his liberal beliefs, I have tried to show how they shaped the argument as well as the language of his work. At all times, I have tried to illuminate his extraordinary skill in reconciling 'thoughts' with 'sensations'.

Part 4:

'Embedding his life in his times' turns out to mean, says poetry critic Helen Vendler, "drawing attention to Keats's political opinions and his class status; showing how his liberal beliefs 'shaped the argument as well as the language of his work' turns out to mean interpreting the poems – especially the longer poems – as documents of political thought embodied in styles suitable to liberal

expression; and 'illuminating his skill in reconciling "thoughts" with "sensations" ' turns out to mean almost anything the author needs it to mean in any given chapter."

Motion adds the following remark, dissociating himself as the remark does, from the deterministic convictions of materialist biography and criticism:

Accounts of Keats's reading, his friendships, his psychological imperatives, his poetic 'axioms', his politics and his context can never completely explain his marvellous achievement. The story of his life must also allow for other things, things which have become embarrassing or doubtful for many critics in the late 20th century, but which are still, as they always were, actual and undeniable: inspiration, accident, genius.

Ron Price

Poetry And Science

POETRY AND SCIENCE

The language of both science and poetry is a language under stress. Words are being made by their respective authors to describe things that often seem indescribable in words: equations, chemical and physical structures in the case of science, and an inner life of thoughts and emotions, among other things in the case of poetry. Words don't and cannot mean all that they stand for. Yet words are arguably the best means people have to describe experience. By being a natural language under tension, the language of science is inherently poetic. There is metaphor aplenty in science. Emotions emerge shaped as states of matter and, more interestingly, matter acts out what goes on in the soul. This is why one can say that science is poetic. One thing is certainly not true: that scientists have some greater insight into the workings of nature than poets, or vice versa. Some people feel that, deep down, scientists have some inner knowledge that is barred to others. The expertise of a scientist is an expertise acquired by learning and, unless others acquire the required learning, that particular piece of the universe of knowledge is, indeed, barred to those others. Poetry soars in the world of science.¹ It soars all around the tangible, in deep dark, through a world the scientist reveals and makes his own. Poetry in the hands of a lover of life and words, a person with great knowledge and wisdom, can soar in the worlds of intellect and understanding the two most luminous lights in the world of creation.² -Ron Price with thanks to ¹Roald Hoffman, "Science, Language and Poetry, " The Pantaneto Forum, Issue 6, April 2002; and ²Abdul-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, Wilmette, 1970, p.1.

What can I say of today?
Slept late and also had a
sleep after lunch: hardly
productive one could say.
But how can one measure
the success of a single day?
Got a handle on Homer more
than I've ever had: *The Iliad*
and *The Odyssey* as well as
Simone Weil.¹ She was a delight,
especially her essay on *The Iliad*
and its closing words about the idea
of rediscovering: "the epic genius...
no refuge from fate...learning not to

hate the enemy.....how soon will this happen? " she asks.² It has happened; it has already happened, Simone: it was born in the Siyah-Chal in Tehran and its light is spreading around the world to every corner.

1 Simone Weil(1909-1943) French philosopher, Christian mystic, and social activist.

2 Simone Weil, "The Iliad or the Poem of Force, " Chicago Review,18.2,1965.

Ron Price

12 September 2010

Ron Price

Poetry Of Abundance

So much lies ahead, after
I am gone, long after I am
gone...for my epigone¹ to
whom I direct the required
new perceptions which have
been slowly coming into my
mind as I try to balance all,
using a scale to weigh years
behind me & years to come.

My engine is not so grim as
Robert's, churning as it did
in the midst of his bipolar
disorder²....although I, too,
have my rust which must be
cleaned from off my heart on
a daily basis as I write & write
surrounded by an abundance &
emptiness, with the loss of some
sensuality, a gain of some degree
of dessication as several doctors
deal with my bodily maladies as
the evening of life incrementally
goes insensibly into a long night.

Ron Price

The Pre-Raphaelites: On Abc1tv In June 2011

It was a wet and cold Sunday afternoon as Tasmania and Australia moved closer this weekend to the winter solstice just two days away. My wife usually watches Aussie rules and I write in my study. I often go downstairs to make a cup-of-coffee, have a snack, see how she is doing, wash a few dishes and have a break from my writing and reading. As I walked across the lounge-room I chanced upon the ABC1's half hour program entitled: The Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Revolutionaries.¹ I did not get to see all of it, but my whistle was whetted and the result is this prose-poem.-Ron Price with thanks to (1) ABC1,4: 30 to 5: 00 p.m.19 June 2011.

The name John Ruskin caught my ear as this focus on the individual artist determining his own ideas & methods of depiction with freedom-responsibility being inseparable and the essentially spiritual character of art, and all this happening in those transforming 1840s. That was a decade, mirabile dictu.(1)

I will not list all the events of that incredible decade....but it is not surprising that this art movement began, especially in 1848, the year of the revolutions throughout Europe and that main event, hardly known, in Tabarsi when 313 men withstood the forces of 1000s of the Shah's men under the black standard unbeknownst to the wider-western-world² and as it still is mostly, mostly; as is the pre-Raphaelite movement: such is life.

1 A Latin expression I first came across while studying Latin in high school: 1958 to 1963, and meaning 'marvellous to relate.'

2 Nabil, The Dawn-Breakers, Wilmette, Illinois, Baha'i Publishing Trust,1974(1932) .

Ron Price
19 June 2011

Ron Price