

POST IT NOTE POETRY



ADAM BYATT

Post It Note Poetry

The Post It Note Poetry Challenge was initially a frivolous idea I threw out to my collaborative writing partner, Jodi Cleghorn (@JodiCleghorn).

28 days.

28 poems.

Written on a Post It Note.

I began the process with a caveat*

* Results may vary and you can probably expect dog-awful, spleen rupturing, Vogon-inspired poetry. You have been warned.

I was returning to school (I'm a teacher) and the beginning of the term is a dearth for creativity and continuing with longer projects. It was something to keep the creative wheels turning while the busyness of school consumed time and effort, allowing me to return to other projects when things settled down.

I haven't written much poetry, although I teach the mechanics of poetry deconstruction (and poetry appreciation) in my English classes. I understand rhyme, rhythm, meter, onomatopoeia, metaphor and simile but do not have the practical experience. I usually write short fiction and I wanted to explore the intricacies of poetry, albeit in a short form, restricted and constricted by the physical boundaries of a square of paper.

Small Beginnings

The initial idea was launched on February 1, 2013 on twitter (#postitnotepoetry). I wrote my poem, took a photo with a prop and posted it to my blog and to twitter. This became the default setting and was adopted by other participants.

And it suddenly took off. People we knew loved the idea and began writing their own poetry, posting it to twitter and/or their blog.

Jodi's spectacular cat-wrangling skills herded the participants towards a facebook page where it became a salon of sorts. People shared their poetry, commented, critiqued, deconstructed and analysed, in a collegial and supportive community.

The power of writers to connect and form a community is a special thing. We might write in isolation but the strength of community and the connections made between writers means we are never alone.

Therefore, in **28 days** I wrote **28 poems** totalling **1,128 words** (this last point is somewhat irrelevant except I am keeping a tally of my writing output this year across all forms of fiction and non-fiction).

What I Learned Along the Way

- *Creativity is habit forming.*

28 days of writing poetry became a focused task and developed into a routine. For all but the last 3 days, I had a poem written, photographed and scheduled for posting. Scraps of lines and ideas were hastily written in my notebook for later observation. I could not imagine maintaining it for a longer period of time but it developed the concept of *doing* something creative on a regular basis.

- *Creativity sparks new ideas and concepts.*

Yesterday I had a flurry of new ideas for creative endeavours while in a conversation with Sean Wright (@SeanBlogonaut). Maintaining the alliterative form I threw these out (and some of them have creative potential. Feel free to take the idea and run with it).

#fableflyers, #serviettesermons, #placematproverbs, #amphoraaphorisms, #postitnoteplatitudes, #paddlepopstickpoetry

They are mostly frivolous ideas but what's to say one of these can't be turned into an ongoing creative outlet? Austin Kleon started Black Out Poetry using a newspaper and a black marker to create something unique.

- *Creativity fuels others.*

The strength of the writing community to engage with ostensibly a trivial and frivolous concept, and to participate with enthusiasm and pride is a joyful thing. It lead to a core group of writers championing each other's work, providing a supportive and trusting environment. The flow on effect to this is having a new group of people to call upon for feedback, critique, advice and encouragement.

Creativity finds its strength first in the creator then finds its purpose when shared with an audience. For when you draw crisp, clean water from the well of creativity, you slake your own needs first then you can offer it to those around you.

- *Poetry is hard.*

I have always maintained when I become Prime Minister of Australia, no child shall be permitted to write poetry until they have reached the age of 18 and completed a one-year intensive poetry course.

While somewhat facetious, there is some truth. Writing poetry is hard. I was amazed at the skill some poets have to wrangle rhythm, meter and rhyme in their work. The adage to be a writer, you need to read, is applicable to poetry. I do not read enough poetry to be conversant with styles, techniques and forms.

I wrote one poem in cinquain form; everything else was free verse. I didn't use rhyme but was conscious of rhythm; years of drumming give me a good feel for it.

- *My poetry is really rather prosaic.*

People have commented that my short stories have a poetic, lyrical feel to them. This is not surprising considering my influences. Therefore my poetry has more of a narrative feel to it, setting up ideas and emotions through the structure of the line and words, rather than letting the words speak for themselves to create the emotional resonance and atmosphere.

- *Humour is hard.*

To write humorous or frivolous poetry is not easy. It takes a skilled comedian time to craft the lines and delivery of their routine and poetry is no different. Jodi commented my default (for any of my writing) is "deep" (although she typed it as "depp" in conversation and the malapropism has stuck). I do write humour but it is not my first focus.

- *Creativity is fun.*

There were times when I struggled for ideas or words or line length or structure, but it was never a chore or burden. As I said before, it is not something I want to maintain or prolong beyond the initial parameters.

And it was fun because I was doing it with a great group of people. We wrote, photographed, posted, commented and critiqued in a collegial and positive environment.

- *You are allowed to suck*

Writing involved a great deal of risk. The first risk is the fear of bad writing and it stops creativity. When you give yourself permission to suck, you allow creativity to flow. My blog post, [The Paradigm of Permission](#) explores this further.

I firmly believe each and every individual has the potential and ability to be creative. It can be expressed through writing, art, photography, dance music or any other creative expression.

I know of people who take a photo a day, either of themselves or something that has caught their eye. Others write. It is about engaging with the creative process in some way. For me it was writing poetry on Post It Notes.

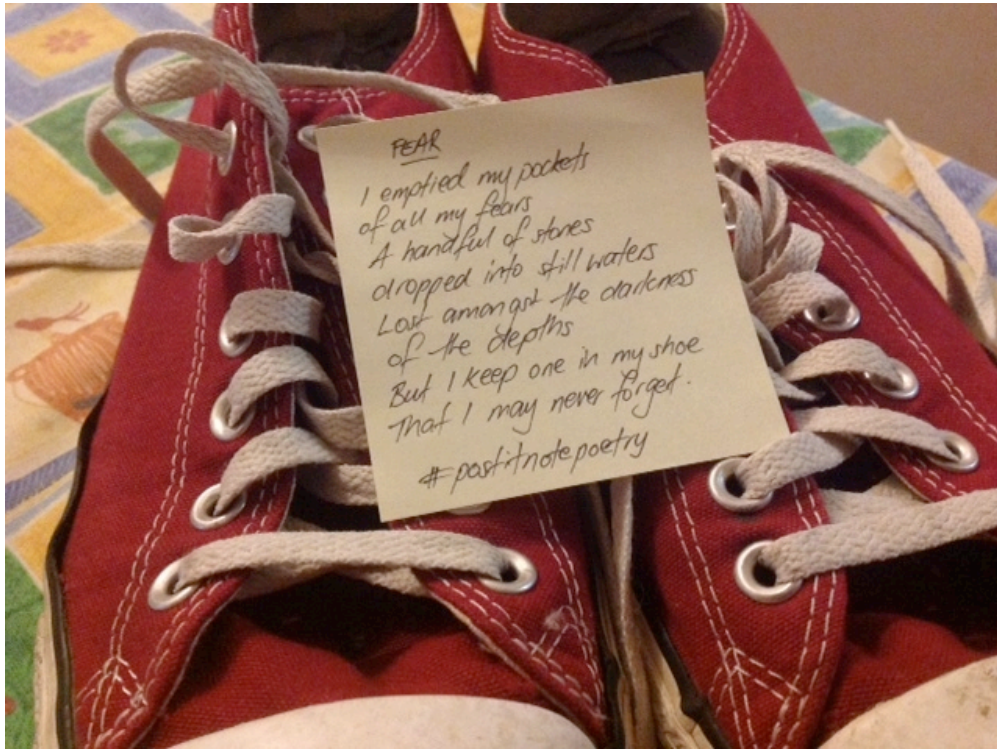
I have included five more poems written after February, exploring more ways of writing poetry.

Find your own way of being creative and commit to it for a sustained period of time.

Grab a pen and a pad of Post It Notes.

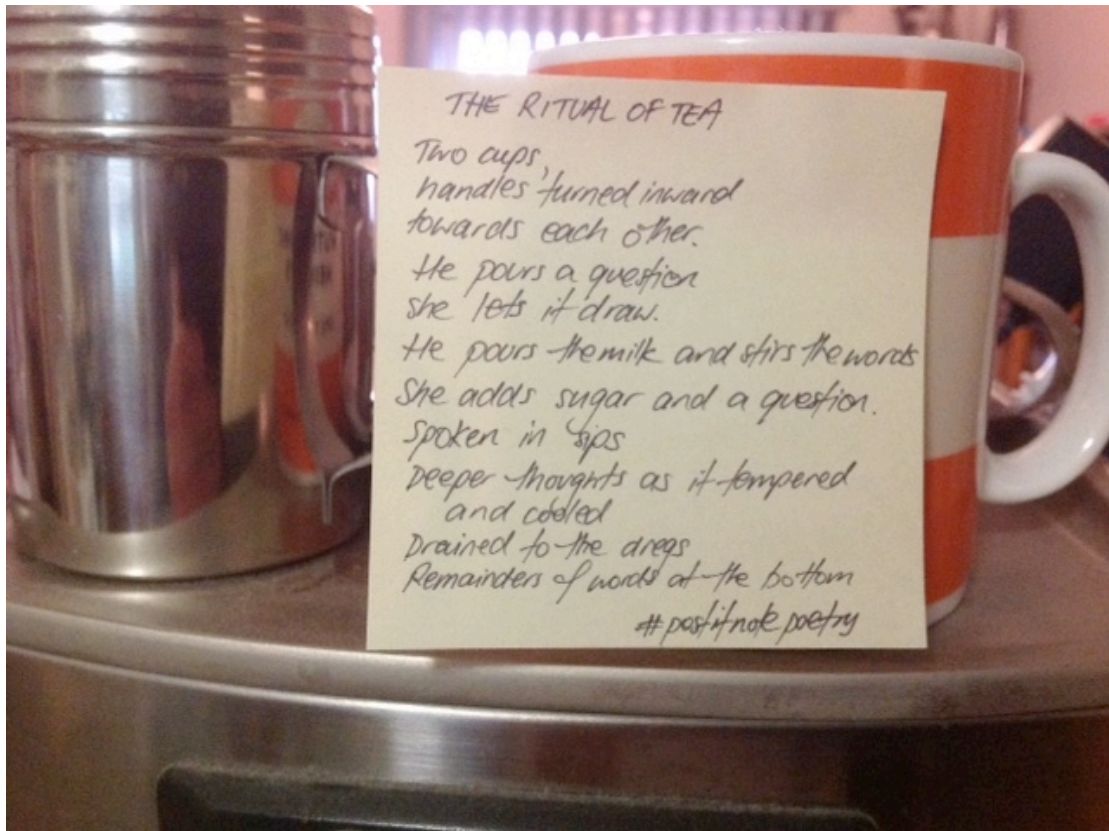
Go and be creative.

February 1 – Fear



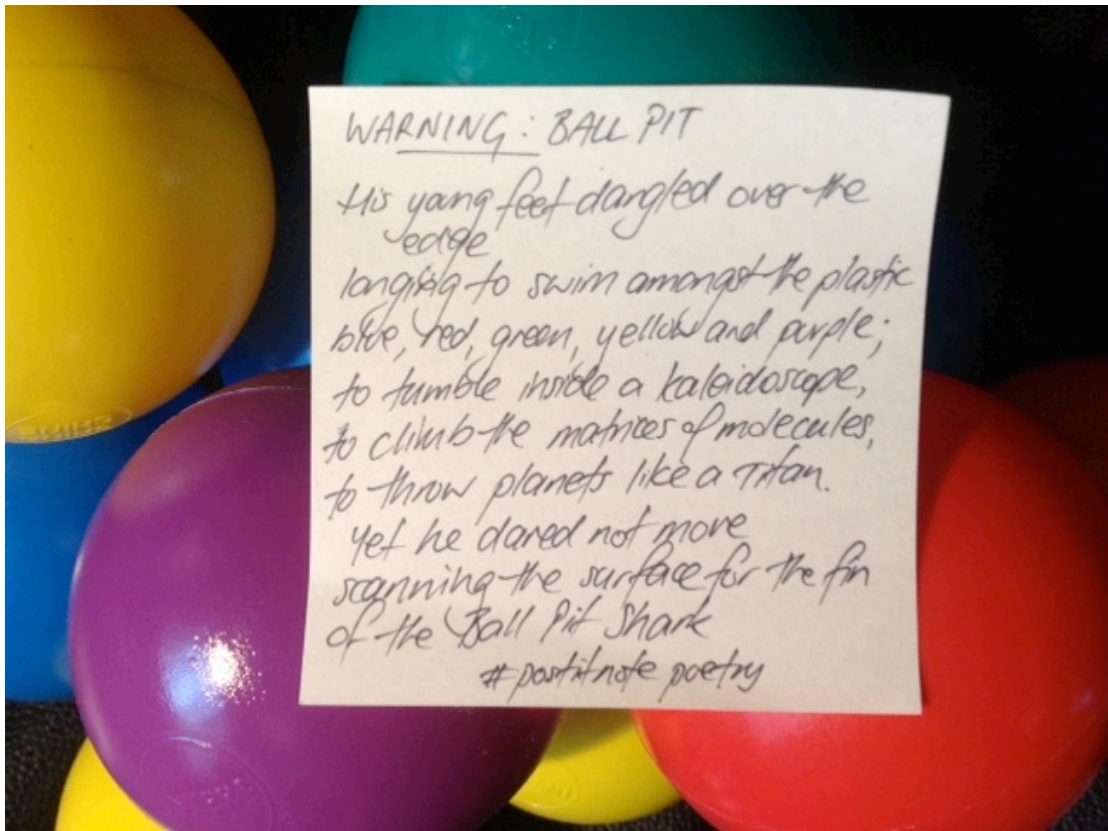
I emptied my pockets
of all my fears
A handful of stones
dropped into still waters
Lost amongst the darkness
of the depths
But I keep one in my shoe
That I may never forget

February 2 – The Ritual of Tea



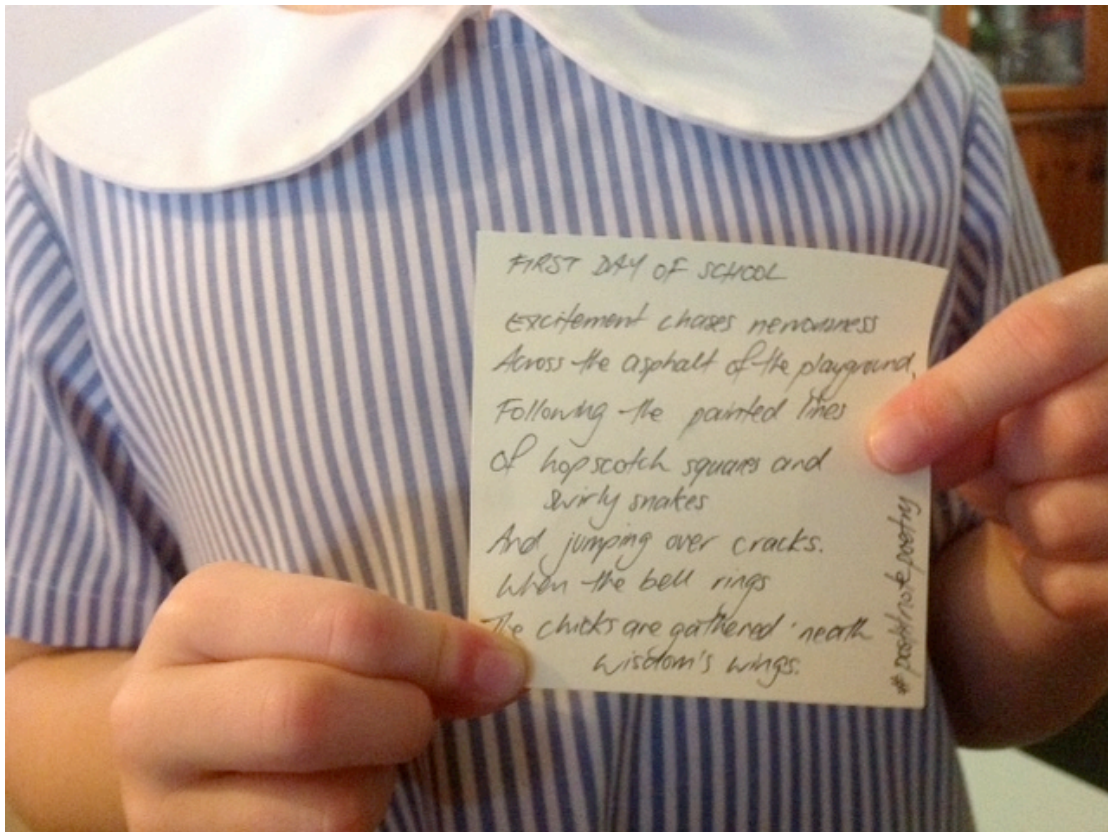
Two cups,
Handles turned inward
Towards each other.
He pours a question
She lets it draw.
He pours the milk and stirs the words.
She adds sugar and a question.
Spoken in sips
Deeper thoughts as it tempered and cooled
Drained to the dregs
Remainders of words at the bottom

February 3 – WARNING: BALL PIT



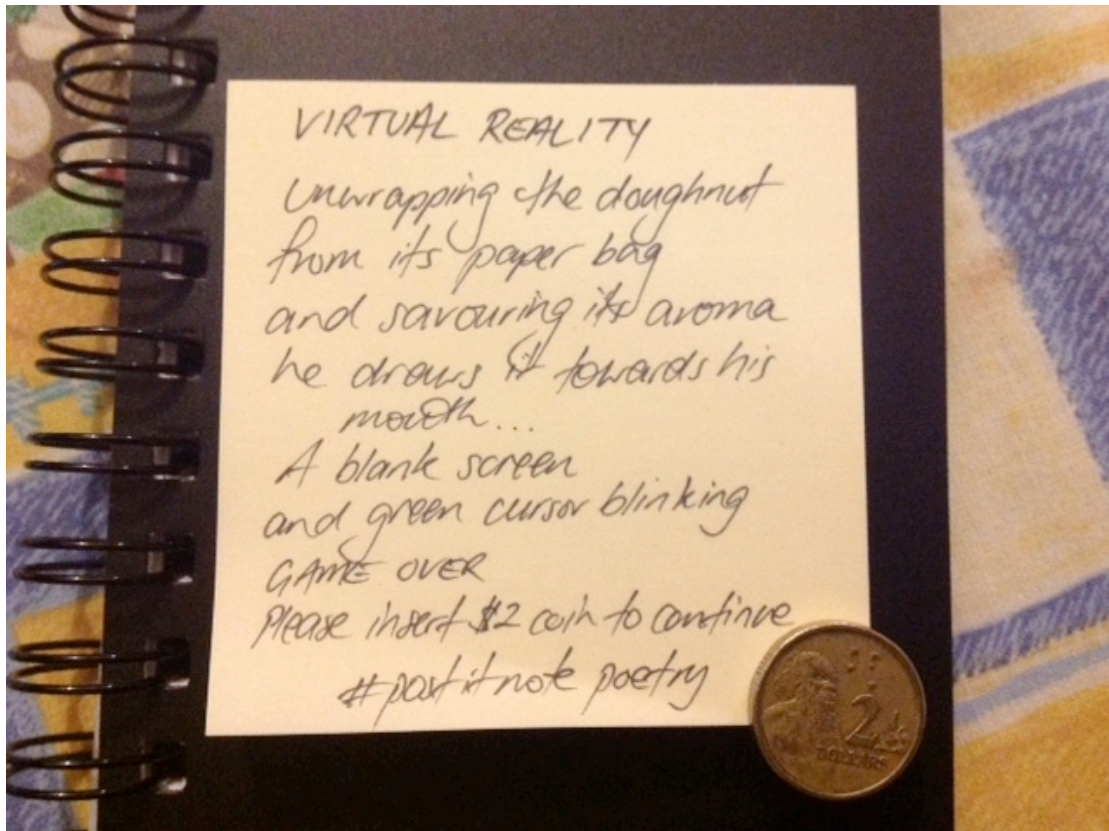
His young feet dangled over the edge
longing to swim amongst the plastic
blue, red, green, yellow and purple balls;
to tumble inside a kaleidoscope
to climb the matrices of molecules
to throw planets like a Titan
Yet he dared not move
scanning the surface for the fin
of the Ball Pit Shark

February 4 – First Day of School



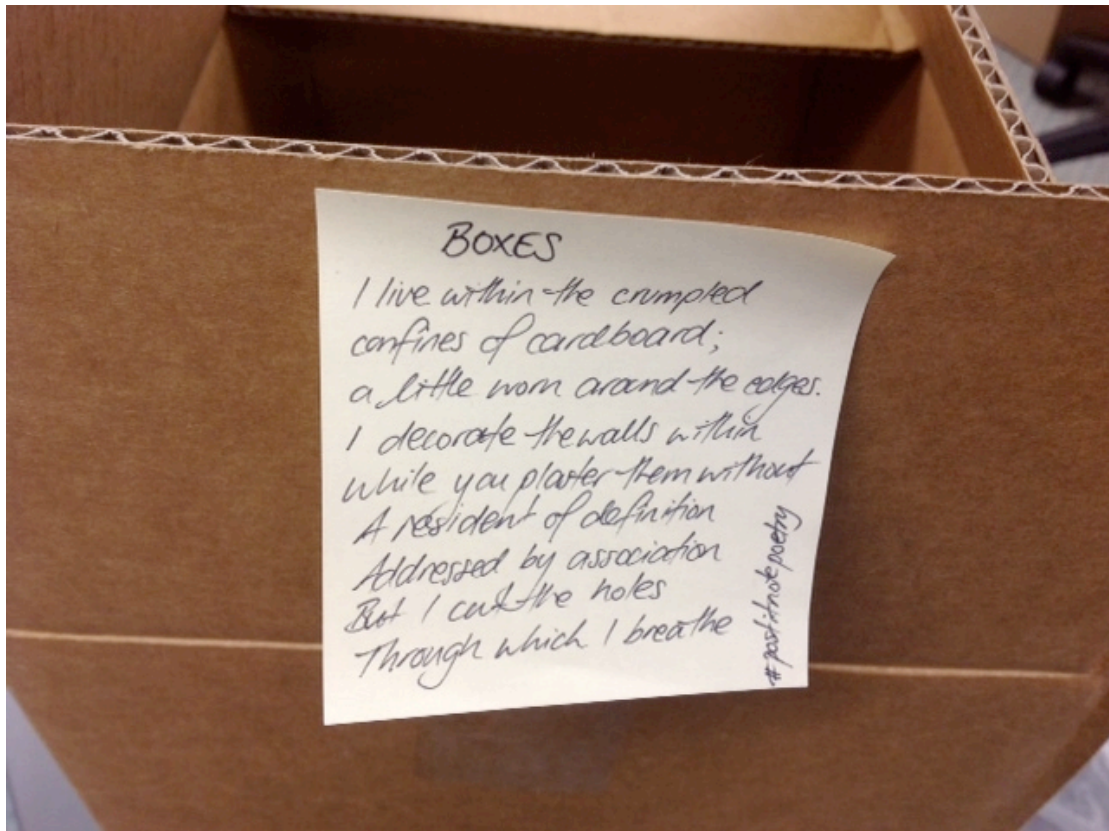
Excitement chases nervousness
Across the asphalt of the playground,
Following the painted lines
Of hopscotch squares and swirly snakes
And jumping over cracks.
When the bell rings
The chicks are gathered 'neath
Wisdom's wings

February 5 - Virtual Reality



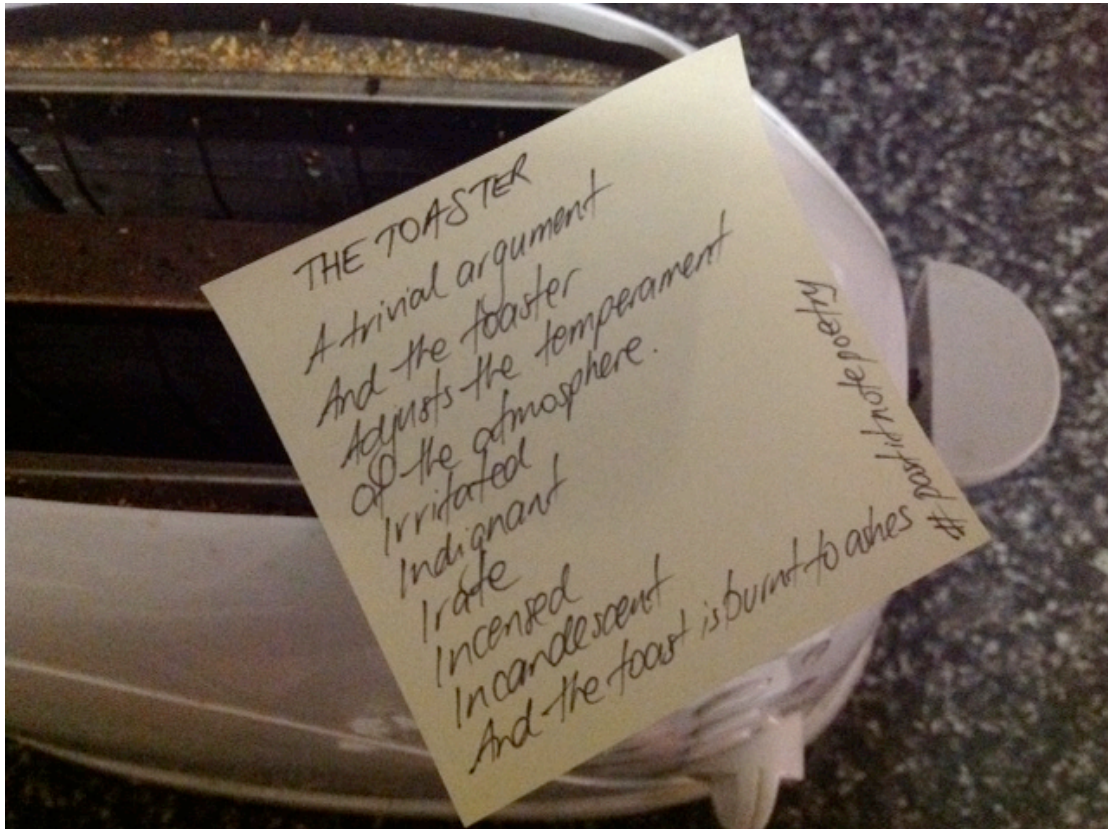
Unwrapping the doughnut
from its paper bag
and savouring its aroma
he draws it towards his mouth...
A blank screen
and green cursor blinking
GAME OVER
Please insert \$2 coin to continue
#post it note poetry

February 6 – Boxes



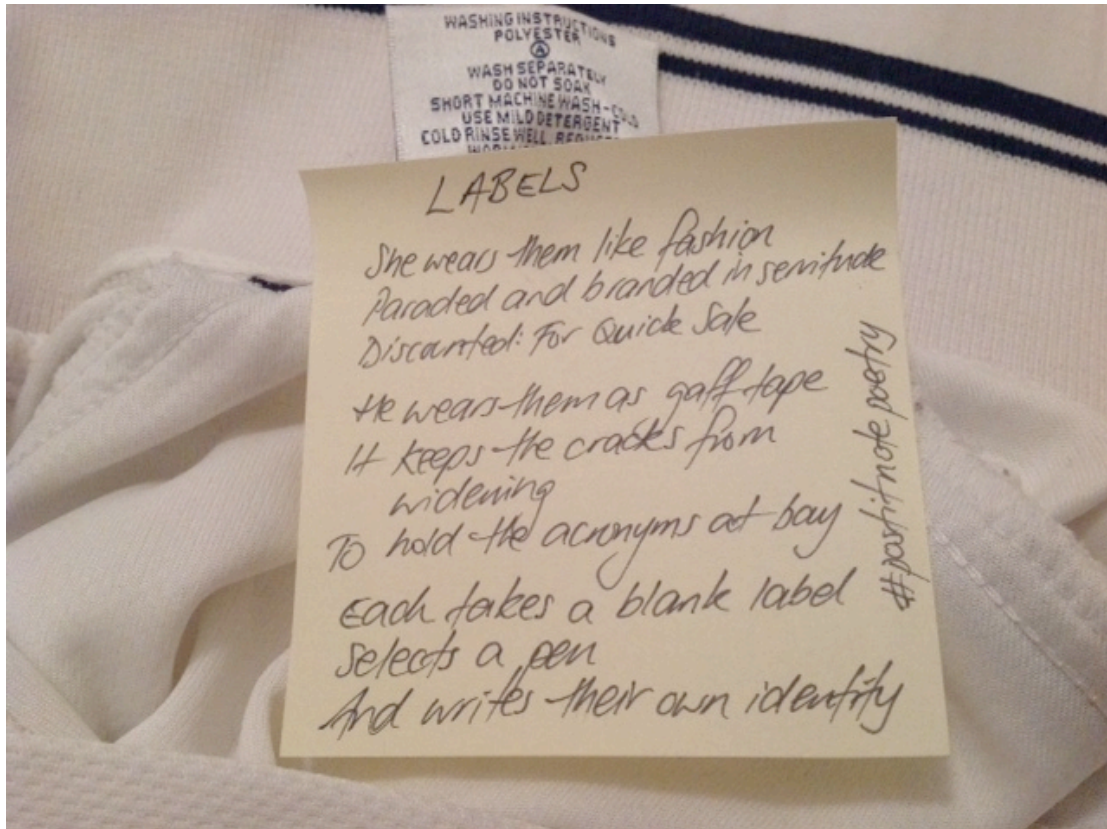
I live within the crumpled
confines of cardboard;
a little worn around the edges.
I decorate the walls within
while you plaster them without
A resident of definition
Addressed by association
But I cut the holes
Through which I breathe

February 7 – The Toaster



A trivial argument
And the toaster
Adjusts the temperament
Of the atmosphere
Irritated
Indignant
Irate
Incensed
Incandescent
And the toast is burnt to ashes

February 8 – Labels

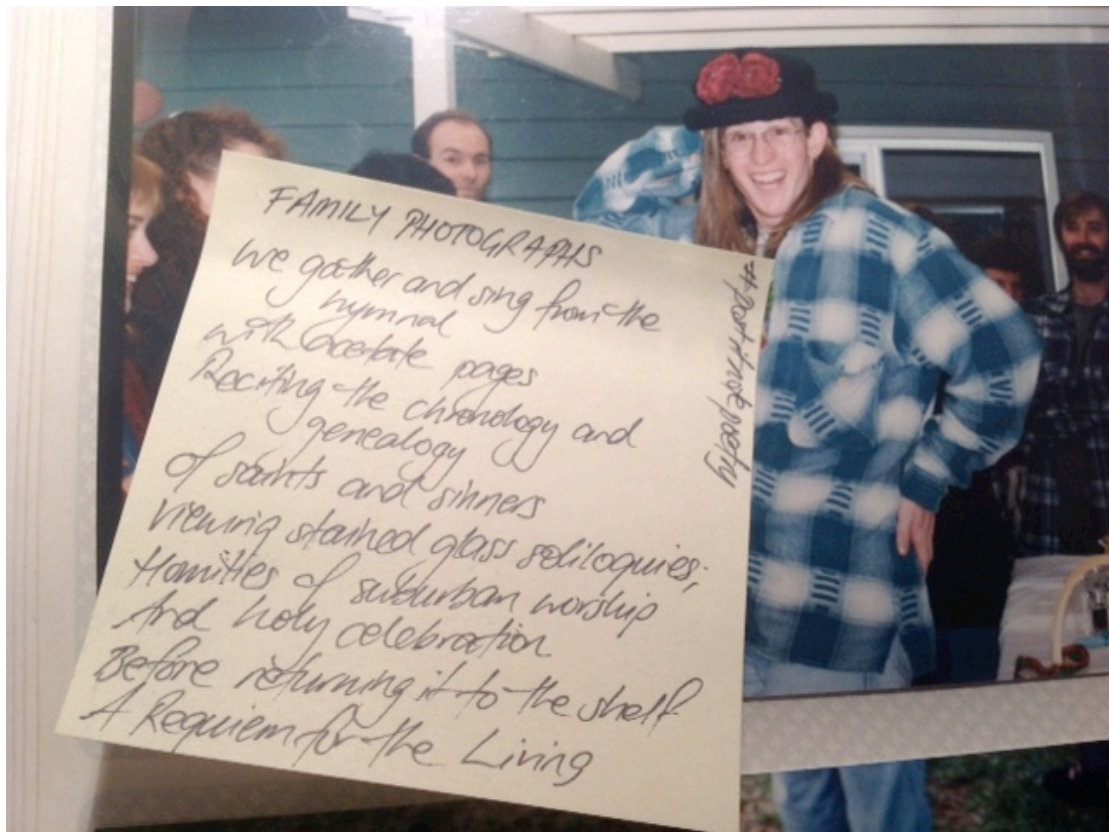


She wears them like fashion
Paraded and branded in servitude
Discounted: For Quick Sale

He wears them as gaff tape
It keeps the cracks from widening
To hold the acronyms at bay

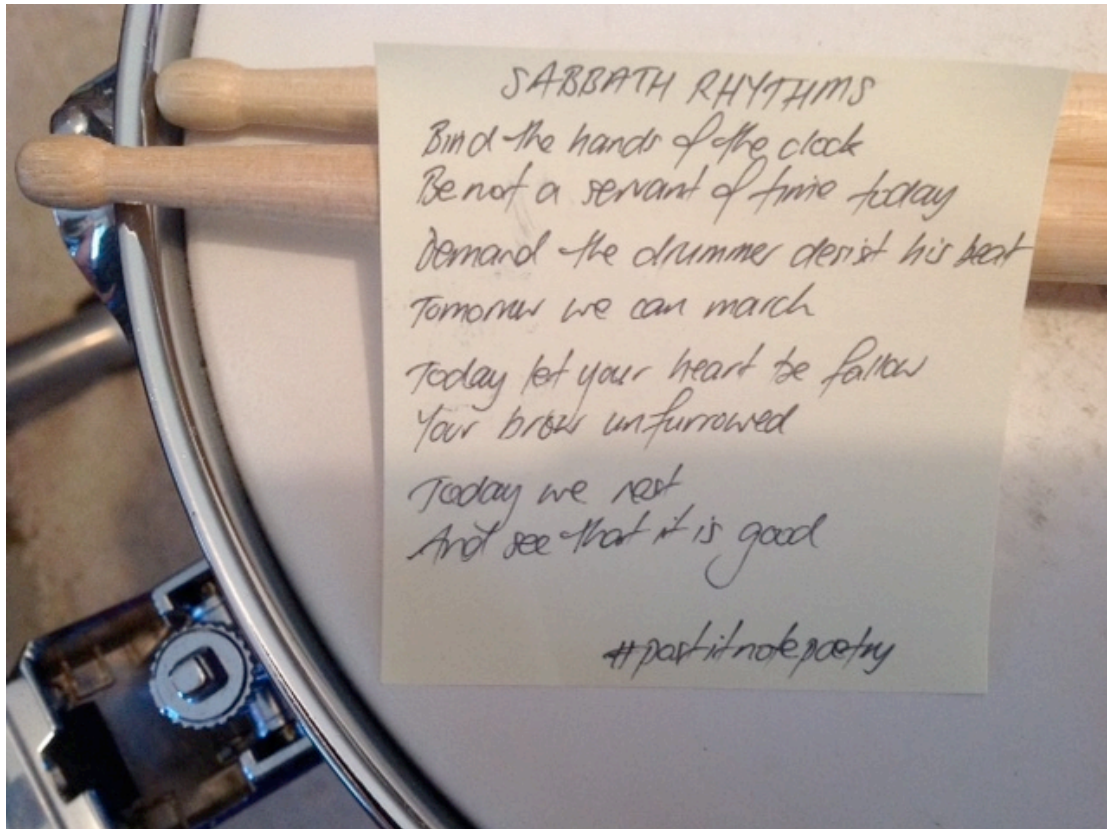
Each takes a blank label
Selects a pen
And writes their own identity

February 9 – Family Photographs



FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS
We gather and sing from the hymnal
With acetate pages
Reciting the chronology and genealogy
Of saints and sinners
Viewing stained glass soliloquies;
Homilies of suburban worship
And holy celebration
Before returning it to the shelf
A Requiem for the Living

February 10 – Sabbath Rhythms



Bind the hands of the clock
Be not a servant of time today

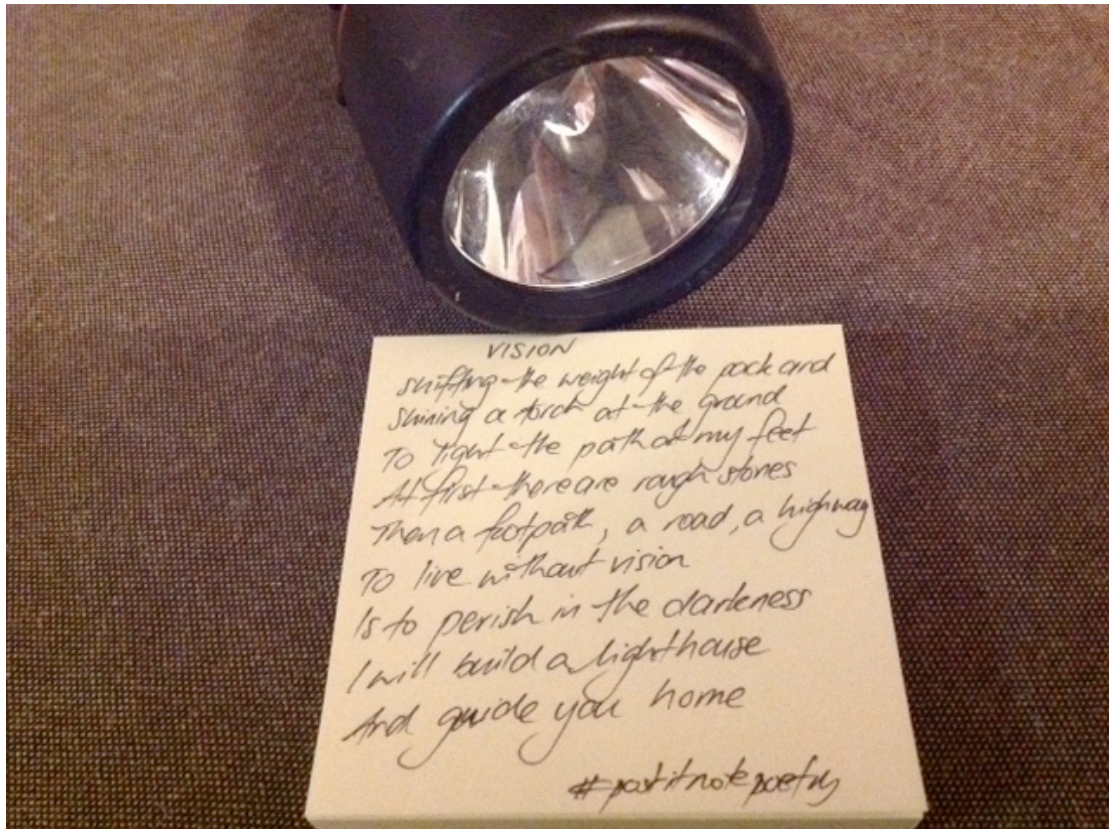
Demand the drummer desist his beat
Tomorrow we can march

Today let your heart be fallow
Your brow unfurrowed

Today we rest
And see that it is good

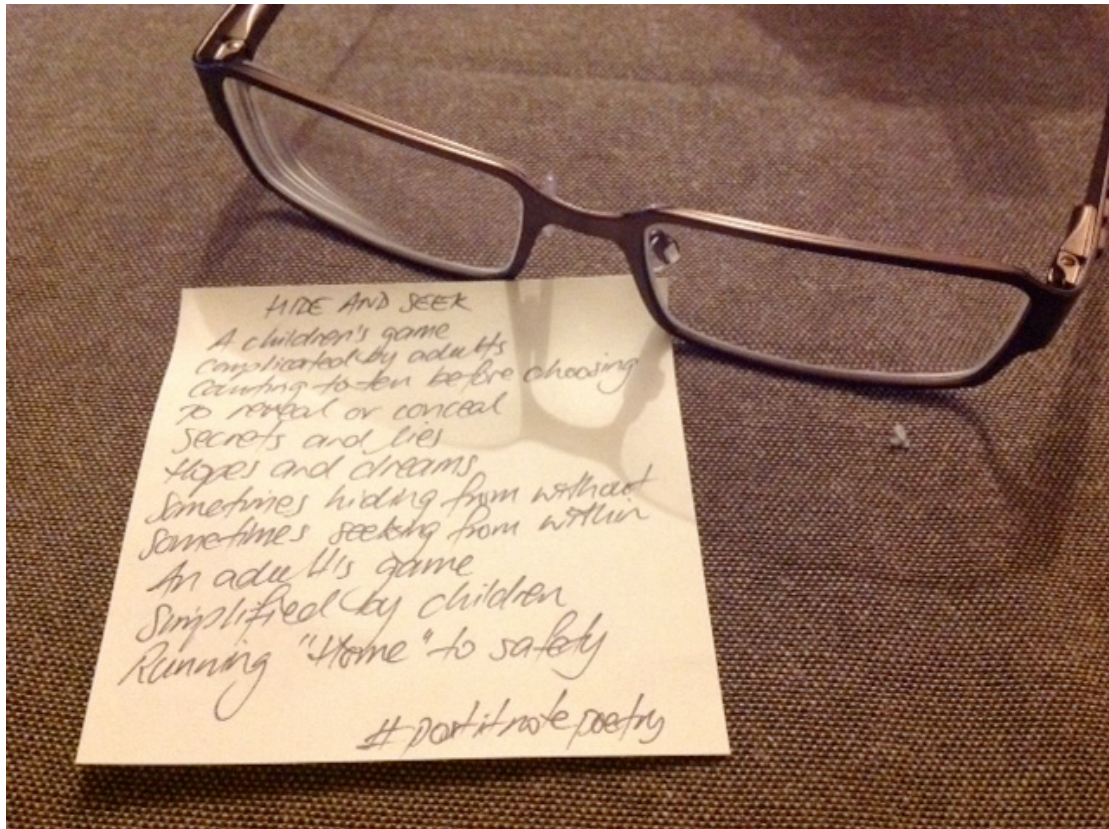
#partitnotepoetry

February 11 – Vision



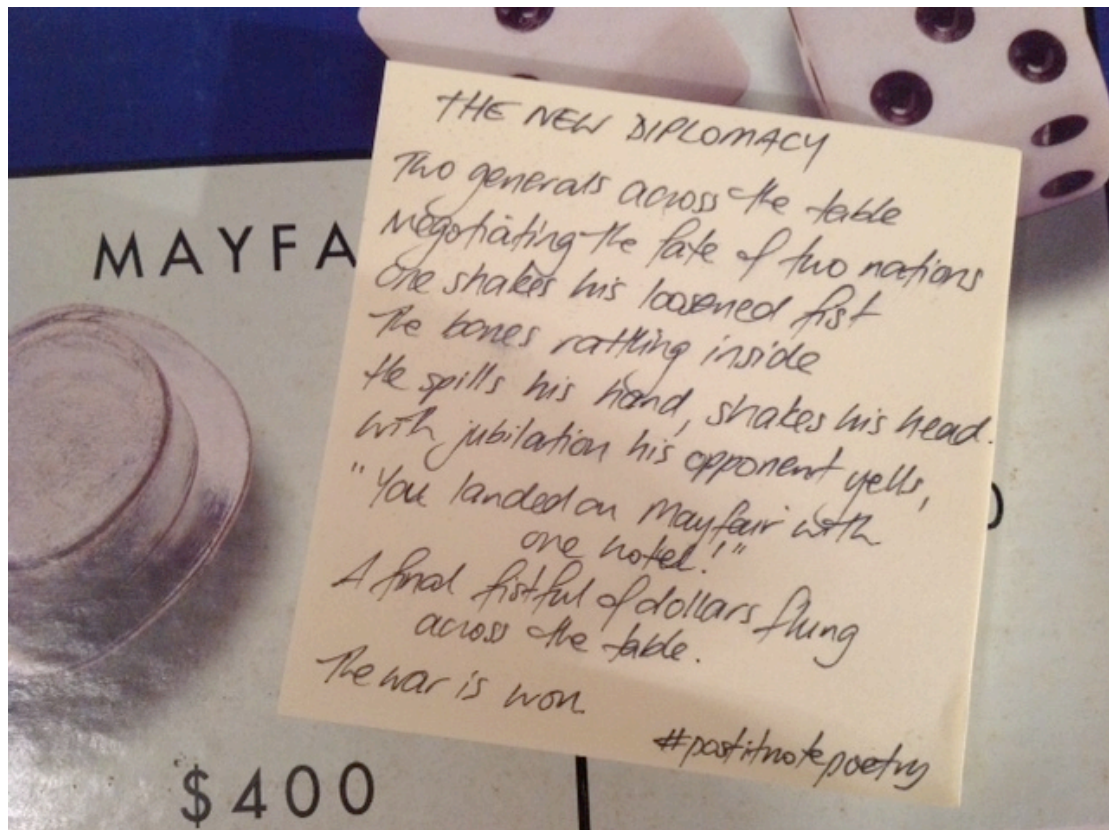
Shifting the weight of the pack and
Shining a torch at the ground
To light the path at my feet
At first there are rough stones
Then a footpath, a road, a highway
To live without vision
Is to perish in the darkness
I will build a lighthouse
And guide you home

February 12 – Hide and Seek



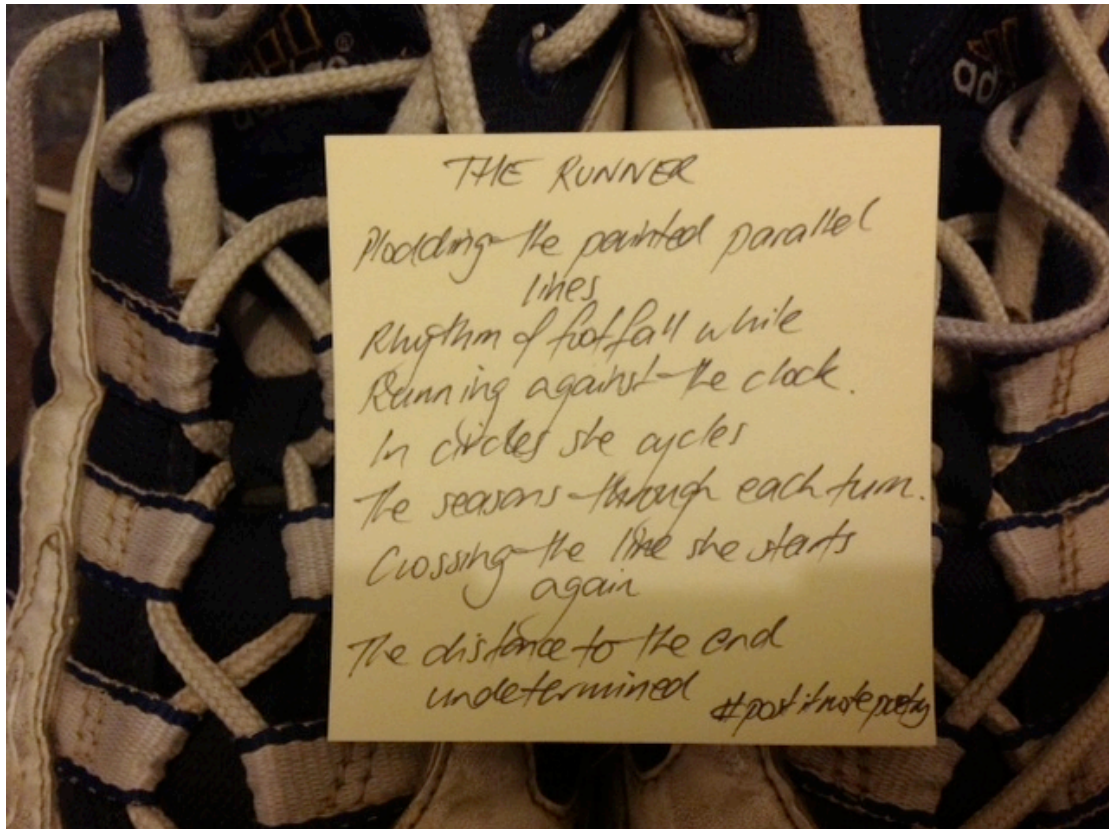
A children's game
Complicated by adults
Counting to ten before choosing
To reveal or conceal
Secrets and lies
Hopes and dreams
Sometimes hiding from without
Sometimes seeking from within
An adult's game
Simplified by children
Running "Home" to safety

February 13 – The New Diplomacy



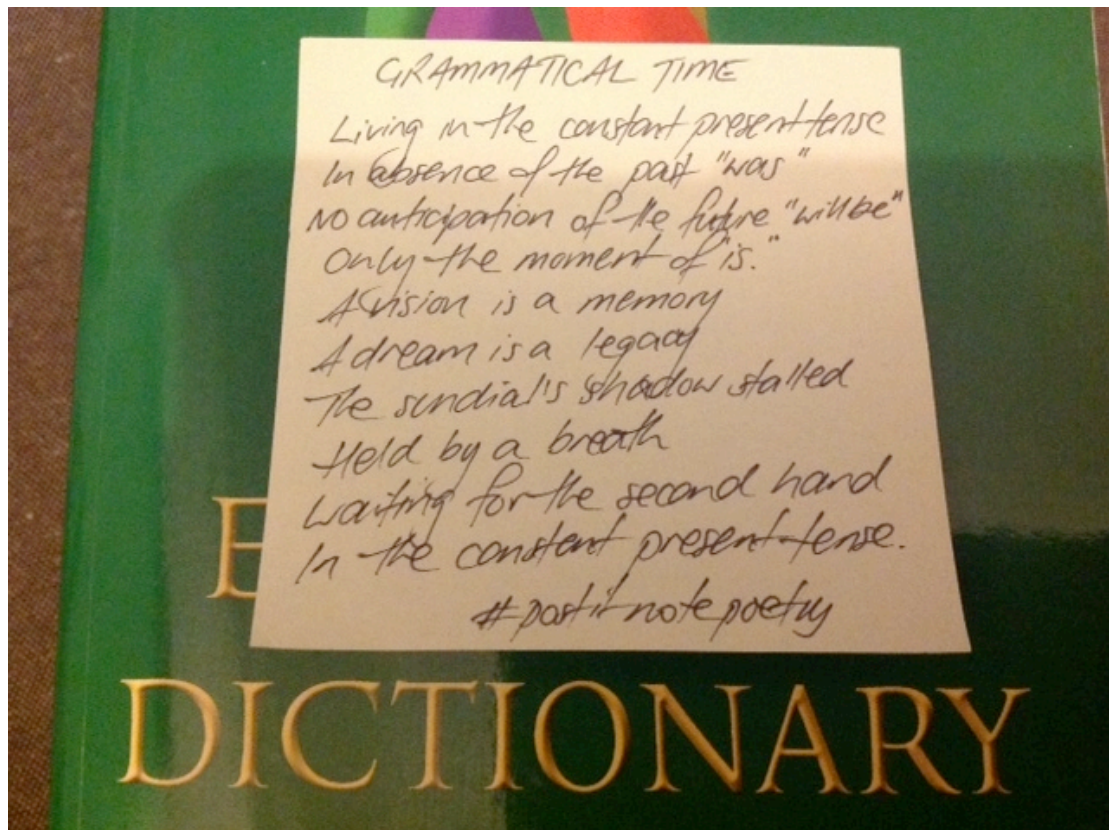
THE NEW DIPLOMACY
Two generals across the table
Negotiating the fate of two nations
One shakes his loosened fist
The bones rattling inside
He spills his hand, shakes his head.
With jubilation his opponent yells,
"You landed on Mayfair with
one hotel!"
A final fistful of dollars flung
across the table.
The war is won.
#postitnotepoetry

February 14 – The Runner



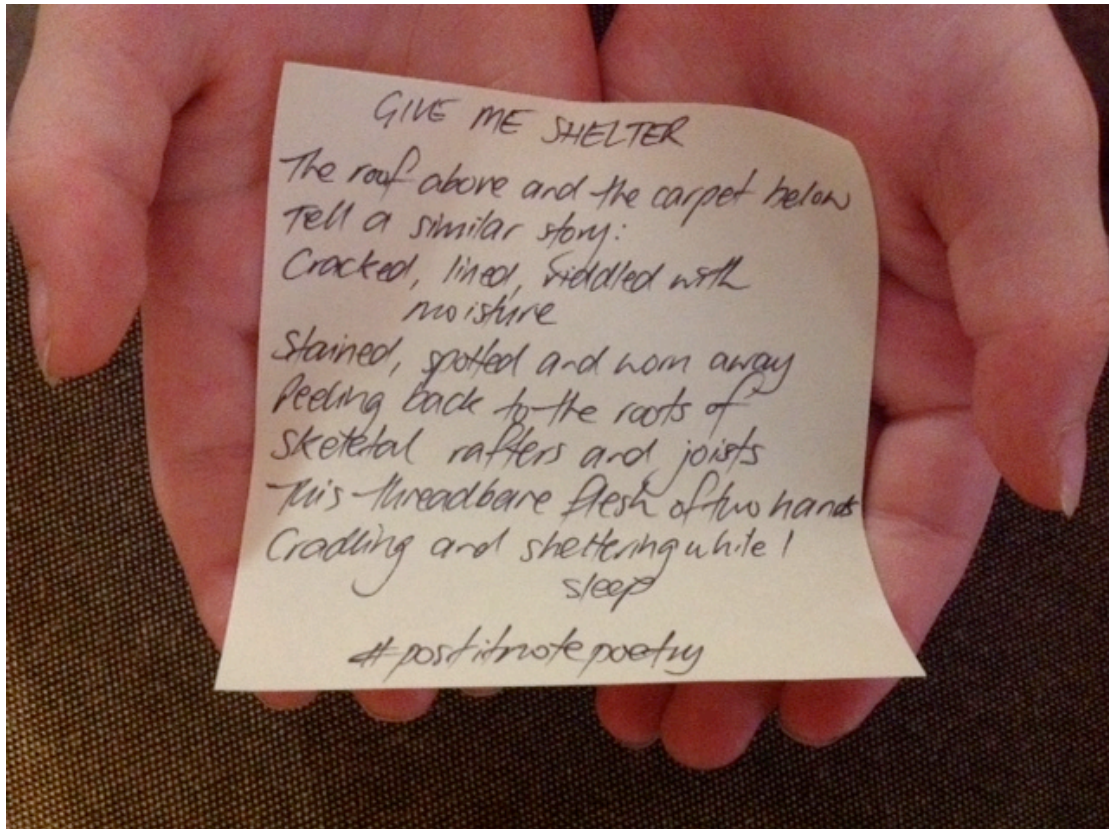
Plodding the painted parallel lines
Rhythm of footfall while
Running against the clock.
In circles she cycles
The seasons through each turn.
Crossing the line she starts again
The distance to the end undetermined

February 15 – Grammatical Time



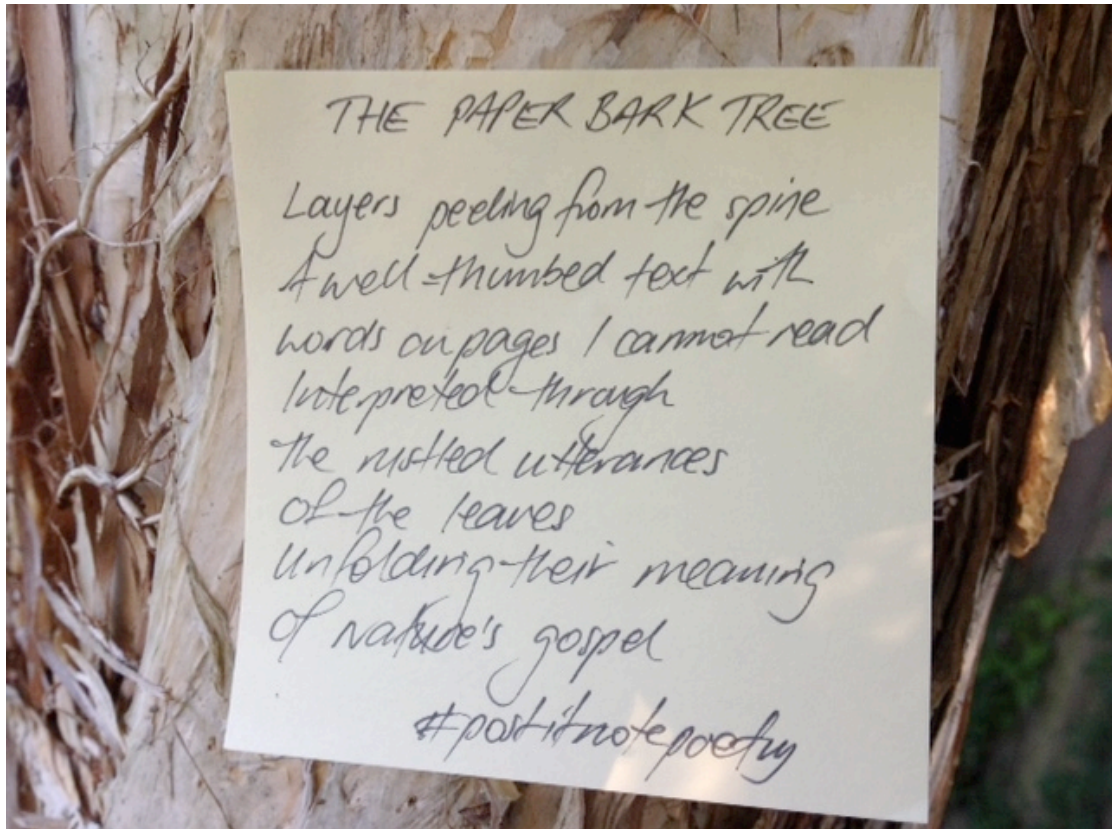
Living in the constant present tense
In absence of the past "was"
No anticipation of the future "will be"
Only the moment of "is."
A vision is a memory
A dream is a legacy
The sundial's shadow stalled
Held by a breath
Waiting for the second hand
In the constant present tense

February 16 – Give Me Shelter



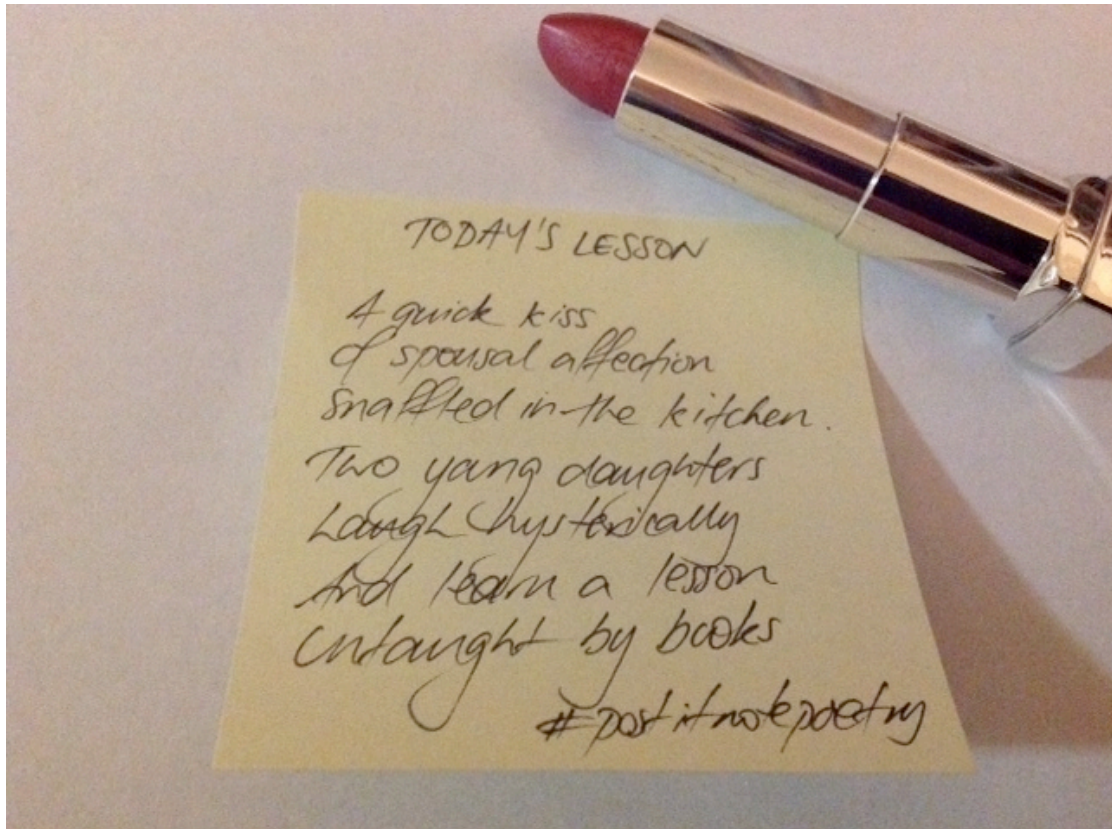
GIVE ME SHELTER
The roof above and the carpet below
Tell a similar story:
Cracked, lined, riddled with moisture
Stained, spotted and worn away
Peeling back to the roots of
Skeletal rafters and joists
This threadbare flesh of two hands
Cradling and sheltering while I sleep
#postitnote poetry

February 17 – The Paper Bark Tree



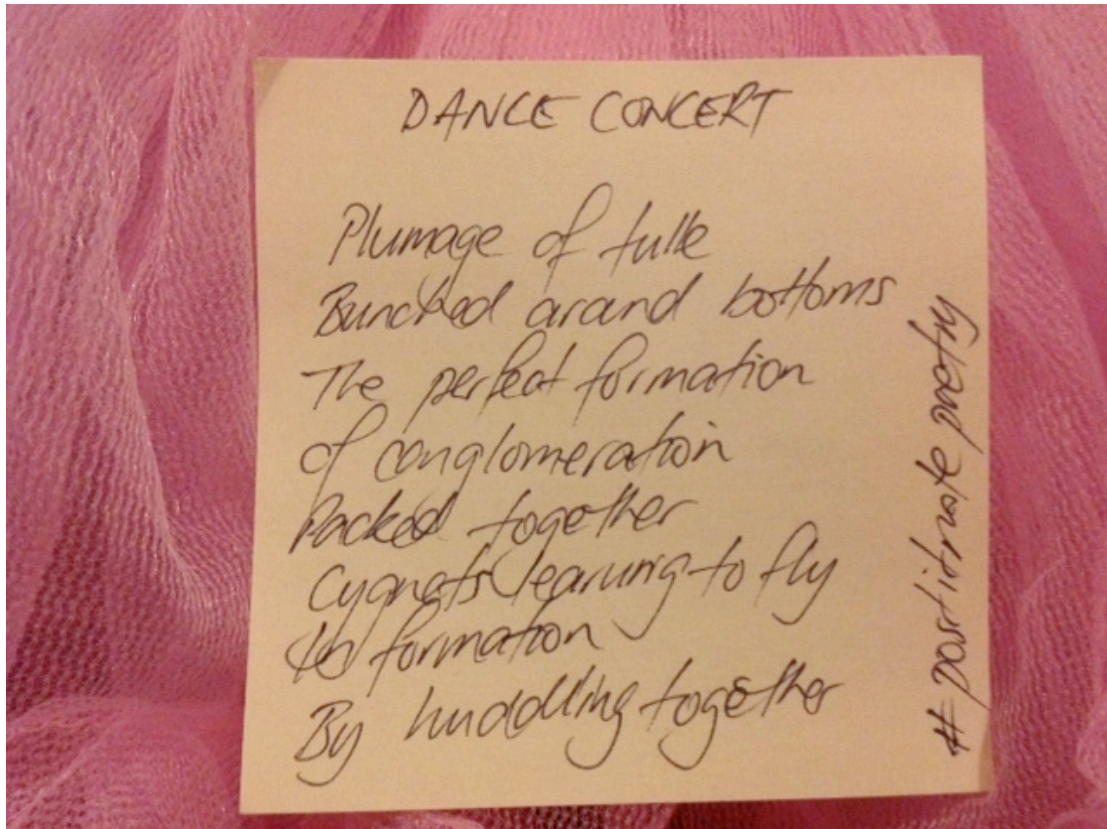
Layers peeling from the spine
A well-thumbed text with
Words on pages I cannot read
Interpreted through
The rustled utterances
Of the leaves
Unfolding their meaning
Of Nature's gospel

February 18 – Today's Lesson



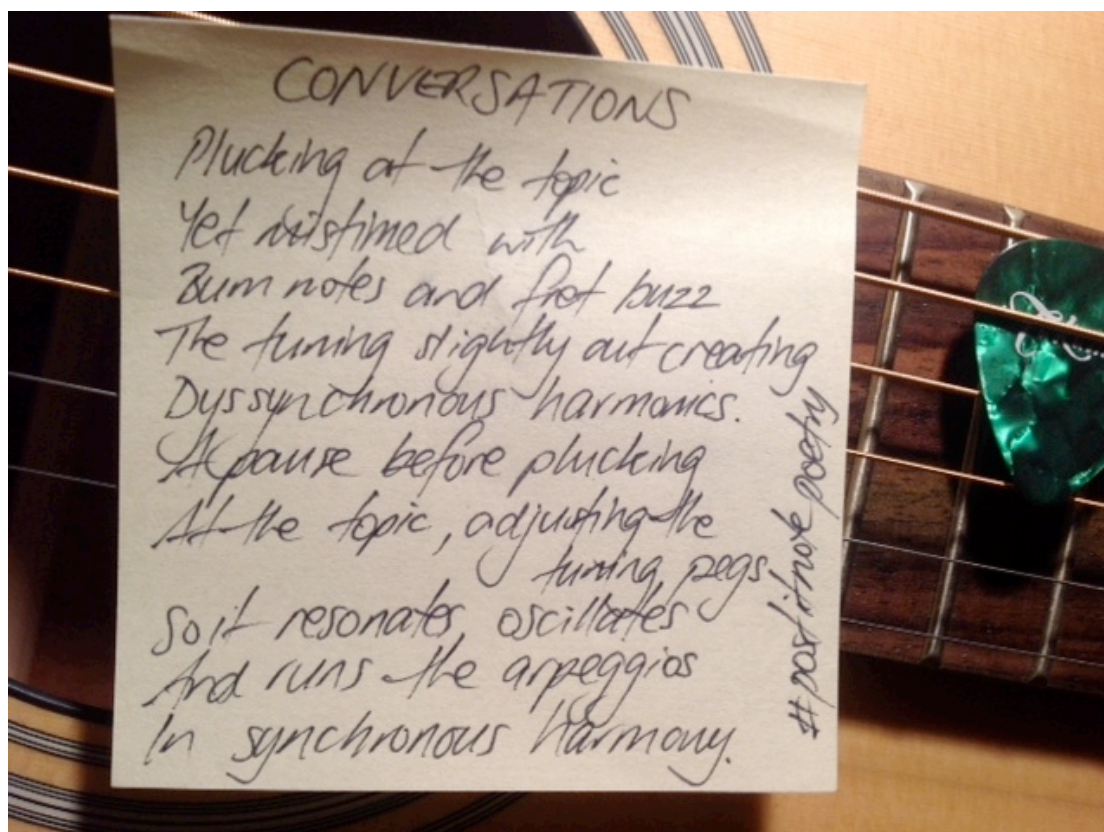
A quick kiss
Of spousal affection
Snaffled in the kitchen.
Two young daughters
Laugh hysterically
And learn a lesson
Untaught by books

February 19 – Dance Concert



Plumage of tulle
Bunched around bottoms
The perfect formation
Of conglomeration
Packed together
Cygnet's learning to fly
In formation
By huddling together

February 20 – Conversations

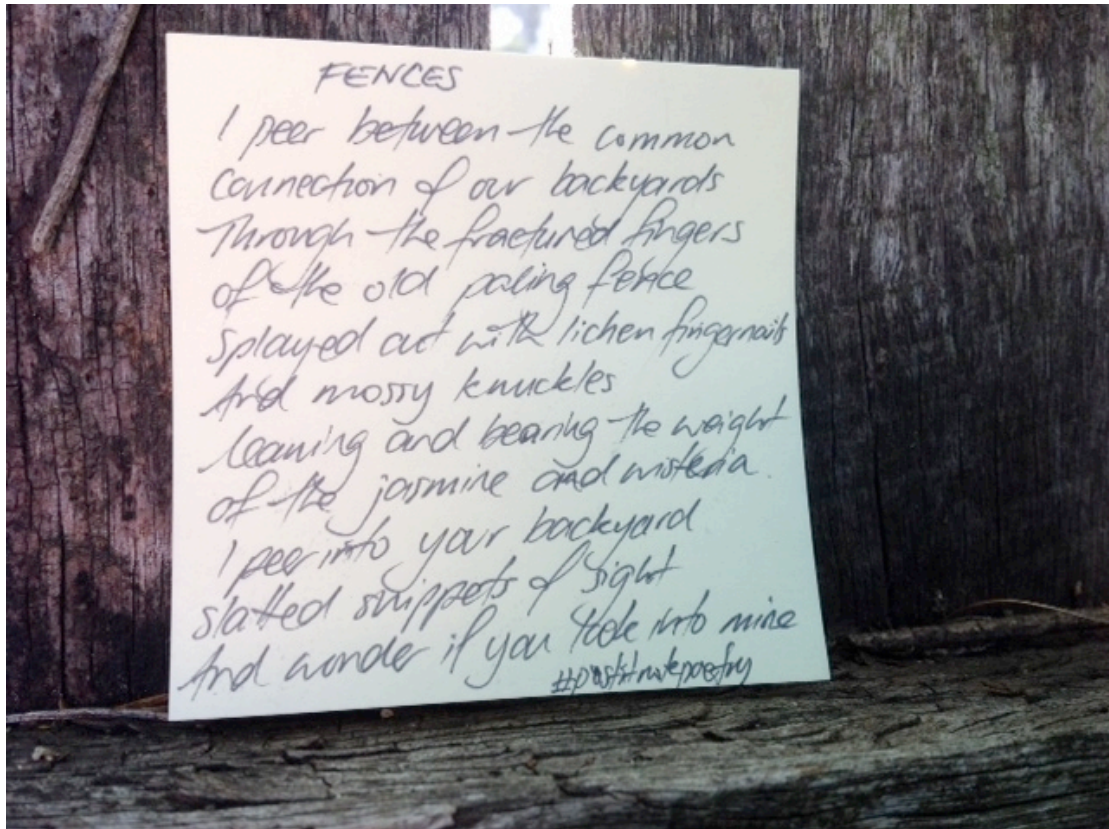


CONVERSATIONS
Plucking at the topic
Yet mistimed with
Bum notes and fret buzz
The tuning slightly out creating
Dyssynchronous harmonics.
A pause before plucking
At the topic, adjusting the
tuning pegs
So it resonates, oscillates
And runs the arpeggios
In synchronous harmony.

#poetinhok poetry

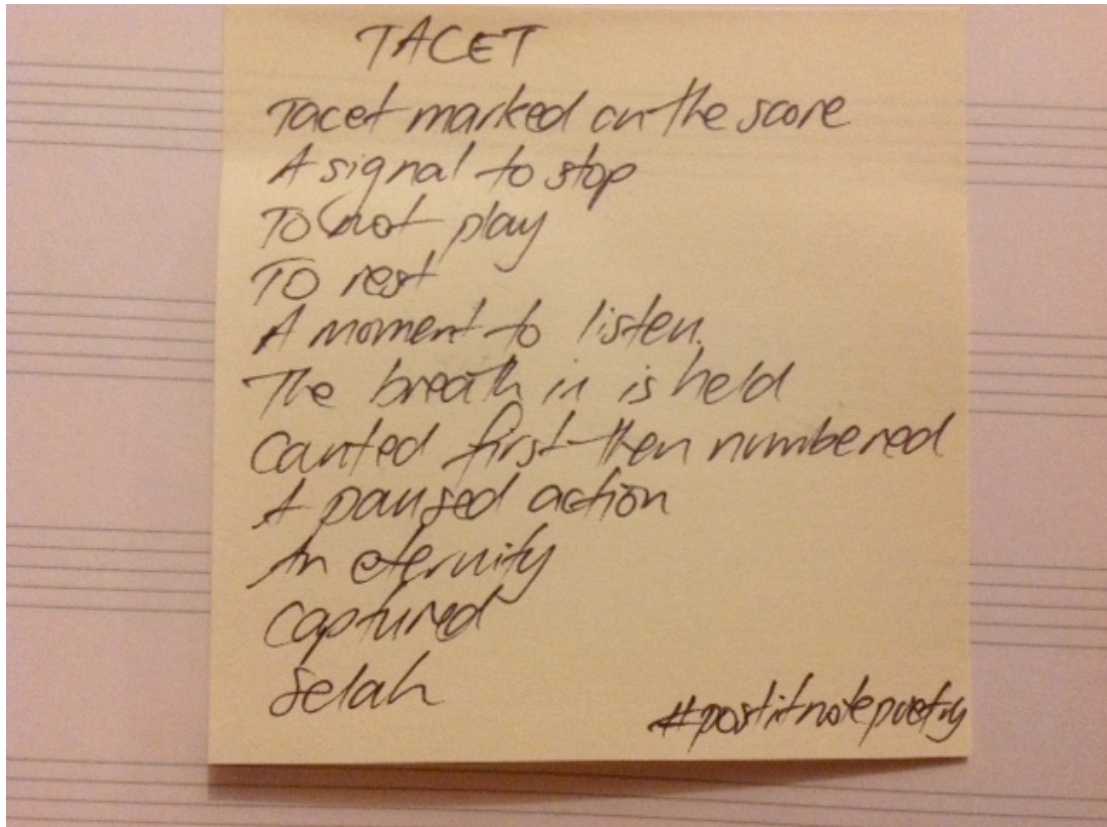
Plucking at the topic
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A pause before plucking
At the topic, adjusting the tuning pegs
So it resonates, oscillates
And runs the arpeggios
In synchronous harmony.

February 21 – Fences



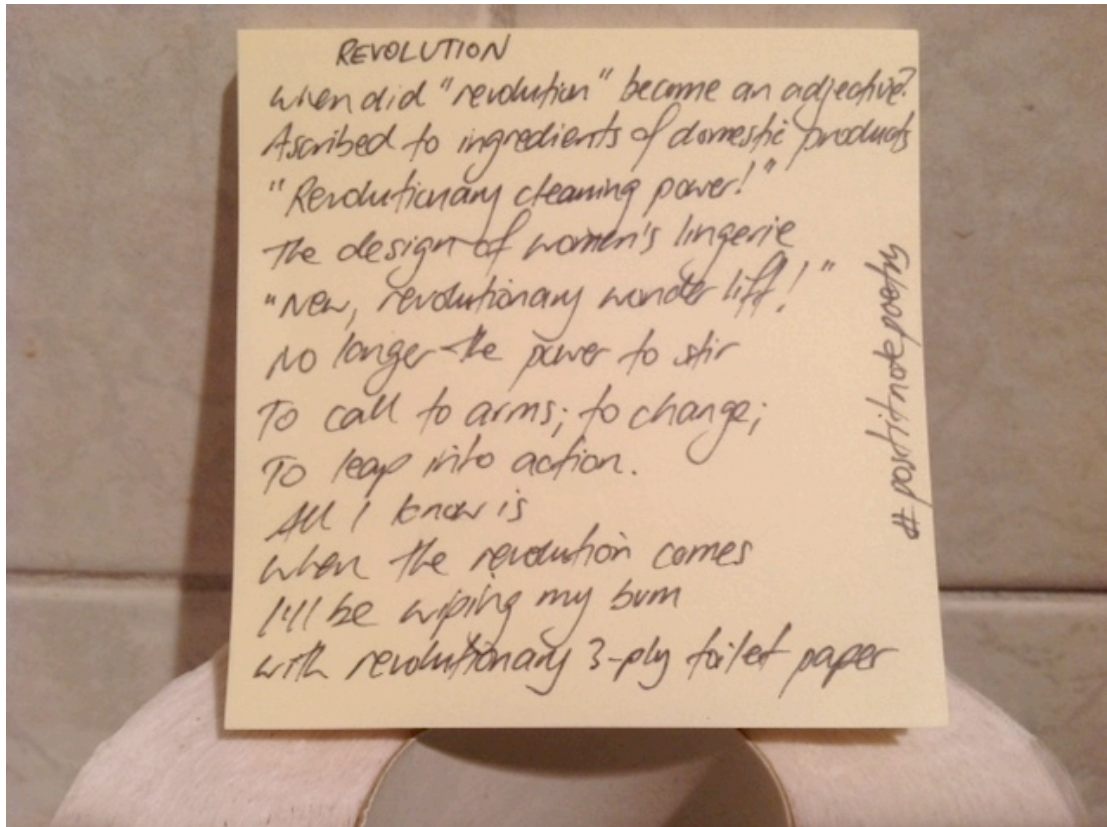
I peer between the common
Connection of our backyards
Through the fractured fingers
Of the old paling fence
Splayed out with lichen fingernails
And mossy knuckles
Leaning and bearing the weight
Of the jasmine and wisteria.
I peer into your backyard
Slatted snippets of sight
And wonder if you look into mine

February 22 – Tacet



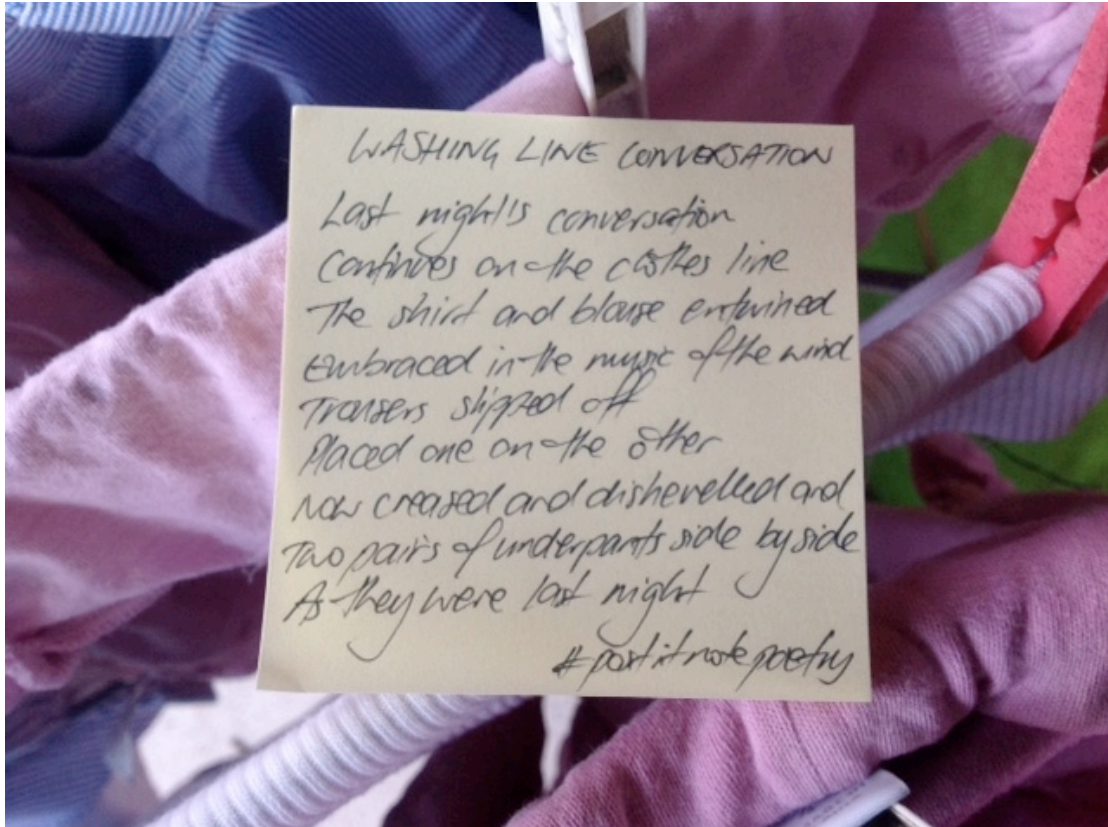
Tacet marked on the score
A signal to stop
To not play
To rest
A moment to listen.
The breath in is held
Counted first then numbered
A paused action
An eternity
Captured
Selah

February 23 – Revolution



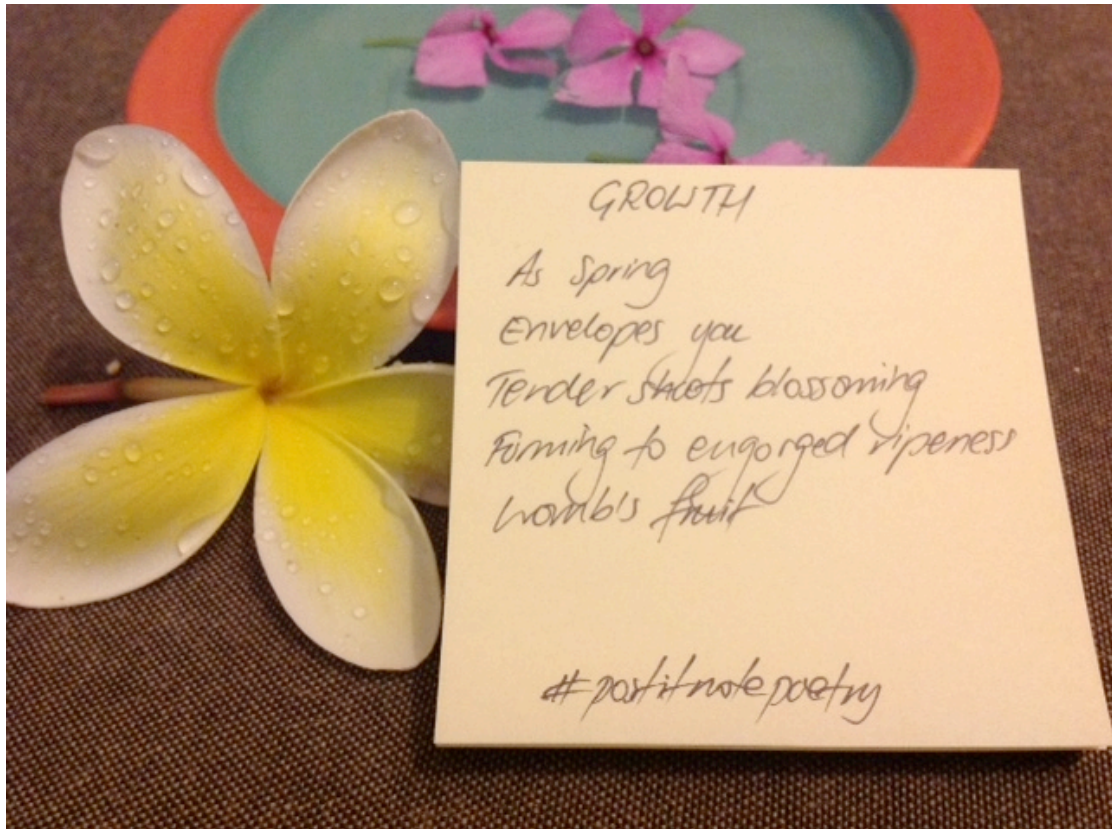
When did "revolution" become an adjective?
Ascribed to ingredients of domestic products
"Revolutionary cleaning power!"
The design of women's lingerie
"New, revolutionary wonder lift!"
No longer the power to stir
To call to arms; to change;
To leap into action.
All I know is
When the revolution comes
I'll be wiping my bum
With revolutionary 3-ply toilet paper.

February 24 – Washing Line Conversation



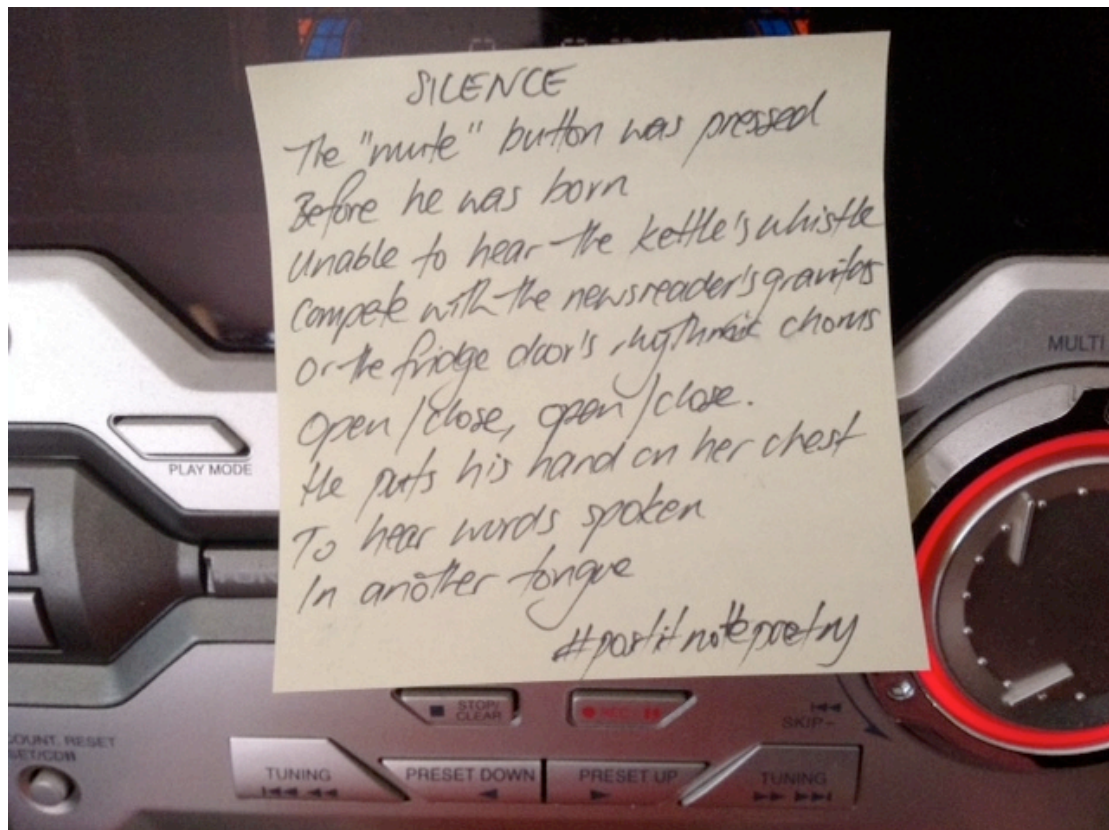
Last night's conversation
Continues on the clothes line
The shirt and blouse entwined
Embraced in the music of the wind
Trousers slipped off
Placed one on the other
Now creased and dishevelled and
Two pairs of underpants side by side
As they were last night

February 25 – Growth



As Spring
Envelopes you
Tender shoots blossoming
Forming to engorged ripeness
Womb's fruit

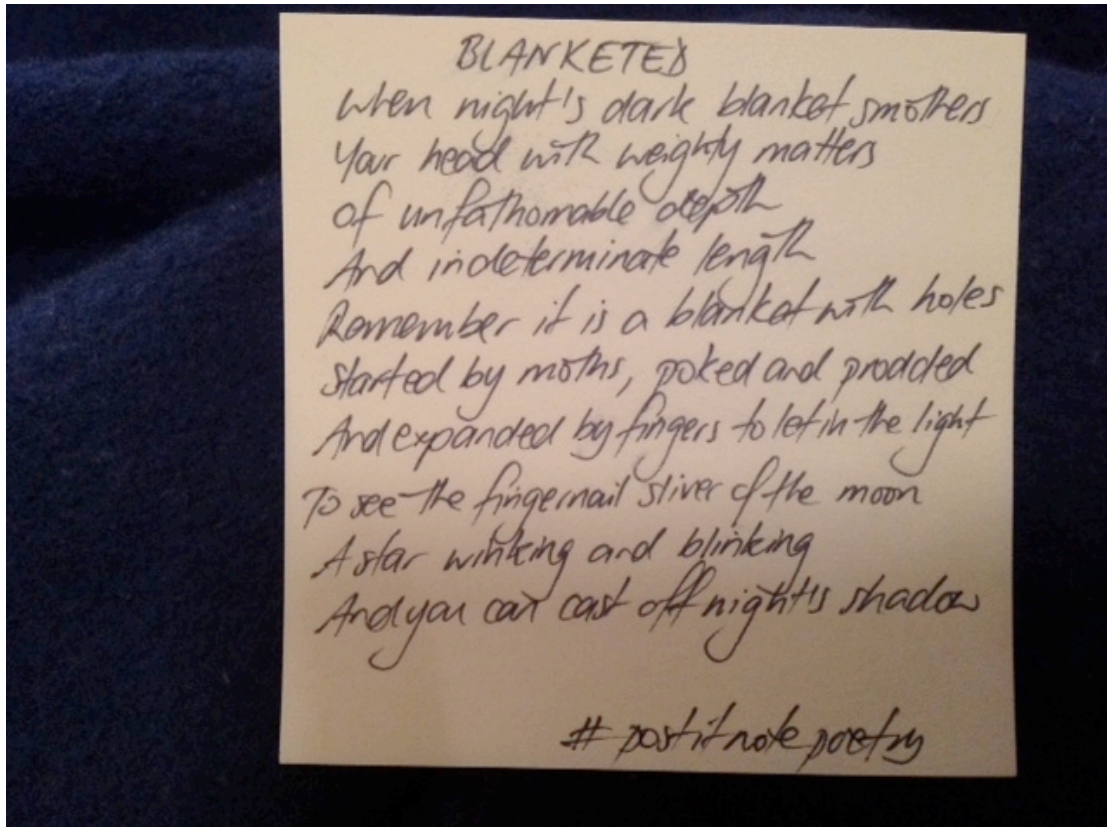
February 26 – Silence



SILENCE
The "mute" button was pressed
Before he was born
Unable to hear the kettle's whistle
Compete with the newsreader's gravitas
Or the fridge door's rhythmic chorus
Open/close, open/close.
He puts his hand on her chest
To hear words spoken
In another tongue
#postitnotepoetry

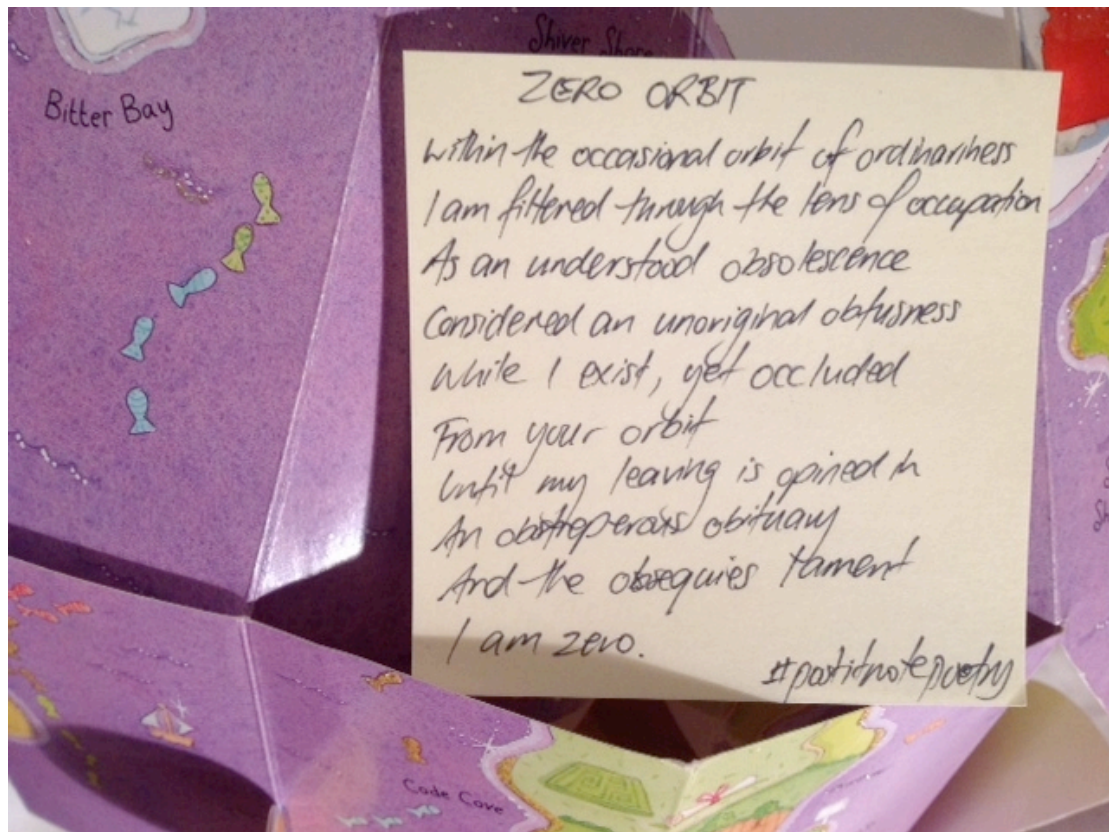
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Unable to hear the kettle's whistle
Compete with the newsreader's gravitas
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February 27 – Blanketed



When night's dark blanket smothers
Your head with weighty matters
Of unfathomable depth
And indeterminate length
Remember it is a blanket with holes
Started by moths, poked and prodded
And expanded by fingers to let in the light
To see the fingernail sliver of the moon
A star winking and blinking
And you can cast off night's shadow

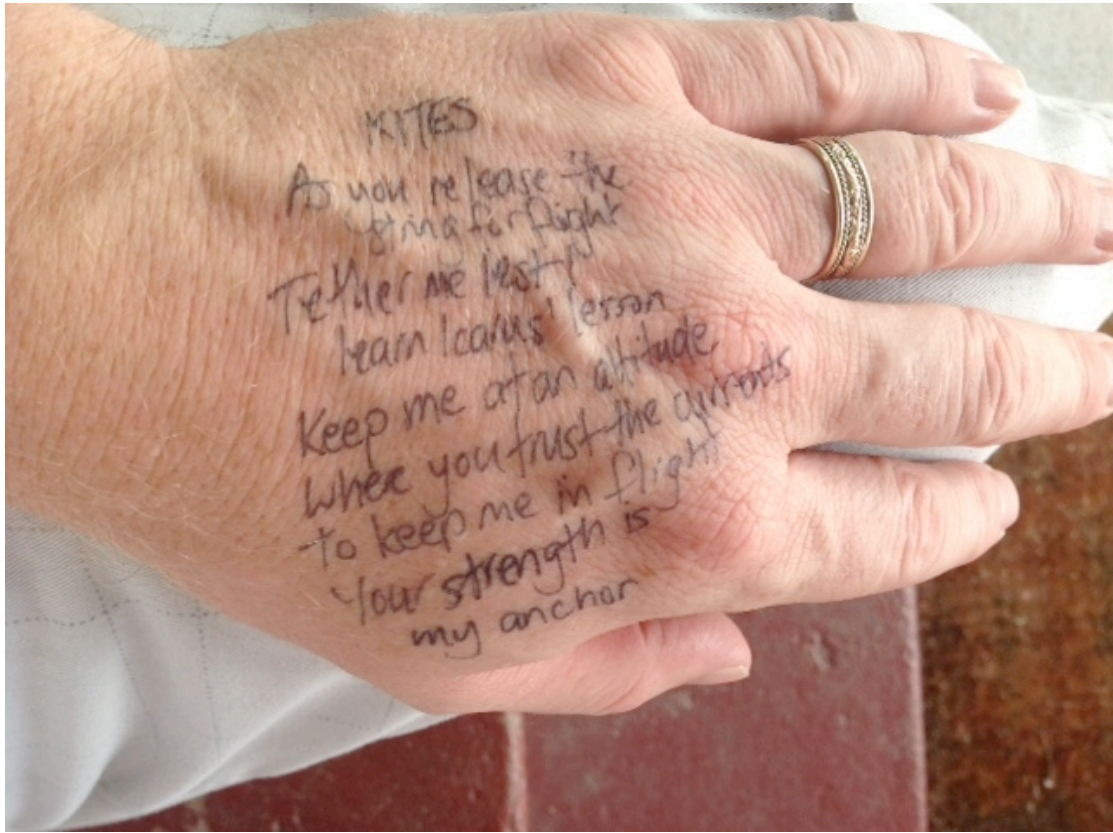
February 28 – Zero Orbit



Within the occasional orbit of ordinariness
I am filtered through the lens of occupation
As an understood obsolescence
Considered an unoriginal obtuseness
While I exist, yet occluded
From your orbit
Until my leaving is opined in
An obstreperous obituary
And the obsequies lament
I am zero.

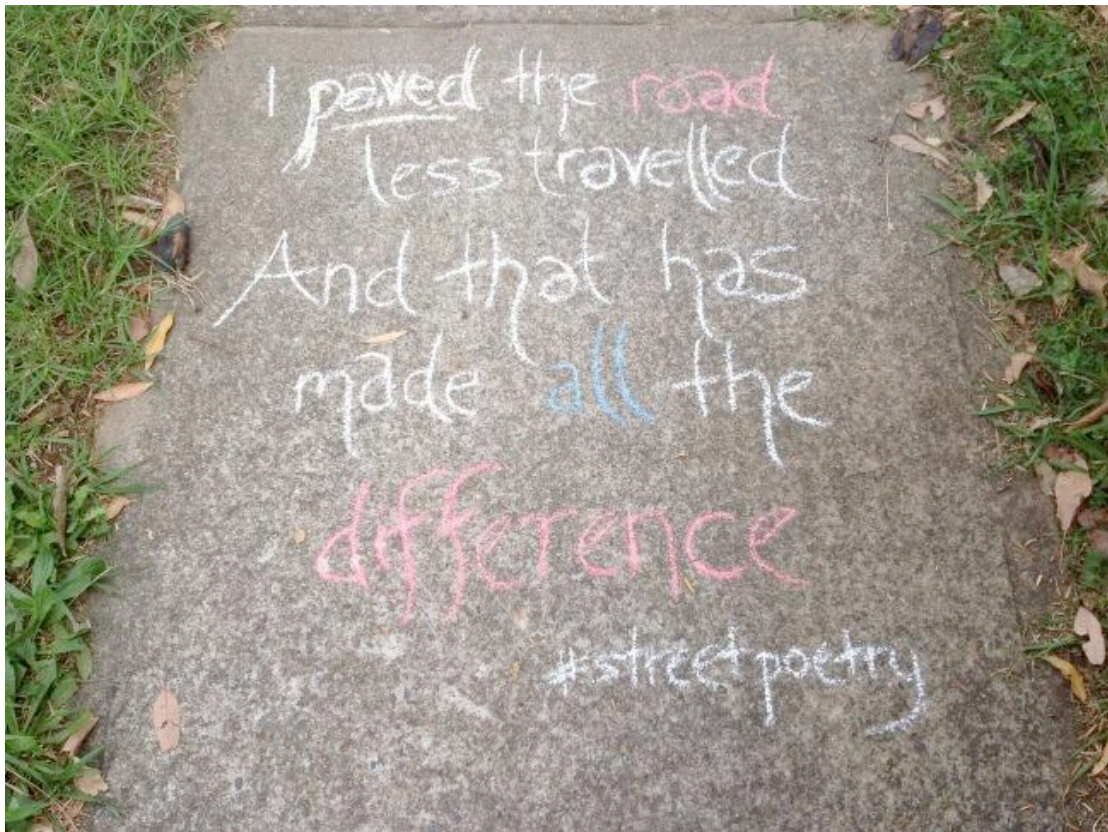
Kites

9 March



As you release the string for flight
Tether me lest I learn Icarus' lesson.
Keep me at an altitude
Where you trust the currents
To keep me in flight.
Your strength is my anchor.

I Paved The Road Less Travelled
15 April



I paved the road
less travelled
And that has
made all the
difference

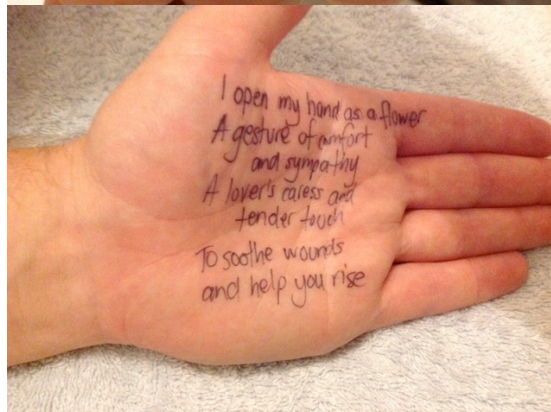
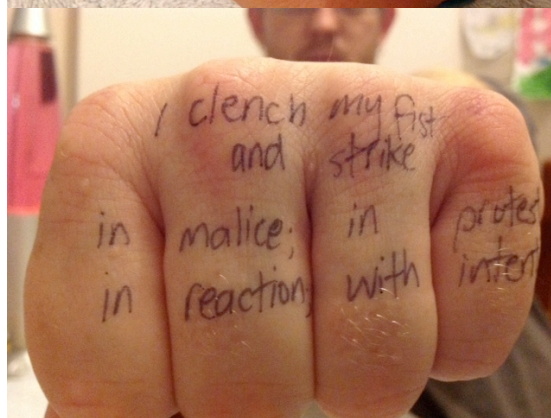
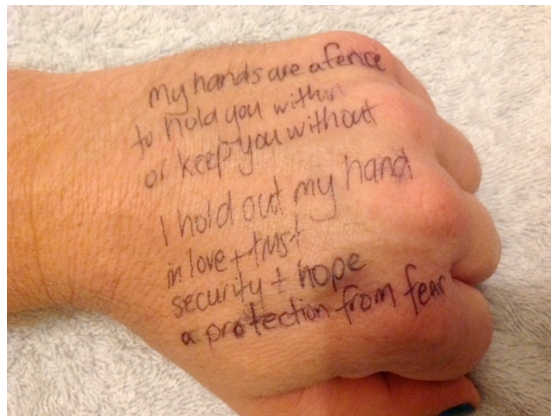
My Enemy
16 April



My enemy planted a brick
and grew a wall of hate
I planted a tree beside
the wall and showed
how love creeps in

Hands

Thursday 18 April



My hands are a fence
to hold you within
or keep you out
I hold out my hand
In love + trust, security + hope
a protection from fear
I clench my fist and strike
in malice; in protest
in reaction; with intent
I open my hand as a flower
A gesture of comfort and sympathy
A lover's caress and tender touch
To soothe wounds and help you rise
In friendship we clasp and I know
Your strength and you know mine
I can close the doors against you
or open the gates
and welcome you home

Tempest's Questions

Sunday 21 April



In the darkness
Of the tempest
Twixt Faith and Doubt
Who dares wake the
Sleeper in the prow?

About the Author

Adam is an English teacher and occasional drummer with an interest in literary pursuits, rhythmic permutations, theological amplifications and comedic outbursts.

He sifts through the ennui, minutiae and detritus of life and cataloguing them as potential story ideas on the fridge door.

Occasionally he finds loose change.

He exists on twitter as @revhappiness, blogs about creativity and writes flash fiction at <http://afullnessinbrevity.wordpress.com>

He is also co-author of the epistolary serial Post Marked: Piper's Reach <http://postmarkedpipersreach.wordpress.com>



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