

## The Last Bus to Auburn

Auburn Poets and Writers Group



In partnership with Auburn City Council and The Red Room Company, Author of *The Tribe* and Director of Sweatshop, Michael Mohammed Ahmed lead a *Disappearing* poetry writing workshop with The Auburn Writers and Poets group. The workshop has resulted in geo-specific poetry about Auburn, which featured in a guided bus tour, *The Last Bus to Auburn*, as part of the Sydney Writers' Festival on 22 May, 2016.

These poems will feature in The Red Room Company's *The Disappearing* – a website that links poetry to place to be launched in 2016.

*Image credit: Leigh Rigozzi, 2016. Commissioned by The Red Room Company for The Disappearing*



### *fibros and silvertails*

Williem Tibben

**(‘dallas’ john donnelly at lidcombe oval sunday 7<sup>th</sup> may 1978...)**

i never heard the grandstand like that roaring afternoon  
dallas burst through manly forwards bouncing off him  
like tossed potato chips and then his square bulk  
running down their winger smashing him into the corner post

i was having a beer in the railway hotel after my day at the office  
dallas was there in the public bar on his tenth rum and coke  
he said looking at me smiling wide as he was tall  
reckon our fibros will flog those silvertails this sunday

sly coach roy masterminded that club rivalry as class warfare  
some bloody good fights that we won and the minor premiership  
but the grand final went to manly again history rolled on  
we disappeared into wests-tigers manly still the fucking silvertails

we never lost a single home game all that larrikin season...  
... dallas's weight ballooned him to byron bay as player-coach  
then i read how he drowned in the surf someone found him  
beached the ocean's roar washing over him...

my night train passes the gallipoli mosque and slows  
lidcombe oval goalposts the last post lone grandstand  
exacting lights steam wreathing from a scattered handful

*Location: Lidcombe Oval, Lidcombe*

# The Last Bus to Auburn

Auburn Poets and Writers Group

## DUFFY BROTHERS' CORNER

Neera Handa

*"You live around here STILL!"*

She asks me while getting her wallet out of her red matching bag at the till, a bit too grand,

We have met by chance at the Duffy Brothers Veggie corner, where onions are on special, the Spanish ones, \$4.99 for a 10 kg bag!

I squint at the hanging tag

It is an expensive brand!

We had known each other years ago,

From the time of the playgroups, taking our little girls every second Thursday at the local church hall together

right after the English conversational classes

*"I wonder if they still have them",* she looks at me,

Patting at my greying hair, I look away

Playgroups, run by good Samaritan local mums and volunteers

And those red and green plastic and dirty yellow, cups and saucers with orange cordial galore!

(it wasn't called squash here, we had found out!) flash in my mind

and kids drinking at a great speed, racing for the second one

as if they had never tasted an orange drink before!

and embarrassed, we, the mothers, distributing already darkening cut apple, and bananas, and occasional fruit cake,

that Mrs Simms, she was not a mother, just a volunteer.

liked to bake!

*"We should catch up, you know, the girls will like it!"*

Last year, Keisha's wedding invitation had come back undelivered.

it has been seventeen years,

Well, we had been friends, then!

Recent arrivals, same continents, similar cultures, neighbours, unemployed.

before she moved up the postcode ladder

over the years though a couple of cards found their reluctant way into my letter box, she knew where, I still lived!

stuck in Auburn, the transit lounge, as we migrants called it then!

*Did you get that job at the Migrant resource centre?*

She is busy shaking something imaginary off her sleeve or maybe a stray onion skin

I had lent her my white blouse for her first interview, and there had been a few

for both us, but you know, one needs only one successful interview

we used to laugh a lot together, a few picnics, shopping, buying together, looking for bargains

saving up a bit each week, for a coffee and a Donut treat, we called it our high tea

She is thinner now, and looks much taller, in her black tights and high shoes

I count 7 dollars in my purse.

Just enough to pay for our coffees

"Auburn has changed a lot!" she is in a hurry to leave!

Maybe I will take some Oregano pizzas home!

*Location: South Parade Shops Northumberland Rd, Auburn*

---

# The Last Bus to Auburn

Auburn Poets and Writers Group

## Alice St, 1903

Danny Gardiner

They named her 'sweet Auburn' where:  
'smiling Spring it's earliest visits paid'.  
With its streets with those evocative names . . .  
Birmingham, Manchester, Gloucester, Canterbury, Salisbury.  
In a spacious row of attractive cottages  
With fine front fences and shady trees behind.  
Horse and buggies pass down wide, unpaved avenues  
Sloping gently away from the church at the rise.  
There was an air of plenty - still bucolic;  
the neighbourhood of our humble abode  
Where bird song and cricket call dressed ends of day  
And clocks tick in the parlour, a good book interrupted  
By the welcome pause of tea-time  
And a gaze from lounge window reflection;  
The barking of a dog.

I'm still looking at a photograph

2

As a car on bitupave passes  
and the far knock-off whistle blows from a factory.

I feel again with my hand  
the texture of a passport to untold foreign lands.

---

## Newcomer

Maureen Tan

*(On the premise that before things can disappear, things have to appear, this poem presents a newcomer on his first trip to Auburn.)*

Bumping a wheelie suitcase through sliding doors, he just makes the train at Strathfield.  
He studies the diagram of stations, looks around.  
A couple in their fifties, both of a ruddy complexion (the man relaxed, in shorts; the woman plump----- -  
cheeked, plastic bags of food tucked up against her broad hip), a slim woman thumb-texting, and  
another woman, of his race, but clearly, he can tell, not from his country.  
"Is...right train?" he asks of all or any of them.  
"Depends where you're going, mate," the ruddy man quips, friendly-like.  
"Auburn," he pronounces.  
"You're alright, then," the man continues; his wife smiles.  
"Two stops down. After Lidcombe," the same-race foreigner woman volunteers.  
Now that's cleared up. But he has another, as urgent, query. "Is...toilet train?"  
"No, mate," Mr Ruddy shakes his head, "only intercity trains."  
"There are toilets at Auburn station," the non-compatriot woman adds.  
He nods. "My English...no good."  
"English is a difficult language," plump-cheeked Mrs Ruddy responds amiably.  
"Mandarin is even more difficult," the non-compatriot offers for some reason, perhaps so his learning capacity is not underestimated.  
He settles into his seat, his newcomer suitcase unobtrusive at his feet.

---

# *The Last Bus to Auburn*

*Auburn Poets and Writers Group*

## ***Gazing out the window day dreaming***

Yasemin Dolcel

Gazing out the window day dreaming,  
With the last of my things in the back of Gary's range rover heading west on  
Parramatta rd,  
I am coming back leaving behind a life style that will remain memories.

- Reaching the big M, known as the golden arc, we turn left onto st hillers rd  
Approaching, i can see the minarets, then the dome – “here it is, built by the Turks” i  
say excitingly passing the Gallipoli nearing the Turkish delight building.  
On the corner at the set of lights, we turn left driving over the railway bridge turning  
right theres Pizza hut, now a lebanese restaurant called Jasmin 1  
Driving into Auburn and onto auburn rd i see long legged Nigerians, men in white  
gowns, woman in black borques, china men and Indians. Where are the nuns?  
This doesn't look like the auburn i grew up in.  
Driving along The changes Are dramatic,  
On the left, the old post office , record shop, toy shop and funeral house have all  
turned into medical centre's.  
On the right, the old milk bar and chemist have been replaced by kebab shops.  
Venture, katies, events, harris scarfs are all long gone. In their place Islamic shools,  
mosque, and job search centres  
Where have i come what have i done, this is Not the auburn i grew up in  
I roll the window down,  
The st that once smelt of jasmine, hair products, perfume blended with hamburgers,  
fish and chips is now blanketed over by kebabs, chicken, curry and rubbish.  
Where have i come, what have i done, this isn't the Same auburn i grew up in,  
it looks different, it smells different.  
Where the shops end, We reach the set of lights, turning right onto Beatrice st.  
“i went to school here” i say half heartdly as we drive pass reaching the round about.  
we turn left onto park rd, further along on the left the servo is still here, so is the  
convenience store and the butchers across it... All The writings on The awnings are In  
Arabic

“Keep going , at the lights we turn right” i say softly  
At the intersection of Park and Chiswick rd the lights are red  
Joe's grocery store is still here, only now its called Beladana, looking right my eyes  
light up 'o cool dr lum and dr chums surgery stayed  
As The lights turn green, Gary veers right,  
Slow down, left here' i say nervously,  
All the houses are the same , The lawns are nicely trimmed and there's Jenny and  
Robin on their verandah,  
just here on the right, the brick house” i say nervously  
as gary drives into the drive way my dog runs out yelping with excitement waging his  
tail followed by my parents.  
Where the nuns gone?  
Woman in borques ,men in white gowns walk the streets  
The only bookstore in replace of the dissappeared Manchester shop is called albahri  
Islamic bookstore  
A mosque is being built where the fire station use to be  
The squash centre, now an Islamic shool  
Eateries with names like maddo, merhaba, vatan, dunya, line the streets.  
Auburn,, is it the new epicentre of Islam?  
Im told, the Baptist church is still here so is the orthodox Russian one  
There is the Indian temple down on Cumberland rd and st joseph's on Wellington rd  
on Sunday mornings still lively.  
Where Have I Come What Have I done?  
My Pass Is Here, I'll adapt to My future like I Did to The past I left behind That was My  
future.  
Auburn, where religion, races, ragers and rebels meet.  
I know what ive done, i know where ive come.  
I am auburn and auburn is me.

*Location: Auburn Rd*

---

# *The Last Bus to Auburn*

*Auburn Poets and Writers Group*

## ***Disappearing Auburn Train Station***

Seher Aydinlik

I love Auburn Train Station  
I have been going to Auburn train Station for 20 years  
You can catch a train to just about any place in Sydney  
It is so easy  
It's cheap and affordable  
Sometimes feelings on the platform are sad and  
Sometimes funny things happen  
I love Auburn Train Station

Auburn Train Station is much busier than before  
It's active every hour of the day  
It's full of travellers every hour of the day  
People travelling to see friends or relatives  
People travelling to a hospital for treatment  
People travelling to hospital to visit their sick ones  
People travelling to work  
People travelling to look for work  
People travelling to study  
You can see someone from every culture  
Every nationality and every age group  
Sometimes you can help an elderly  
Sometimes a young person  
Auburn Train Station is much busier than before

Auburn Train Station  
Has 4 platforms  
You need to climb 34 steps to get to platform 1 and 2  
You need to climb 34 steps to get to platform 3 and 4  
It's good exercise for young and healthy people  
But it was hard for some

the elderly, the sick, the disabled,  
pregnant women  
and mothers with babies & prams  
People with shopping bags and trolleys would struggle  
It could be hard and stressful

It could bring you to tears  
Not even a walking stick could support you  
and you could fall half way

But Auburn Train Station is much easier than before -  
Some years ago it was given two new lifts  
People seem so thankful while they look at the lift  
They know the old station without it  
Auburn Train Station is much easier than before

The old Auburn Train Station is disappearing  
You could see your destination and timetable on old wooden displays  
Nowadays you can see everything on a digital display  
Auburn Train Station is much more presentable and busier  
Hellos and goodbyes seem to have a smile and a hug nowadays  
There are cameras everywhere  
Auburn Train Station is so modern and nice  
The ticket sales office, the information office, the coffee house, the newsagency  
Auburn Train Station is much cleaner and secure

I love Auburn Train Station

*Location: Auburn Train Station*

# *The Last Bus to Auburn*

*Auburn Poets and Writers Group*

## **Ashes to Ashes**

Isil Cosar

Ashes to ashes  
Dust to dust  
Nothing disappears  
From the earth 's crust

Every step  
Will leave an imprint

Every erased answer  
a mark

Every drop of blood spilt  
Will leave a stain

Every wound  
a scar

Every sadness  
Will leave a silence

Every joy  
A smile

Every barbaric yelp  
Will leave an echo  
That calms into a stir

Every poem  
Will dwell on our tongues  
A tasty myrrh

Every memory  
Will leave  
A reverie  
Don't meteors dazzle us

With their showers  
Long after comets  
Shed their debris  
Seven hundred years and  
I'm dizzy still dancing with Rumi

Doesn't true love  
Embroider itself in our hearts  
Don't we feel his scent  
After the lover departs  
The way a flower blooms  
Long after the rain  
The way earth tremors  
Long after she quakes

Ashes to ashes  
Dust to dust  
Every bit of ash and every speck of dust  
Will settle somewhere on the earth's crust

---

# *The Last Bus to Auburn*

*Auburn Poets and Writers Group*

## ***Death of the Milk Bar***

Michaela Simon

I stepped in  
To have a cup of tea  
Smell of cappuccino and raisin toast  
Mingled with stubbed cigarettes  
Here tables were bolted to benches and to the floor.  
Land of lino  
The table adorned with sugar, salt and pepper  
And dusty plastic flowers

The sign behind the counter reads  
Confectionaries, cigarettes and groceries  
Yet the shelves are nearly empty.

The host a heavy built man  
Sits eyes shut cigarette hanging from stained hand  
A Fan desperately tries to change the air  
But here the heat has decided to stay.  
A land of chewing gum and hot chips  
No health food dares to enter  
No one hurries  
The sound of some 'ones paper turn.  
Hushed by the fan.  
I finished my tea. I become nostalgic  
For this vanishing world.

*Location: Auburn Rd*

---

## ***RELOCATION OF AUBURN LIBRARY***

Bhagavadas Sriskanthadas

Opposite Auburn Library  
I perched happily on a bench  
Pondered for a few moments  
The transformation in front of me!

Here a storehouse of knowledge,  
That once led nothing but a nomadic life.  
Then came the Sydney Olympics,  
Local readers saw as a windfall

A new complex; where the library  
Went into a huddle with the Town Hall  
Nestled with the police station.  
This treasure house, under one roof,  
Catered for young and old.

The children's enclave possessed  
From Kipling to Rowling.  
Seniors shuffled between shelves  
Where large print versions quietly sat!

Plenty of books for migrants  
In Turkish, Arabic, Hindi and Tamil  
Stacked along with Chinese and Vietnamese.  
Welding Different groups:  
Reflecting Auburn's community spirit.

*Location: Auburn Library*

---