

## Homesickness

On cool Autumn days in Melbourne  
I can smell Glasgow. Transposed,  
I think it's Spring  
and look for lambs - lambs that aren't  
far from the city, in fields  
on farms like handkerchiefs,  
in contrast with the spare, sprawling bush.  
I imagine the almost edible aroma  
of rain as it falls on untended pavements,  
mingling centuries of my ancestors' dust.  
When the sounds of cicadas echo in the evening,  
they bring with them a quandary:  
leaving me in darkness, the sun  
descends to give you morning light,  
migration of moon shadows  
and time's disruption, this now  
is your tomorrow, the past, already here.

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## Lighting up

Dunhill one milligram, gift-wrapped  
box of gold and handy flip-top lid.  
I reach inside repeatedly for those long,  
white, smoking tubes with pale orange tips.  
Lit in clandestine places, glowing remotely  
in marked out spaces: after dinner, outside,  
smoking zones with windowed walls,  
in bed, in secret, while I make telephone  
calls. Resplendently held between fingers  
and raised to my waiting mouth, I  
suck deeply upon their contained pleasure -  
softly inhaling the essence of a dragged  
sensation; rushing to satisfy the soul,  
slowly releasing the smoke from my mouth,  
exhaling the cloud from my lips shaped  
in an O, producing invisibility,  
watching it go, and still seeking  
the ultimate cigarette.

## THE PK POETS

The PK Poets is a series of free to print poetry leaflets highlighting the poetry of a single poet. It is intended to be a sample introduction to the work of a poet who is also a member of the PK Poetry List. The PK List is a free to join community of poets who share their work and critique using email and the internet. Information about the PK List can be found on the front page of the Poetry Kit Website at [www.poetrykit.org](http://www.poetrykit.org).

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### About Irene Hossack

Irene Hossack was born in Melrose, Scotland but she has spent time living in England and Australia. She writes poetry and short stories and has had work published in journals from the UK, America and Australia since the mid-1990s. She teaches Creative Writing, among other courses, with the Open University.

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# THE PK POETS #11: Irene Hossack



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## Sundays Are Different Now

This is the ancient church where  
we offered heavenly praises  
to a god we did not seek  
to understand. Rewarding ourselves with mum's  
feast of ham and eggs on our return home,  
a starched white apron over her best suit,  
a new one every year for Easter Sunday.  
We savoured a delicious end  
to the weekly four hour fast,  
sitting together in the same places,  
gathering in the round  
of a day set aside to meditate,  
the strange possibility of being here.  
Now, there is no worship and  
breakfast comes before lunch  
with no fresh, crispy-white rolls set amongst  
serviettes and tea-cups saved for best.  
Her white apron hangs redundantly as  
we eat solitary snacks from our laps,  
having no time for the ceremonies of life.

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## Choosing My Religion

I killed a fly and worried all morning,  
not being Buddhist, I worried in secret.  
There's a shopping mall with an icon of  
the Christ, hung on a chain from the ceiling,  
one hundred sequins sparkle on his tie-dyed  
shirt, his pink lips move but his words are  
silence.  
The standing stones are dormant for the Summer  
solstice,  
late-twenty-first-century rays gather upon obsolete  
rocks,  
mystery being the meaning of life,  
an answer for the lost urban lambs, also;  
tarot, crystals and mobilephoneism,  
Gnosticism, starsigns and nineteen-sixtiesism,  
homeopathy, ecstasy  
and colonic irrigation.

## The Literary Life

I have found my place at Lumb Bank,  
on a bench outside the communal dining room,  
away from the poets. I light my cigarettes and  
smoke in the chill air of poetic critique,  
watching Hughes' abandoned garden hang  
from the edge of a cliff it could fall over.  
Ravens intimidate the resonant silence  
in dead trees on blue-black hills, blocking the sky,  
trying to block the moonless light  
of the mind. I draw deeply on  
isolated addiction, my words dry  
for reconciliation, your carbon copy,  
overexposed, a legendary x-ray.  
At this place, where rivals are star-crossed  
bedfellows, across the black-rocked chasm,  
I throw my doubt to the monument,  
made of all the cigarettes I am finished with.

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## Double-Exposure

Holga is cheap but not common,  
she's a special little chick  
who can flash-sync at all speeds.  
She is middle-of-the-road  
but her optics are pin-sharp,  
sharp enough to capture  
what I thought had escaped me  
that day, at the blood-red wall  
when we stared with fear at  
the prospect of being bricked  
into hell to become the wall which is both  
me and not. She exposed it to me later,  
the hellish vision of hands waving  
not drowning, but much worse.

## Love Letter To My Family

... *December 1993* ...

I remember everything. I remember for instance  
a birthday meal at our favourite restaurant,  
all of us dancing in the hallway at the bells,  
spinning on the carnival rides at the Kelvin Hall,  
building snowmen in the grounds of that  
awful hotel on Christmas Eve, our wildness  
not welcomed there. Joints and tarot readings  
late at night, Wayne's World on the TV,  
eating noodles and pizza from down the road,  
past the church and the City Bakeries. James -  
Taylor,  
and Shelleyan Orphan on CD.

I remember the beauty configured in snow-  
weighted trees  
seen from the train as I travelled North, writing -  
letters to absent friends,  
wishing to stay here, not capturing but remaining  
somehow like *this*.  
Lying under stars in the snow, enchanted, not  
feeling cold  
and the dark-white-frost night lit by the moon and  
the stars.

Resting on Sunday afternoons with the fire blazing,  
hearing ghost stories from uncles with not long to  
go,  
giving us goosebumps on our skins, they are  
vulnerable and human as if for the first time.  
We all share this desire for the inexplicable,  
a family tree in whose roots we are entwined.

And later, spending hours arguing lovingly  
on the subject of truth and cultural difference,  
trying to make sense of chaos theory,  
in between the sups from cups of Cadbury's Creme;  
my spirit lives amongst your chaotic laundry  
and microwaved Marks and Spencer's food.