

LARRY BUTTROSE

SELECTED POEMS

*The poem is a beast of its own will
Slipping unseen through our lofty mists*

Larry Buttrose *Eau de Vie*

This selection of poems by Larry Buttrose represents a forty-year output and although many of the poems have been published before, either as single offerings or inclusions in anthologies, this is the first time that such a range of the poet's work has been gathered in one volume.

The poet has arranged the order in which the poems appear. Because the sequence is not chronological, a list of dates by year for the writing of each poem is also included.

Larry Buttrose is an Australian writer whose published works include poetry, novels and plays, as well as an extensive range of non-fiction and journalism.

He trained as a journalist with the ABC and holds a BA and PhD from the University of Adelaide.

National Library of Australia listing for Larry Buttrose:

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/people/458941?q=larry+buttrose&c=people>

Wikipedia listing: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Larry_Buttrose

The range and quality of his output make Larry Buttrose one of the most versatile, accomplished and interesting authors writing in Australia today. As a publisher of quality books of cultural worth, BryshaWilson Press is proud to issue two titles by Larry Buttrose: this first edition of *Selected Poems* and *The Muse of the Maze* (BryshaWilson Press, 2016, eBook), a new, extensively revised edition of the novel originally published in 1998, as *The Maze of the Muse*, by Flamingo, an imprint of HarperCollins.

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LARRY BUTTROSE



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Cover image: old tourist map of Seville, collection of Larry Buttrose

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To my darlings Belle and Ada

SELECTED POEMS

By way of introduction

I have followed the poems of Larry Buttrose as they appeared over the years, cutting some from newspapers. Rodney Hall often published them in *The Australian*. Now we have this fine *Selected Poems* and in this context the poems prove they are more than keepers, radiating imagination, wit and lyrical power. There are beautiful lyrics and edgy ballads along with elegies. Larry Buttrose uses agile rhymes and traditional forms, however his touch is light and tinged with dark humour. He writes of death hovering and time passing, yet the figure of an angel often appears in sunlight. We can't tell whether wit or a more profound note keeps the lines on their toes; there are risks with technique as well as subject matter, all successful. There is human interaction with nature, lyrical narratives and love poems. It's a book by a poet who can praise life and yet sting when he looks at what we have brought upon ourselves. It is a surprising book, the work of a brilliant poet.

Robert Adamson

A remarkable collection. I found valued friends here, and made new ones. Buttrose is one of our most indispensable poetic voices.

Geraldine Brooks

Sweet, funny, savage, sumptuous, sad, these poems taste of Larkin and Eliot but mostly, ruthlessly, of Buttrose.

Elizabeth Farrelly

Larry Buttrose's poems disrobe and contemplate the great existential truths of life: love, desire, memory and death. They unveil a sensibility that engages the world with passion, honesty and at times a wry, humorous scepticism, "cries of desperate love and love's despair" finely attuned with "that unfailing stare within, dark as the pith of a star". Read and be enlightened.

Peter Minter

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Eau de vie

Our phrases and syllables fuse alchemically
Transcending the sum of their parts; intoxicatedly,
The poem is a beast of its own will
Slipping unseen through our lofty mists,
Down the valleys and vales to the plains,
Where one may read its tracks and hear its tread.

Through some inexplicable astronomical singularity
We are the droplets of that enclosing mist,
Together constituting the eau de vie
Through which the beast invisibly steps;
We have no notion of what it is, this eau de vie,
Other than that, miraculously, it is you, as it is me.

The Morning

The morning comes
Which you don't see
A dirty morning
Of grit and sleet
A perfect morning
Of sun and breeze
Which you don't see
You've had your mornings
You missed them

London Fields

The night my girl flew to Paris
the phone rang and I thought
it's her but heard the voice
of a man I did not know saying
I had fucked up and he knew where
I was and was coming to get me.
His voice had a Kray Twins sort
of authenticity and sneered as I said
I don't know you I've never met you.
I'm coming to get you he said
I'm coming there to get you now.

That we lived in a flat atop
a large Edwardian home and thus
I had two front doors between me
and that voice was of some comfort,
though not complete. Some days later
when our old blue Triumph Herald
was stolen the police found it
a few streets away the wiper blades
twisted oddly like the arms of a man
imprisoned in a dungeon somewhere
down the East End or so it felt.

I got casual work in Fleet Street
left the Reuters building at dusk
got off at Highgate. By the tube
was a pub The Woodman where I drank
a pint or so then walked the dark
Queen's Wood ten minutes to my door
love poems in my head for my girl
as I strolled beneath the trees.
One night voices hard and close

I heard two men crashing through
the woods walking fast with purpose.

Years later home in Australia I read
of Dennis Nilsen a former army cook
he had killed fifteen boys and men
picked them up in The Woodman
drugged killed and butchered
buried parts flushed others fed
entrails to animals got found out
only after neighbours complained
of blocked and smelly drains
in his flat in Cranley Gardens
at the end of our street.

Pimlico

I remember leaving your flat in Pimlico,
Stepping out into the silent square;
It was autumn, leaves in the gutter,
A soft pink sun on the blank faces
Of the tall Georgian row.
The fenced park was locked
To those who lacked the key,
So I walked around it,
Dawdling off to Victoria.
The past is not another country
But another person who is you no more,
Evidenced by the slip of time
In which I never saw you again.