



Starlight: 150 poems

John Tranter

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“AFTER a career of more than 40 years, John Tranter has become that paradoxical thing: the postmodern master. Ghosting others’ poems, using “proceduralist” approaches to composition and revising and mistranslating “classic” works (such as Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*), Tranter produces something entirely original and — most importantly — superbly entertaining. The inventiveness of *Starlight* seems unending, offering us a countless array of brilliant images and atmospheres, hilarious ideas and compelling *mélanges* of styles and registers. *Starlight* could well be Tranter’s masterpiece.”

— David McCooley, *The Saturday Age*. Saturday 06 August 2011.

John Tranter's *Starlight: 150 poems* quite literally 'makes it new' - whether 'it' is Eliot's 'Four Quartets', Hitchcock's 'Vertigo' or Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*. In Tranter's hands these classics evolve into new creatures with shiny new claws and fangs.

This is one poetry book you will want to keep reading!

—Rae Armantrout

It seems natural, in retrospect, that the first great surrealist poetry in English was written by an Australian, Ern Malley. The fact that he was a hoax hardly matters. The poetry is what does, and it’s superb. It seems like modernism was directed at Australia like arrows from all over the world, and gets shot back in tenfold multiplications of them. Certainly John Tranter, who has been an international phenomenon for some time, is not one to deny the influences from outside, or to slow down the discussion of whether it all (Beats, Black Mountain, New York School) may be a hoax itself. This open question is, after all, what gives them their plangency and liveliness. We can find here firmly planted echoes of O’Hara — (‘The Last Clean Shirt’) with its superb first line, ‘We have to make do with Third Avenue,’ Ashbery — ‘The Anaglyph,’ Charles Baudelaire — ‘The Age of Nakedness,’ with its lovely ending, ‘A way of being astonished / by little things: a tractor, a running fox, a harbour full of boats,’ and no doubt others as well, but Tranter’s genius is singular in both senses of the word. Does he contain multitudes? Yes, he contains multitudes. His version of ‘Lights on the Hill’ assembles an odd bunch of artists: Stanley Spencer, Fantin-Latour, Bacon, Rockwell, Picasso, Pollock, Whiteley (don’t know him) and Warhol, and concludes ‘These curses, these futile blasphemies, these / hangovers, larger than the Brooklyn Bridge, / sobs, headaches, hissy fits, pissing competitions, / they are a kind of veterinary vitamin injection, / to raise a snoring draught-horse to his duties...’ Welcome to Tranter’s medicinal coruscating world. You’ll like it. It’ll do you good.

— John Ashbery

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