

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Kate Lilley**  
**- poems -**

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## Kate Lilley(1960 -)

Kate Lilley (born 1960) is a contemporary Australian poet and academic.

Kate Lilley was born in Perth, Western Australia and moved to Sydney with her family. She is the daughter of writers Dorothy Hewett and Merv Lilley.

After studying at the University of Sydney she completed a PhD at University of London on masculine elegy.

### <b>Career</b>

Lilley published her first volume of poems, *Versary*, in 2002. She is Associate Professor of English at The University of Sydney. Lilley edited *The Blazing World* by Margaret Cavendish (Penguin Classics, 1994). In 2010 she edited Dorothy Hewett's *Selected Poems* for UWA Press.

Lilley has a "featured cameo" as Vera Newby in the film *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*.

# 1972

After the dance we cross the oval in pairs  
to the steep bank behind the softball field.  
The hall is bolted shut, teachers pass in the dark,  
smoking and talking on the way to their cars.  
It's cold on the ground, my buttons loose to the sky.

Kate Lilley

# Countrypolitan

Many words are falling you don't care  
wasted lips forget and have some fun

each time you leave I make a vow  
this will draw the line

thanks for something I can't win  
heartache I can't use

I hate to admit the talk is true  
my past is getting warmer while yours is growing old

someone new is crying in the most familiar way  
I didn't do one wrong thing to you

Kate Lilley

# Finally

quarto doesn't last a weak crush lingers  
like a festival of moss  
the clerk of all passports takes me round  
for a drink at a popular nightspot

I hear the voice-over from the start of Dirty Dancing  
playing in the lounge and feel sedate  
sedated  
like one more krispy creme would set me up for life

if it's not one thing it's another,  
if it's not your fault it's irrelevant  
either way keep it sober  
and sweet like some perpetual valentine

I read your letter o'er again  
it says what it doesn't say  
for so long I've wanted you to be my pretty queen

Kate Lilley

# It Follows

Resentment starts to go backwards in search of a new hermeneutic  
the appointment slipped your mind that's no excuse

I'm the kind who'll sit in the waiting room and watch the second hand  
for as long as it takes it's something I'm proud of I won't

leave just because it's dark outside and the street is slick with tears  
it's impolite to tell you what you know already

and antisocial not to — I'll bounce back in a year or two  
sorry there's no one on your side you'll have to take mine

no need to write that down I'll feel like a brute and it'll only fester  
then we'll both be on our knees mewling and puking

it's the voice of a thousand gardens making me cranky and out of sorts  
quit your dimwit hankering and hollering I don't want to hear it

Kate Lilley

# Live At The Opry

Porter Wagoner in a nudie suit  
flashes the crowd an embroidered Hi!  
He kids around trading jokes with the hee-haw,  
then the lights go down and the teardrops start.  
The Queens of the Nashville Sound gear up,  
nobody's laughing or chewing now.  
Skeeter, frail in a sky blue sheath,  
is out of rehab and born again.  
Her voice has gone the way of her orchestra.  
It's almost fifty years since the crash  
that killed off the harmonising Davis Sisters,  
the sleep-overs and double-dates,  
square dancing after the Big Barn Frolic.  
So long my honey, goodbye my dear,  
gonna get along without you now.  
When she holds the microphone to her lips  
and whispers mine is a lonely life  
it sounds like a radio tuned to the end of the world.

Kate Lilley

# Nicky's World

As the plot rocks back and forth on a pinhead  
count to fifteen very slowly.  
By that time you should be alone again  
contemplating your evening.

You could go for a ride and take a fall,  
break your back and welcome an addiction —  
or ask Miguel to serve drinks by the pool,  
that hunky contractor might stop by.

Finally there's a knock at the door,  
a lady policeman shows her badge.  
She's asking if these unusual cufflinks  
belong to the father of your children.

Kate Lilley



# Where Was I

High speed trains aren't meant for looking:  
if you try to solve the blur you'll get a headache.  
Masks are popular if you're feeling infectious  
or prophylactically alert.  
Sit back and practise mind-control instead,  
turning the pages of a cartoon novel.  
This one has pictures of lunch boxes emulating  
regions and seasons, ingenious snacks  
sold on certain days at certain stations.  
Don't try to escape allegory  
or over-read the vending machines.  
You'll regret it later, and you'll miss a lot:  
pre-mixed cocktails, blood-type fortunes,  
bandaged schoolgirls shitting on Teacher.

Kate Lilley