



**poetry collection**

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Age on the Page

In late 2021, Nillumbik Shire Council invited residents 55 and over to write poetry that rejected ageist stereotypes as part of Council's inaugural **Age on the Page** poetry challenge.

The challenge has provided residents with the opportunity to tap into their creative side. Residents were invited to attend a free poetry workshop facilitated by award-winning poet Anne M Carson.

The poems collected here were submitted in response to the themes:

- Independence
- Elder
- Challenging Stereotypes
- Identity
- Wisdom

Commended poems were read at a community event in Bridges Restaurant, Hurstbridge in December 2021.

**Age on the Page** was a rewarding collaboration between Community Support Services, Gender Equity and Arts and Cultural Development teams at Council.

This has been supported by Nillumbik Shire Council as part of Seniors Festival and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

*We acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the Country on which Nillumbik is located, we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future, and extend that respect to all First Nations People. We respect the enduring strength of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.*

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### Crossing the Styx

Let me cross the Styx with dignity  
Knowing my work here is done  
Let the ones who loved me celebrate  
The times that we had—all the fun

Let me leave my affairs in order  
Let me know what to burn, what to keep,  
What to hold in my heart—take with me—  
As I yield to eternal sleep

Let me know that I've made a difference  
Touched at least one other soul  
Let me feel that the sum of the parts of my life  
Is smaller by far than the whole

Let me go at a time of my choosing  
For I know I must leave one day  
Let me orchestrate my own exit  
Having said all I needed to say

To the ones who will stay behind grieving  
Let them laugh – say she had a wild ride  
She couldn't taste all from the buffet of life  
But by golly she certainly tried

*Gillian Essex*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Writing

Second-hand clothes hang,  
Lines of ink scrawled across page  
So, not yet published

*Helen Costello*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### 30 lines of life

Here I sit in this open space  
A place so familiar a blank open space  
Where I weave together what has never existed  
Unique, creative, at my own pace

Fifty Five plus the entry form said that seems forever ago.  
Take life as it comes or make planned decisions the choice was mine I know  
I could have been dead at 30 or a successful millionaire  
Rarely I braved the raging storm but followed life's ebb and flow

My elderly brain fully packed with stuff my early life archived  
I need connections, a link, situation, for some thoughts to be revived  
So many people places events hard to recall things at times  
Just a huge encyclopedia with some index pages excised

Past hard times fight for attention try to push the good times below  
Like two kids on a see-saw, I keep them in balance enjoying the highs and the lows  
But lows can't be forgotten they always bounce back again  
I am here then I'm not was I really here will anyone care or know

There is still time to leave my mark why is that important to me  
Fame is for the relative few but we all have an identity  
Not content to be such a tiny part of this world's history book  
Though that's the lot of billions of others before me I see

Though much is yet to be achieved while the clock ticks ever faster  
With Nuclear Midnight and Climate Change a world headed for disaster  
Will my grandchildren last until the day they can pass this planet on  
To a coming generation and many more thereafter

What is is what it is. So near the end what's happened  
Started thousands of kids in music guitar drums singing and rappin'  
Two great children a life shared with family and friends  
Four CDs to last for hundreds of years with no player - as useful as Latin

Life is not about winning since for all it ends in a dead heat  
Life is about a human race enjoying loving sharing struggling - until each life's complete

*Garry Hayes*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Lifelines

When you were six days didn't end, they collapsed.  
Night happened behind blue floral curtains your mother closed at bedtime.  
Mornings smelled of toast, sometimes bacon, to the tune of the ABC

and the chink and clink of a milkman. School mornings lapped at a wire gate,  
inviting you out in your pleated navy skirt, white shirt, lace-ups.  
You read fairy tales and pretended not to hear your mother until, *The End*.

At twelve, the weeks were spent in grey serge and sixty-denier, but your eye  
was on pointy toes and stiff petticoats. You read Agatha Christie, Georgette Heyer,  
made first attempts at algebra. Sixteen was a string of routines:

homework, piano practice, babysitting, choir, occasional good-girl party thrown in...  
Mornings broke over a study timetable taped under the window by a frothy purple bed,  
insisting on History, Geography, memorising certainties, before school began again.

You sang alto, had to be a boy at dancing lessons, but wore witches britches  
with purple polka-dots and sang along to *Rock My Soul*, with long-lost friends-for-life.  
At eighteen you went to University in an ancient car, in a city wrapped around a river,

harmonised to *Where have all the Flowers Gone*, while young men were sent to Vietnam.  
You fell in love forever in a purple hessian dress with missing bits. You shared a flat,  
skipped lectures, read Castaneda, Khayam, Hesse ... tried to learn everything.

Twenty-four was all summer. You had become, had a nestling son with peach-blond hair.  
You were a brave new teacher of new brave girls reading *Brave New World*  
and meaning every word of it. Home was shared, sometimes with broken-hearted friends.

Together you cooked up lentil curries to Leonard Cohen, Astrid Gilberto, Cleo Laine,  
all that jazz, while a greyhound slept in the vinyl beanbag. You fell off high heels,  
tripped on long skirts, voted for Whitlam, grieved for Janis Joplin, knotted macramé.

Now your evenings are measured in poetry readings, yoga, book club nights,  
or spent on pixellated forms of distraction, your tastes symptomatic of a generation:  
foreign films, authentic pasta, home-grown vegetables, pinot noir...

You haven't seen the Galapagos, finished Proust, learnt the Western Two-Step...yet.  
Now your daughter is a mother of daughters, who wish you'd kept the clothes from then.  
The moon cycling through the back door now lights up *this* season of the present tense.

*Carmel Macdonald Grahame*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### **This is your life**

You begin this way  
This is the air you breathe  
This is the soil you walk on  
This is the ocean of your world  
On the earth, here  
The shadow of you  
This is your being, your body  
Nothing else, your footprint

The same air, soil and water  
The same since our world began  
Absorbs all human waste  
Polluted air, soil, sea  
We do not see; we do not think  
Can we mend our ways?

It is a world of excess of wanting more and more  
We are comfortable with our lives of indulgence  
We accept it all willingly  
But we question?  
Bushfires floods and drought have brought destruction  
Do we listen to men of wisdom?  
There are many conflicting views  
All will affect our hip pocket

This is your life; this is the world  
Where nature tries to heal all  
All that we can see  
In the beginning and forever  
We live in hope  
And return to, this is your life

*Catherine 'Betty' Johnson*



## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Bearing witness

Inspired by WH Auden Musee des Beaux Arts

Living ninety years or more, suffering sorrow, an unhealing sore.  
A private grief underscores the mundane trivia of daily life.  
Showering, dressing, cooking, hanging out the washing, ironing, folding,  
In front of happy photos of a son shot from the sky whilst travelling with his wife.  
Their lives cut short by someone else's war.

Remembering a young boy who, one night retired to bed, but failed to wake next day.  
A photograph that fades each passing year, sits on the dresser,  
Impassive witness to a mother's never-ending sorrow.  
At 90, grieving for a son of twelve, unforgotten, but from a different age,  
It seems an incongruity somehow.

Some argue growth comes out of suffering.  
How to explain that to a young wife who saw off her son and husband in a train,  
Widowed before the day had turned to night.  
Where is the light in overwhelming grief?  
Belief does not ameliorate the loss.

Two decades past our three score years and ten, who cares why we continue to exist?  
Mourn tragedies remembered by so few?  
Largely forgotten by a wearied world that carries on regardless of old news.

*Charlotte Chidell*

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### Good on you, IGA

I bundle piles upon piles  
of bags from the back seat,  
drop them on the floor at the door,  
loop that bloody mask  
over my nose and across my ears,  
It is one of those papery blue ones today.  
I scribble my name and number  
on the paper that waits,  
I choose one of the big trolleys,  
Those bundles of bags waiting to be filled,  
I push, pause, choose,  
Rex grins and waves from his check out desk,  
He is wearing his soft black mask today,  
I begin my meandering from aisle to aisle,  
There is hardly a soul in sight,  
That suits me just right,  
Ben, the manager,  
Tall, chatty, always filled with fun,  
Stops to talk, skims up the stairs,  
I return, add to my basket of treasures,  
eventually move to Courtney's aisle,  
we stand together,  
exchange our news, our stories,  
she is wearing her trademark beautifully  
coloured bow on her shining hair,  
A wave to Rex, a grin to Ben,  
And I fill my back seat  
with those mountains of bags,  
and I trundle home  
until my next visit to my IGA mates.

*Kay Arthur*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Death is not the problem

Death is not the problem  
It's getting there that matters  
Waiting for it is a time to sift through memories  
To wonder if you're *the best you can be*  
If you've *made the most of all opportunities*  
*Taken enough chances, made the wisest choices,*  
*Lived a good life,*  
If you haven't it's too late  
So don't ask those questions.  
Look instead for the times when you did well,  
Felt happy, laughed, played with the children,  
Fell in love, was kind to someone  
Did what you did well and felt good.  
Now is not the time to lament, it's all over now  
Except maybe for getting stiffer, wrinklier, more forgetful.  
There's still time for loving, laughing, watching the moon  
Life is not over yet  
Remember death is not the problem.

*Peta Haywood*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Can you hear it?

Listening, listening...

It's funny how a whole room, a whole building,  
can seem to be listening...

it's almost as if our listening  
was also, uncannily, listening to itself  
listening to the listening of others,  
and to the listening, too, of silent things ...

a small pool of silence gathers  
                    in one corner of the room,  
as more silence streams down the walls,  
expands, and runs across the floor

the whole room fills with silence

with a soft, and calm and tranquil silence,  
the silence of silence itself

in this silence, you become aware of sounds which float  
out of and back to... and which move across,  
and above and beneath...

Sounds of... *distant traffic and aircraft,*  
*the constant hum of everything*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

More sounds slip away  
Sounds of... *creaking furniture*  
Sounds of ... *your own faint breathing*

And, in between,  
the silence which frames everything,  
which frames night and the day.

It begins to fill the room again

It begins to fill the spaces  
between new sounds and voices.

Step by weightless step,  
the silence is returning...

\*

*John Jenkins*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### On ageing

I'm fine with being older, no longer being thin  
I'm happy with this grandma's body, I find myself in

I like the invisibility cloak, I now get to wear  
And how no-ones fussed, if I haven't done my hair

It's ok being slower, not cutting such a pace  
I'm even fairly happy with the wrinkles on my face

I've learned about excess, that moderation's not wrong  
No one gets away with drinking, and not flossing, for too long

I'm cool with greying hair, and I think it should be prized  
A well-earned mark of the experienced, and the wise

I might harness my hot flushes, as an energy source  
To fuel the cars of the future, of course

I'm good with not being a pleaser, the ability to say no  
My time and effort's my own, it's my life's show

I'm loving the community, volunteering and such  
Activities that aren't focused on earning, as much

I'm chuffed I've had a youth, that reads well on the page  
And some juicy stories to relate, in my old age

I seem to have this energy, this untapped well within  
To launch into those projects, I'm longing to begin

I might even give the grey nomad life, a crack  
Hook up the van, hit the road, and not look back

You see I'm OK with ageing, I'll embrace the stereotype  
The secret is my friend, it's better than the hype

*Renata Ringin*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### As I get older

As I get older  
I realise  
That my life story is not a Netflix show

It does not have a 'satisfying narrative arc'  
Or well-known actors  
Or 'great production values'

As I get older  
I realise  
That my writers got bored at the story board stage

They started with a bang of illness and challenge  
Kept the characters and 'development' the same  
Then decided to change the theme too late

As I get older  
I realise  
That I love the life they wrote, even if they don't.

*Tricia McCann*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Don't call me Love

Don't call me Love  
I am three times your age  
I lived a life before you were born.  
    catching the train  
    Well before dawn.  
    Carrying bags  
And eating the same.  
Coupons for clothes,  
    Shoes to mend,  
    And mend,  
    and mend again.

Don't call me Love  
I am three times your age  
    And more.  
I know what is Gorman,  
    And Asos,  
    And Nike.  
Ripped and torn jeans,  
    Not to my like.  
You are here, because  
We who stood at the gate,  
    had meetings galore  
    and that sealed our fate.  
    To shout victorious  
for the gains we had made  
    for you, and for all.

Don't call me love  
I am three times your age.  
Now looked at and patted and stroked  
    Like a dog.  
    You can be me  
    Rise up and fight  
    Cant you see  
Your world slowly dying?  
    Do as we did  
    Before it's too late.

Don't call me love  
Im three times your age  
It is my right to say it  
    not yours.....  
Its respect that we want  
    Not pity and cake  
Remember it next time

Thanks a lot mate!

*Yvonne Torrico*



## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Acting my age

Acting my age means living in an encore, for the performance of a lifetime.  
I have been a woman wearing long skirts, dangly earrings and handmade beads,  
a woman in army surplus boots and overalls, chained to trees; one in purple crepe  
with embroidered sleeves, or her grandmother's vintage Indian shawl worn  
over sequined gypsy skirts, sometimes tight black jeans, or red lace nighties.  
In the beginning, Twiggy hair morphed into afro perms, gave way  
to henna times and later sleek black ponytails, arriving at the present tense  
of silver hair, long, short, up, down, often brightly colour-threaded.  
Depends on where and when we would have met.

Acting my age these days means *life* is a verb;  
writing, reading, thinking, speaking, making, walking, waiting,  
digging, planting, weeding, pruning, watering, sweeping, raking  
showering, rinsing, washing, wiping, cooking, eating, tasting,  
smiling, laughing, hugging, kissing, loving, caring, giving, taking,  
standing, sitting, still visiting, revisiting, sleeping, waking,  
viewing, reviewing, learning, teaching, hearing, seeing...  
finding meaning, as I always have, in *being*.  
All this. And now, how astonishing to have to tell it.

Acting my age might mean spending more time on the pauses, I do find  
myself suspended over experience like an under-feather in an eagle's wing,  
resting on the updraft of a planetary wind. The view is panoramic.  
Behind me are countless trees planted, species from oak to eucalypt;  
and a tide of seed scattered, watered, hoped-for flowerings harvested;  
thirty thousand evening meals prepared, possibly, over millions of minutes.  
I contain decades of education, exhibitions, concerts that tune my memories  
and turn out to be a living library, and my travels are a personal cartography  
of intersecting places by which to calculate the latitude and longitude of a life.

Add the distance walked, love received, children born, then theirs, then theirs,  
and those ahead...and I am a busy woman. So, when it comes, the end,  
and come it will; when the grace notes fade, I will certainly have been.

*Carmel Macdonald Grahame*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Looking back

I look back involuntarily  
I had to know who was following me  
My heart thumps and rises in my throat  
Strangling my intended call  
Frightened of shadows  
Fearful of the future  
I had to make the decision to embrace my aloneness  
Take it with both hands and not let go  
My comfortable past will not temp me  
I will walk this path with all its stumbling obstacles  
Face adversity with courage and tenacity  
And live my life without fear

*Catherine 'Betty' Johnson*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Painful love

How is it  
that every conversation  
ends in tears?

Why is it  
that we struggle  
to communicate?

When was it  
that this difference  
became apparent?

Where is the  
common ground  
between us?

Who are you?  
Who am I?  
What are we?

*Charlotte Chidell*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### At Blue Lake

I climb the fence and walk the steep route down  
My legs complain, their sandaled feet unsure  
But muscle memory finds its way  
Through weather's rearrangement of terrain

I slink between the girls in scant attire  
Hoping I'll un-noticed pass them by  
I'm feeling lumpy, past my prime  
But submerging can't be hurried at this time

*How did you get here?* a girl asks me  
Perhaps the question is rhetorical  
I gesture vaguely, *from up there*  
*Oh, I came by road*, she says, surprised

The girls dip toes, intentions disappear  
They chirp, *it's freezing*, I don't want to hear  
A young man bravely plunges in  
*Fuck!* he says then beats a swift retreat

The lake has not relinquished winter's chill  
But pools are closed and this is all there is

A couple joins me in my slow advance  
The girl says, *you've done well to get this far*  
Who'll be first to finally immerse?  
To my surprise, as well as theirs, it's me

They follow suit and as we swim we chat  
Rejoicing in our shared humanity  
This moment that transcends all else  
Releasing me from limits of my age

*Gillian Essex*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Communication

It's not so long ago  
That we had telephones with cords  
It is wise to keep your conversations short  
And not tire the listener nor the speaker

That we had telephones with cords  
And they are attached to a base  
And not tire the listener nor the speaker  
Where life runs at a slow pace

And they are attached to a base  
Which means no roaming around your house  
Where life runs at a slow pace  
It is wise to be kind to your family and friends

Which means no roaming around your house  
It keeps you in one spot  
It is wise to be kind to your family and friends  
Share your life's ups and downs

It keeps you in one spot  
Where you focus on your conversation  
Share your life's ups and downs  
And be mindful of other people's values

Where you focus on your conversation  
*How has your day been?*  
And be mindful of other people's values  
*Oh, much the same!*

*How has your day been?*  
*Well, you know it's okay*  
*Oh, much the same!*  
It's not so long ago!

*Helen Costello*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Ornamental shadows

Those dear ones adored the storms  
above their nursing homes,  
    in my dream they  
all threw away their walking frames,  
grew back their teeth and ran  
out of their wards at midnight

they laughed at the wind that pushed them back,  
growing younger and younger as they fled,  
their bodies burst with flowers

while re-living their truce with life,  
its dark beauty, they ran on  
    in fluffy dressing gowns  
until the coast was clear

back to prams and nappies,  
to single cells, to just an impulse  
in their parent's eyes, and beyond that  
to a gentler silence

All to wait and wait...  
for another big bang,  
a storm to lift the roof off,  
to do it all again, grow back more teeth  
    brave the storms, the journey,  
grow old again, and smile, and laugh  
then rub all their wrinkles away,  
bodies transparent and vanishing  
into the falling night.

*John Jenkins*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Libraries change lives

My small red car parked,  
the library doors beckon,  
a warm hello from the staff,  
I head toward our writing corner,  
heave my shoulder bag to the floor,  
nestle into my favourite spot,  
folders, papers in piles  
on the low table before me,  
our fellow writers arrive,  
hellos, g'days, warm greetings,  
we each take our turn,  
the stories unfold,  
each piece received with interest  
with close attention and respect  
comments, suggestions, praise,  
delivered, spoken and written.  
Late that night with a cup of tea  
I open my folder  
and absorb the feedback.  
Tomorrow I re-draft  
and complete, and be inspired to create,  
and develop another piece  
that I will take in my small red car,  
when those doors beckon  
and I snuggle into my favourite spot  
in my Watsonia library.

*Kay Arthur*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Elcho Island

“Baru, Baru”, she shouts out loud,  
to a group of children along the river shore.  
She gestures for me to help,  
her large brown eyes and hands implore.

She sits on the homeland sand,  
her daughters have gone to find mangrove worms.  
She and I are in charge,  
of wrangling children as a small fire burns.

The Yolngu are living in two worlds,  
hunting, suicides, speaking dialects and English.  
They watch iphone videos,  
while cooking their freshly speared fish.

The Elder Mari gives me a rock  
And she shows me how to crack the sea shells.  
I smack down the rock and it opens,  
But I am fearful of the slug and its strong smells.

The children take them eagerly,  
the offerings of the wriggling mangrove worms.  
I watch as they swallow them,  
not worrying, like me, about any dirt or germs.

There are gaps in my education,  
this new experience challenges my learning.  
The first nation’s ability to survive,  
their language and bush skills I am now yearning.

I have come back home to my Nillumbik life,  
with a desire to learn about Wurundjeri people in the future.  
To seek more education about their bush skills,  
their ancient knowledge and the land that they nurture.

*Kirsten Dickinson*

This poem captures the author’s experience of spending time with Yolngu Elders in the Northern Territory. ‘Baru’ means crocodile, and ‘Mari’ mean’s grandmother on the child’s mother’s side.



## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Lament

A grey time

No writing

Brain dull

Depression around the corner

It's not death I'm worried about

But getting old and older

Stiff and stiffer

Slow and slower

*Relax into it* I tell myself

*many have it worse*

I resist, grieving the life I had when I could run

Days were full of colour, action, anticipation,

Climate change a distant probability

Remember Schumacher

Although we've forgotten, small **is** beautiful

But we want **big, huge, giant**

In this TrumpBorisScomo age

The planet writhes in agony

We, ears closed, hearts stony, eyes shut,

gaily plunder on

*Peta Haywood*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Old folk

Be sorry for the old folk  
hobbling down the street  
They can't walk any faster  
they've got bunions on their feet  
and their knees have got arthritis  
While their eyes are growing dim  
They've given up on exercise  
And going to the gym.  
So now they sit and chatter  
and remember what they did  
when they were young and slender  
and didn't have a kid.  
But now they face a new hip  
made of metal not of bone,  
or maybe it's their shoulder –  
it's enough to make one moan.  
They've had to give up running  
and walking with the dog  
and life is getting tedious  
and a rather painful slog.  
So, treat them very nicely,  
one day it will be you.  
No matter what the doctor says  
there's not much you can do  
to keep your body perfect  
until the day you die  
But oldies please keep trying  
even though you're not so spry.  
Don't give up till it's over  
and have said your last goodbye

*Peta Haywood*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Positive ageing

Perceptions change as life goes on  
Only my self stays the same  
Seasons all have come and gone  
I hold onto my name  
Time has passed me, child no longer  
Verdant memories keep me whole  
Experience of travel I wander  
Awake to image refresh the soul  
Going far away from home  
Exciting worlds are random roam  
I wrap these images around me  
No longer able to explore  
Grunting shuffling to the door

*Tricia McCann*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### The life of things.

He would have known I was thinking of him  
As I packed a bag for the hospital visit  
Eventually, they had said,  
then soon, then very soon.  
People hustling for final visits,  
grave faces, mute in the face of dying

I choose a bag, big and quilted, to silence  
Small bottles; Dry ginger for dry mouth,  
His not mine. I imagine he drinks,  
leans back on a pillow  
Sighs, with temporary relief,  
a brief sensory pleasure

Into the bag, warm water, cloth washer for hands,  
Benediction, Ritual of cleansing of dust,  
mothers love, benediction, removal of sin.  
Also in the bag, a fondly remembered poem,  
a shared love of words  
Remembering, visioning another world, past,

He left this world as I left my house  
Gone, removed from pain with will  
Using the energy of my thoughts  
To carry him away from us  
Leaving us behind  
His hands, unwashed, folded in rest

*Tricia McCann*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### My treasures

My treasures, my links to the past are my everyday companions  
My mum's Stuart crystal fruit compots  
Aunt Gert's old stylish bits of furniture  
My nana's china cream jug and caster sugar shaker in a silver stand  
My dad's tobacco tin and cigarette lighter  
Eric's mums' cut glass perfume bottles with stoppers  
My great grandmother's button hook  
Eric's grandfather's pocket fob watch chain

My treasures inherited from nature  
My bird feathers collected from far and wide  
My rocks collected all over Australia  
The ones for pockets, to be held and rubbed  
And ones too big for that  
Stones collected overseas and bits of pottery from ancient sites  
Aboriginal spear heads, knives and chips  
Jars of shells from lonely beaches  
A tiger snake skin, shed at Yarrambat

*Catherine 'Betty' Johnson*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Acting your age...

Top of their B List is Cuba – Nirvana for two ‘glass half full’ lefties:  
David and Goliath – materialism trumped by Marx and music

And the music! ragtag bands on street corners, pubs and parks, cafes and bars  
and always the dancing, the swinging and swaying – impossible not to, they all join in:

old women with shopping, young mums with prams, long queues surviving  
with impromptu musicians, then swirling salsas...

And the wonderful women! Sexy, curvaceous, tight bright clothes, such joie de vivre –  
all ages and sizes – thumbing their noses at the western cool black, and the need to be thin

They are a tour of two, with Danny their guide, a fit 25, no child of the revolution –  
dreams of escape to the land of stick insects dressed in cool black...

Quite perplexed by his boisterous charges, their enthusiasm for ‘socialismo!’  
Shocked at their fondness for salsa and rum, the serious constantly balanced with fun.

Politics, history, wanting to learn *And what about now? ‘Sempre Revolution’ Is that how it is?*  
And then it is nature – a famed waterfall! *El Cubana National Park?*

*Impossible – to climb up a mountain for 3 or 4 hours, too far for you two...*

No problem, they say, we’re long-time bush walkers, surfers as well, both of us dying for

a cool mountain swim, a \*Caipirinha toast when we get back to base!

He thinks of their passports – they’re both 65! *Older than my elderly grandmother...*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

It was long and hot and they miss not a beat, with even more questions  
*and what of Cuba's Environment Plans?*

When they finally stand awed, at the thunderous majesty, drenched in the cool of its constant  
spray, one of them jumps in fully clothed! *Forgot my bathers*, she says with a grin

At his home town of Camaguay – *I'd like them meet*, invited them home to his family for tea  
The family is warm, full of questions. Such a generous spread in the tiny backyard

They meet Rosalita, tiny and stooped, and dressed all in black  
walks very slowly, smiles all the time, sits in her chair like a queen on her throne

Danny explains— in Cuba, after a life of hard work  
you are able to rest, your children serve you, for a change...

Our two were shocked – *Her life's so constrained*  
Danny thought proudly – *She's acting her age...*

*Karen Throssell*

\*Sempre Revolution – always revolution  
\*Caipirinha- rum cocktail with sugar and lime juice

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Pastorale

She lies upon her narrow bed, clasped hands upon on her breast  
Her breathing regular and soft, at peace, no more unrest.  
Her sisters spend each day in care, throughout the day and night:  
They feed and nurture, comfort her, provide eternal light.

There is an atmosphere in here, a something, hard to understand.  
An almost dream like quality: time contracts and then expands.  
I try to read my book but find my eyes are feeling heavy;  
I focus on my in/out breath, through the nose and keep it steady.

My book explores the links between, mindfulness and music;  
Develops arguments round chords, the dominant and tonic.  
Tranquility continues in the gardens that surround  
This place of life, and peacefulness; that sense is quite profound

I'm told the picture of the trees, Winter, Summer, Spring, and Fall  
Mirrors their community: Sisters of the Pastorelle.  
Outside, the peace continues. Besides the waterfall  
There are roses, trees and birdlife, stone statues, large and small.

She starts to stir, we raise her bed, we wash her gently, brush her hair  
Place a bib and offer soup which she enjoys, when fed with care.  
I take my leave reluctantly, aware the home is sacrosanct  
Carved from oak and rising high, the double doors magnificent

Located in suburbia, an unassuming cul de sac,  
A home of love and presence, I hope I'll soon be back.  
The day outside is humid, hot, main roads full of traffic  
Car horns sounding, people rushing, a different demographic.

*Charlotte Chidell*



## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### A nursing home at lunch

A husband soothes his wife with songs of home  
Italian, the only tongue she knows  
He strokes her face with tenderness for two  
He knows her love for him is now asleep

A Greek, moved by this, in chorus, joins in  
He sings in language only known to him  
No matter if they're singing different tunes  
The harmony is sweet from their intent

Sitting at their table, a wizened nun  
Chants 'Hail Mary' not to be outdone  
Perhaps the Greek man sings of ancient love  
But Sister's love for God is burning still

Another man keeps faith by struggling on  
With trembling arm and only strength for this  
He feeds the shell that once encased his wife  
Enacting wedding vows made long ago

And as I watch—in silence—I shed tears  
If I survive the ravage of the years  
Will my love thrive when none can be returned?  
Could my love ever be as great as this?

Or will I be the partner who is lost?  
What rituals will my lover find for us?  
To bring back traces of the life we shared  
Which I'll recall in some deep part of me

*Gillian Essex*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Elder

I am the matriarch of the family now,  
My mother has passed onto another life,  
I am older than Methuselah,  
And with age comes wisdom

I am like an ancient tree  
With its roots delving deep into the ground,  
My branches are both my forebears  
And my offspring and later generations to come

As an elder I feel responsible  
In leading a good example for others to follow  
They watch what I do and listen to what I say

My bloodline is of the green hills of Ireland,  
Where the Irish like to call their family a clan  
Where the love of potatoes is a staple diet  
And humor can overcome any obstacle

My bloodline is of the Danes,  
Where they are tall and their backs are broad,  
Where the blonde hair is dominant  
And their battles are fierce like the Vikings

My bloodline is of England,  
Where the joy of Fine Bone China shines,  
Where good manners are excelled,  
And sharing of dinner is an important ritual

My bloodline is of Wales,  
Where singing is as natural as walking,  
It can bring people together,  
And can lift up one's spirits

As an elder I pass on my caring for other people  
Sending cards to people who are unwell  
And my recipes for special foods

*Helen Costello*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Tap dance

Hot water heater, of all benign inventions  
of our modern world, it is you!  
Greater than the mobile phone, computer, TV, tablet,  
any microwave, I salute your tap-dance rapturous,  
your jets and shower rose.

Oh, please send your sprinkled *rat-tat-tats*  
down my back. Make your droplets spit,  
bounce and dart with every turn of the tap.  
Oh, long may they split into fragrant spray,  
pelting over drum-skins with a rhythmic patter.

Each day, all around the globe,  
sweaty humanity sheds its daily grind:  
so delicious is your music, great benefactor  
of tired and grubby lives!

I love your fizzy patter,  
your hypnotic swirl down plugholes!  
Oh, nacreous shells of lathery luxury,  
as sudsy veils dare our spinal rapids,  
we inhale perfume bubbles,  
heaven-scent  
from soft squeeze bottles.

Your glorious *hot* in winter, your *semifredo*  
and effortless cool  
in summer's slip-streaming spray.

As foam flotillas fan from knees to toes,  
you make us feel good and clean again.

Oh hot water heater,  
long may your warm reign rain!

*John Jenkins*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Welcome to Fossick

I turn the corner,  
A stream of colour beckons,  
A soft breeze flutters,  
Fabric soft to touch smiles from the rack,  
Inside, rows of clothes  
Nuzzle together and wait,  
My eyes dart, skim,  
My arms reach, stretch,  
My hands fondle these soft treasures.  
We laugh together, you help me choose,  
Yes, this one, vintage,  
That one a touch of retro,  
Oh, and this one is me for sure,  
We laugh as the hangers twist,  
And fill the cozy change room,  
I wriggle out of my clothes,  
Emerge from behind the curtain,  
Yes, it works, this one suits,  
I'll take it, yes and this one too,  
I'll take the whole bloody lot!  
The pile on the desk builds,  
We stand and chat,  
About clothes, about us,  
About the world and life.  
I fondle the jewellery,  
Precious pieces sit perfectly with our Fossick pile,  
As I leave, that special bag hangs from my finger-tips,  
We hug and smile, a warm wave good bye,  
Until my next visit  
to this joy-filled friendly Fossick shop.

*Kay Arthur*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

### Old in time

I pass slowly and steadily  
Stretching the shrinking muscles and ligaments  
The stride and speed notable in their diminishing power  
The breath less strong, laboured and erratic  
Reflecting on life and legacy  
Perhaps it is irrelevant to be driven  
To leave a mark or to be remembered  
Who will care when my energy is done?  
Is my mark worthy?  
How few are remembered in time?

The ones I love are in my heart  
But in theirs, the memory of me will surely fade with time  
And their hearts will beat on strong  
Leaving their own impact  
For their children  
Yesterdays and tomorrows blend into one  
Reflections and ponderings  
The joys of connection  
The smile and the song

Thoughts of youth and the age  
Milestones of my past may be remembered for a fleeting moment  
Given perspective – the falling towers, climate, refugees and wars  
Mere stepping stones across the river of time  
Lost in the rhythm and rhyme  
Infinity of time

The older I, seen in the context of millennia  
Questions how many have asked the same, have felt as I do  
Knowing that all that is, grows old  
And even rocks and stars may change and fade away.

*Pam Hayes*

## Age on the Page Poetry Collection

