

Michael Farrell

Ben 6 Ways & Other Poems

↳ BEN 6 WAYS ↲

1 He can snap his fingers like a hood. he
2 Possibly his tongues a bit thick.
3 He says uhoh / horror / a pickle.
4 he likes broadway. the restaurants
5 chewy. ummm – kneehigh to a kiwi? he
6 Thats his clear-sky nature,

1 kicks the bed when nervous ... a musical hi
2 He will give you a kiss out of nowhere
3 . its not hard to make him laugh
4 busy, so it must be funny
5 reads chinese family dramas,
6 i havent seen him drunk since. he

1 comes out of his hello-box. so
2 . hello, this is nintendo speaking
3. . he likes his ballet, &
4 . gulp, cold drinks, something
5 but not chinese itself; he lives malaysian family dramas
6 tells his sister, doesn't his aunties

↳MANUAL↳

I ' ve only read marr
Bible , Proust , Naked
 . You only get one
 - ery book . But if
 - ice to singles ? Marr
 - y , I choose a short
called Silet : ' It is
together ' . That ' s it
is ' immortal ' , pens
point . Love written down
the wind have turned ag
isn ' t the point . Wheth
rain – irrelevant
 - ic ' have ' . Pound ' s word that
 : beyond any turn
on wedding , still it

- iage manuals . The
Lunch . They ' re long , challenging
 , perhaps two tips from ev
a poem could give adv
 - iage being arbitrar
poem by Ezra Pound
enough that we once came
for Pound : no problem . Ink
are ' deathless ' . This is the
 . Love remembered . ' What if
 - ainst the rain ? ' The turning
 - er you ' re the wind or the
 . It ' s the characterist
the having still exists
 - ing . This isn ' t a tip
defines eternal love

↳A LETTER↳

I like Spicer too, his lovelorn
Unshaken stance. He rarely
Cleaned his oven either I
Expect. You know how to
Dish with someone in a kitchen.
I discern your desire to croon:
A torch singer in a midnight
Blue gown. All the talk, all
The range – yet we could
Slice the tajine with a knife.
Even the spare bed has croissant
Warmth. You lope in, like
An unmurdered Cossack,
Laughing in the tones God
Gave you. This is a subtle
Meeting, has a subtle electric
Feel. I look young and loving
To you I think (relatively).
A fox died on your head,
But it's clean and smells right.
So you're a lunatic in carparks –
A conceptual hoon; you make
Australian poetry – keep it
From tasting like stale cake.
Sparkling on the escalator, so
Agile – some are born to with-
Hold bad news. Though others
Find you cranky so do I. But a

Charm like a homemade broom
Sticks out too. There's a goodness
That surprises, like a shit-stirring
Nun. There's an impasse: I know
You recognise it, flying over it
Like a friendly vulture. Devotion's
An appealing quality ... a qualified
Moodiness: like a lemon detector.
A thinness made for hugging. A
Sunny despair. Is the surf high?
Caught any jellyfish lately?
You've a nuggetiness that reminds
Me of ploughing. Let's have coffee
In Darlington. Post-suburban
Boys are far from nothing to me.
They have chutzpa. Will you make
Spaghetti, like they did in the ranges?
On the boulevards chanting out
Random feelgood phrases; marry
Me, not the other doctor, the one
With a collage for a head, or's it
A soccer ball? We know so-and-so's
Got foibles, we know 'Bing' drinks
Cream like skim milk. I don't care
For parties but I'd wash dishes to
Talk to you, don't you know – you're
The reason Rousseau was composed.
To put the politan back in Cosmo.
The trees wish they could whisper
'Fuck off' with that much assurance –
I think if you found your own skull
In the grass you'd give it a boot for
Luck. Yesterday I smelt some graf-
Itti, it smelt like a native cheese
Melting off the wall of the future.
Hello to those big hearts, north
Of the border: they carry their fish
And chips in a holster. The gaijin
Envy me my folder, xx, love,

Mike.

✦STICK TO THE CLASSICS✦

Oh! It's a very poetry Christmas in the city square
tonight. There's a red kangaroo curled around a cannon
enjoy. There's a can of beetroot on the flat head of a boy
We were waiting – watching cable, how it curls ... like
a hero. It's November: we wear helmet spikes against
nightingales and run in circles with our yellow hoops
When we go fast enough we make a tiger. We whoop in
anticipation like green Indians – or young hamsters (a
bout surfing they're never wrong). We make love on
the cathedral steps just like a movie. We hold a quiz
Where does milk come from? Coconuts! Sam X brings
a present for us to share: a sleigh and a dozen reindeer
and a few days worth of hay. The kids rejoice; I tear
my hair/ an egg. Do you know this one? This? Some
how they find some straight police to stage a straight
kiss-in on the Town Hall steps. Noone throws money
which is bad luck for their lips. The swimming pool's
water breaks and almost drowns a daisy (that I'd been
saving to write my memoirs on). Damn: let's look at a glass of champagne
count the bubbles, count the sexes of the Red Hot Chilli
Peppers. Bon jour, Marilyn Monroe. Do the highs outweigh
The answer's colour-coded. When there's too much dirt t
I get nervous, and start thinking about the earth, wrapping h
tinsel round the coca-cola and the cockatoo. It reminds m e
of you, and how you hated verisimilitude, whether classic or clichéd
'Coconuts' is correct. The kids complete a racetrack. Ash falls; keep
reading. The Salvation Army throws us a packet of peanuts
and a large pair of undies. I find last year's cake under the

c	e	t	c	m
o	v	h	o	i
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h	y	g	n	e
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		s		
			u	
			p	

↪AN ORAL POEM↪

Have you been to the temple?
No, I've never been.
I like the passing of flowers and flame.

An oral poem had come to me: in the form of a man. It was traditional but not Australian. It wasn't white either. The poem thought itself strange and hid its own name. Slightly balding with the kind of mouth an oral poem needs (to be successful).

You didn't know these things. Your poem was mostly numbers (and deflection). It stayed with you. It didn't pour out like an excess of wealth. It wasn't popular, like oral poems were said to be, nor was it especially religious. I had been to the temple – not the poem. The poem couldn't see itself: it was writing. It had innovated in having been a photo before being a poem. Yet it bore no developing traces I could see. It was ordinary, but felt it couldn't be read. You have a PhD, you can read modesty, it said. I didn't mean to objectify the man or the poem. I didn't mean to represent my bed as a field: it wasn't a field. There was no publishing going on ... some flux perhaps ... some giving and taking ... like a colonial's word, like an invader's word. The oral poem was more like a letter than a song; or a diary written to fit the page. Page, book, these were the concepts we fell back on. My room reflected my culture. Yet within this space of abandoned reading, where a laptop served to transport men, from say, Coburg to Fitzroy, an oral poem was going on. There was drunkenness, but that was, I'd have said, in the margin, rather than in the poem itself ... It was in the binding ... in the cells: a drunkenness that was both oblivion and self-knowing. Pronouncing 'sigh' like 'sign', an oral poem wondered if its final form was still to come. 'It's coming out quickly', said the poem, but 'it' was not the poem.

Author Bio

Michael Farrell has lived in Sydney and Melbourne, spending much of his childhood on a farm. He has worked as an editorial assistant and poetry reader at *Meanjin* and as editor of *Slope*. He has written various performance works, including the play 'Up Here' which was performed at the Melbourne Fringe Festival in 1991 under his direction. Farrell's literary influences include Joyce, Brecht, Stein, ee cummings and popular culture. His early rural experiences also colour his poetic work.

His co-edited anthology of Australian gay and lesbian poetry *out of the box* was published by Puncher & Wattmann in late 2009. He has recently completed a PhD at the University of Melbourne on experimental poetics in the nineteenth century.

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