

Speed, a Pastoral

by John Forbes

From book: [Collected poems 1970-1998](#) [[Previous](#) | [Next](#)]

it's fun to take speed
& stay up all night
not writing those reams of poetry
just thinking about is bad for you
 —instead your feelings
follow your career down the drain
& find they like it there
among an anthology of fine ideas, bound together
by a chemical in your blood
that lets you stare the TV in its vacant face
& cheer, consuming yourself like a mortgage
& when Keats comes to dine, or Flaubert,
you can answer their purities
with your own less negative ones—for example
you know Dransfield's line, that once you become a junkie
you'll never want to be anything else?
 well, I think he died too soon,
as if he thought drugs were an old-fashioned teacher
& he was the teacher's pet, who just put up his hand
 & said quietly, 'Sir, sir'
 & heroin let him leave the room.

You Benefit

by Gig Ryan

From book: [Excavation](#) [[Next](#)]

They go and spend their crumbs playing pool,
wondering what they did wrong, the letter, the interview,
and live on bread, and not much.
They fuck during the day to fill it in
waiting for breath on the phone to say Monday.
Their references are perfect. They're qualified.
They borrow clothes and money to queue up,
to sit for the test, to ring, to write.
They try being 16.
They try being male.
They try being Australian, I mean, white.
When the cheque comes, half of it goes on rent.
When the cheque comes, some of it goes on debts.
You've got \$2.50 a day to go like windsurfing. Why work?
When the cheque comes, you buy lamingtons, get drunk, shout taxis,
ring STD, borrow shoes, run out of toothpaste, eat chips,
learn American, win friends, think about politics.
You got nothing a day. Some holiday. Why work?

If I Had A Gun

by Gig Ryan

From book: *The Division Of Anger* [[Previous](#) | [Next](#)]

I'd shoot the man who pulled up slowly in his hot car this morning
I'd shoot the man who whistled from his balcony
I'd shoot the man with things dangling over his creepy chest
in the park when I was contemplating the universe
I'd shoot the man who can't look me in the eye
who stares at my boobs when we're talking
who rips me off in the milk-bar and smiles his wet purple smile
who comments on my clothes. I'm not a fucking painting
that needs to be told what it looks like.
who tells me where to put my hands, who wrenches me into position
like a meccano-set, who drags you round like a war
I'd shoot the man who couldn't live without me
I'd shoot the man who thinks it's his turn to be pretty
flashing his skin passively like something I've got
to step into, the man who says *John's a chemistry Phd
and an ace cricketer, Jane's got rotten legs*
who thinks I'm wearing perfume for him
who says *Baby you can really drive* like it's so complicated,
male, his fucking highway, who says *ah but you're like that*
and pats you on the head, who kisses you at the party because
everybody does it, who shoves it up like a nail
I'd shoot the man who can't look after himself
who comes to me for wisdom
who's witty with his mates about heavy things
that wouldn't interest you, who keeps a little time
to be human and tells me, female, his ridiculous
private thoughts. Who sits up in his moderate bed
and says *Was that good* like a menu
who hangs onto you sloppy and thick as a carpet
I'd shoot the man last night who said *Smile honey
don't look so glum* with money swearing from his jacket
and a 3-course meal he prods lazily
who tells me his problems: his girlfriend, his mother,
his wife, his daughter, his sister, his lover
because women will listen to that sort of rubbish
Women are full of compassion and have soft soggy hearts
you can throw up in and no-one'll notice
and they won't complain. I'd shoot the man
who thinks he can look like an excavation-site
but you can't, who thinks what you look like's for him
to appraise, to sit back, to talk his intelligent way.
I've got eyes in my fucking head. who thinks if he's smart
he'll get it in. I'd shoot the man who said
Andrew's dedicated and works hard, Julia's ruthlessly ambitious
who says *I'll introduce you to the ones who know*
with their inert alcoholic eyes
that'll get by, sad, savage, and civilised
who say *you can* like there's a law against it
I'd shoot the man who goes stupid
in his puny abstract how-could-I-refuse-she-needed-me
taking her tatty head in his neutral arms like a pope
I'd shoot the man who pulled up at the lights
who rolled his face articulate as an asylum
and revved the engine, who says *you're paranoid*
with his educated born-to-it calm
who's standing there wasted as a rifle
and explains the world to me. I'd shoot the man who says
Relax honey come and kiss my valium-mouth blue.