

SYMPTOMS OF  
HOMESICKNESS



NATHANAEL  
O'REILLY

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# **Symptoms of Homesickness**

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## **Symptoms of Homesickness** Nathanael O'Reilly

Collection of twenty original poems by expatriate Australian poet Nathanael O'Reilly. First published as a chapbook by Picaro Press in Australia in 2010.

Praise for Symptoms of Homesickness:

“Joseph Brodsky, the Russian Nobel laureate, once remarked that memory and art have in common the ‘ability to select, a taste for detail.’ In the work of Nathanael O'Reilly, memory and art come together to bring us poems that remember what cannot---what must not---be forgotten, in rich and telling detail and with a taste for quiet but incisive irony.” - Paul Kane, author of *A Slant of Light, Work Life and Australian Poetry: Romanticism and Negativity*

“These wonderfully crafted narrative poems capture the diasporic identity, somewhere between home and elsewhere, a metaphor for the unknown. I particularly enjoy their realism, the way in which they evoke the yearning for a reckless, peripatetic youth spent in rural towns, for teenage friendships, mateships, encounters with, or dreams of post-pubescent love. I like the arrangement of the poems too; it's a fine, understated debut.” – Michelle Cahill, author of *The Accidental Cage, Ophelia in Harlem* and *Vishvarupa*

“With an unmistakable Australian sensibility, O'Reilly summons the courage to face the places he's left behind in these frank, but as often heartfelt poems. Readers both near to, and far away from, the particulars here will easily and equally relate as he mines the things, boyhood, sport, car trips, girls, that are familiar to growing up everywhere and with language that feels completely true.” - Jonathan Bennett, author of *Here is my street, this tree I planted* and *Civil and Civic*

“Nathanael O'Reilly's poems sound the major themes of Australian poetry: landscape, displacement, yearning, and above all a critique of cultural narrowness. O'Reilly's plain-spoken diction is often laced with understated wit, but is given ballast by its principled grounding in lived experience.” - Nicholas Birns, author of *Theory after Theory* and co-editor of *A Companion to Australian Literature Since 1900*

“Poetry rich with imagery but controlled by emotional truth … a potent poetic combination … The most significant poems have me excited about the future possibilities that we are likely to see from this poet.” - E.A. Gleeson, author of *In Between The Dancing*

“…will resonate with many Australian readers' own experiences of growing up” – Deb Matthews-Zott, author of *Shadow Selves* and *Slow Notes* .

## **Symptoms of Homesickness Details**

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## From Reader Review Symptoms of Homesickness for online ebook

### Sean Scarisbrick says

Of course I am biased -- I know many of the locales O'Reilly celebrates in his chapbook, *Symptoms of Homesickness* -- but in the lines of his poetry O'Reilly consistently displays a crafted conversational friendliness and empathy towards his subjects that makes it a very satisfying and engaging read.

Be they the physical artifacts of childhood, or memories of place and moment and person, O'Reilly's text pulses with a palpable fondness.

Consider these memories of family:

"The only wildness I ever / Witnessed was too much chardonnay / On Fridays and a refusal / To own a television" ('Folk LPs and No TV').

And this fine memory of friendship:

"We ...Raced down the path onto the sand, / ...and ran whooping, / High-stepping, splashing / Into the breaking surf" ('Breaking Surf')

which becomes ever more poignant upon reading that poem's dedication. The friend involved died young, some time after O'Reilly had headed off into the world, a separation which gives the lines a gently Wintonesque shading.

O'Reilly is bold enough to include a great deal of references to the 'stuff' of Australian boyhood, but it's well-enough done that knowing the exact object to which he is referring either does not matter, or it can be easily inferred by the highly visual context he creates.

What I find interesting is the space O'Reilly creates between the moments he describes ( -- describes so easily that it seems we as readers are there), and the latter poems that hint at the years and space and time that have forced their way between then and his reflective 'now'.

O'Reilly's final three poems in this collection contain two deaths and an exhaustively catalogued homesickness. The distance between now and those fondly remembered early days is a presence that seems to insert itself on the reader's imagination.

*Symptoms of Homesickness* is a collection of finely crafted yet accessible poems. At the cost of a pint, a person could do much worse than lashing out for one of each (the collection and a cool pint), finding a quiet spot, and settling in for a little time-travel.

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### Ulla says

This was very moving. I'm sad that I've already finished it. I will read it again.

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