

Sweetbreathe
Roger Patulny

I'll buy a beer
to talk things through,
but when you send it back,
amber moistened beads
reminding me of throats and necks,
I'll reach for top-shelf words instead.

I'll propose we play the game of lips
abridged, wetting themselves,
facing off across a glassy march of shots
fat with gin;
or that we swirl cubes of
sweet vermouth in our mouths,
like the dessert wine from our old cupboard,
particulate with tiny ants,
and a good dash of bitterness;
a horse kick of Campari.

We'll cry Negroni tears,
and the farther down the glassy line we go,
and the more pungent comes the slough
of unturned words and, so,
earthy, cool, and true
the more the ice-wine nectar will smell of you.

Let the cold and fragrant things be said
when they thaw and say themselves,
but till they snap, let's sip
and breathe hotly across fruity glass,
and remember
to hold our sweetened breath
right up until we laugh.

Roger Patulny is a sociology academic from the University of Wollongong. He runs the Sydney-based *Authora Australis* writing group. He has published short stories in *The Suburban Review* and the *Stories of Hope* and *Imaginary Worlds* collections, as well as poems in *Cordite*, *Poets Corner InDaily*, The UK arts magazine *Dwell Time*, *The Rye Whisky*

Review, and the sociological fiction zine *SOFI*. Excerpts and links to Roger's recent published creative works can be found at <http://rpatulny.com/creative-fiction/>