

Philip Neilsen

Suburban dinner



Philip Neilsen's fifth collection of poetry, *Without an alibi*, will be published soon. His short stories are widely anthologised and he also has written award-winning fiction for young adults and children, translated into German and Korean. He is Professor of English and Creative Writing at QUT and an environmentalist. Like his early mentor Bruce Dawe, he did not flee Queensland during the 1970s and '80s.

Image courtesy www.sxu.hu

You must be congratulating yourself
on that shallow strategy,
the way your hand brushed her arm
as you reached for the vegetables.
Oh yes, I saw it. And before that,
bending down to retrieve a serviette
deliberately dropped by her side.
I know this from your crow-like cunning
at the office; always the loudest call
but first to hop out of the way.
So—it has begun.
Perhaps in a hotel, not too expensive,
with prints of *The Hunt* on the wall,
and a witty bowl of roses.
Her donkey-headed husband
prattles on and sees nothing.
Though he glances once or twice
at her expensive beauty, neither you
nor he detects the drama here.
I see her lips harden
on the words 'silly mistake'
as she describes
a plagiarism case made a fuss of
in her daughter's class.
She asks me, what should be the penalty
before the ringing of the bell,
the coffee and chocolates.
How does one put a stop to it.