

Kinsella, John
VISITANTS
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Kinsella, one of Australia's leading and most popular poets, has a long and distinguished poetic and editorial career. His bibliography reaches back to the early 1980s and his work, including some of the entries in the current volume, has appeared in a variety of U.S., U.K., and Australian literary publications. A few of the poems in this collection have been "abducted" from his other books and from his play *Crop Circles*. There is little dispute that religion, poetry, and myth arise from the same wellspring. Each signifies an attempt by frail humanity to explain an often inexplicably confusing cosmos. And while the expression of this impulse varies from age to age, its importance never diminishes. As an old farmer in the Outback puts it, "People feel depleted and need something to absorb the emptiness." Kinsella presents a number of the beliefs and ideas concocted in our time to fill this spiritual void. None has gained a sufficient number of adherents to declare itself in the mainstream: glowing objects in the night sky, alien abductions, the Bermuda Triangle, telekinesis, hauntings, and all manner of phenomena in which "words failing facts" produce both believers and denigrators. The notions expressed in *Visitants*, and the characters who voice them, remain, even after more than a half-century of UFO lore and news reports, very much on the fringe. In one particularly chilling poem, kidnaping by aliens is juxtaposed with a child's abduction by a faceless man in a dark car.

Kinsella assembles a range of work of varying quality clustered around the theme of strangeness. Those poems drawing on childhood recollections and his own experiences among Australia's alien landscapes are the more successful. In others, the verses are disjointed, as though mangled in a balky robotic translator.