

Meniscus

Literary Journal - Volume 5, Issue 1 2017

Eugen Bacon
Helen Moore
Dominique Hecq
Daniel Jukes
David Ades
Mags Webster

New Works on Paper
Petra White
Autumn Royal
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photographed by Paul Munden

About *Meniscus*

Meniscus is a literary journal, published and supported by the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP) with editors from the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

The title of the journal was the result of a visit made by two of the editors to the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, where James Turrell's extraordinary installation, 'Within without' (2010), led them to think about how surfaces, curves, tension and openness interact. In particular, they were struck by the way in which the surface of the water features, and the uncertainty of the water's containment, seems to analogise the excitement and anxiety inherent in creative practice, and the delicate balance between possibility and impossibility that is found in much good writing.

Australian Copyright Agency

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Editorial

The first issue of *Meniscus* for 2017 contains a wide range of poetry and creative prose and we are delighted to be able to publish such a fine collection of writing.

This is the first issue where new arrangements associated with funding from Copyright Agency Limited's Cultural Fund apply, as a result of which we are able to award a prize of \$1,000 to the piece of creative prose and the poem that the editors judge to be the best contributions to the issue. Such decisions are difficult to make but we are delighted to be able to remunerate two of our contributors so handsomely. They are Eugen Bacon for her story 'Honey Gone Sour', and Helen Moore for her poem 'A Legacy, Mother's Day'.

Implementing these new arrangements has been one of the reasons why this issue has taken a little extra time to produce, and we thank all contributors for their patience.

This issue also publishes an additional group of creative works edited by Antonia Pont and resulting from her *New Works on Paper* series of events. She understands these as a 'framing [of] uncurated space with strict structure', and through them she turned her attention to making 'contexts or atmospheres in which a certain kind of affect might happen'.

Paul Hetherington with Alice Beecham
for the Meniscus Editors



EUGEN BACON
'Honey Gone Sour'

EUGEN BACON

Honey Gone Sour

SOYA COULDN'T UNDERSTAND her determined liking of Kingston. With him, she was boiling the ocean. He was guarded roof to cellar. Miles of chasing on a concrete runway, she was nowhere near his heart. He gave in fistfuls and segments, never in bucket loads. If she drew near, he loped, skittered and dived into the nearest hole. Took him entire days to unburrow.

And he was a perfectionist; she suspected that he questioned if she was enough. That he was still looking for 'the one'. What was it with men? But right now, Kingston was a good problem to have, unlike some fruit loops she'd dated in the past. Her romance history was smeared with breaks, swirls, clatters and cracks. Occasionally there were gallops—his or hers.

There was something about Kingston ... he was almost passionless. Uncrackable his calm, even when she sent snazzy photos of herself in lingerie. His indifference to what would animate a typical male still stunned.

But his kiss, when he gave it, was poetic, an abundance of butterflies and honey. It dappled her soul with peach, ginger and lime. Think colours: corals. His caress was both virginal and capable, and she gasped and strained in his arms. It wasn't just sex. There was a kind of enchantment that swathed her in its glow the moment he laid a finger, tongue or toe on her skin. He didn't like feral talk and lost his erection the one time she showed him a butt plug. With him it wasn't sex; it was a dance. An elegant dance.

During intimacy, he was present. His touch—lip, tongue, finger or toe—conducted an orchestra inside her body. It was that presence that made up for gaps in his self-created absences. How he guarded his independence! Sometimes Soya felt he treated his friends better than he did her. He'd drop everything and sprint to a pal's aid. As for her, she had to milk time.

Within two months of agreeing to be ‘exclusive’ he announced a six-week trip to South East Asia with his teenage daughter. Her jaw dropped. Before she could stammer, ‘What about us?’ his words tumbled out. ‘Let’s take a break,’ he said. ‘Until I’m back. I’m not sure I’ll be wanting to continue.’

He had chosen a café, a couple with a kid next to them, jolly waiters hovering ... she couldn’t make a scene.

‘Break?’ she said it like a word whose meaning she did not recognise.

He moved his chair slightly away. She understood that her emotiveness overwhelmed him. But her look must have shaken out the explanation. He discharged a careful speech about a fear of commitment.

‘You want a b-break? Like seeing other p-people?’

‘That’s not a factor. I’m going on holiday with Emma, she’ll be enough on my hands. I won’t have time for other people.’

‘A break.’ Air in her head. There was nothing optional about his proposal. ‘We won’t even talk?’

‘I’m happy to communicate. Tell you about the trip.’

He was leaving in a week.

Later, much later, she remembered a dog: it yowled when her heels clipped its tail. A car: it honked when her foot led her to near suicide. She remembered the air, filled with a stench of dead corals. She didn’t remember how she got home.

A break until he got back?

Would have been nice if he’d shared his fear of commitment on his online profile, or before he nudged her to their first intimacy. She pondered whether to snip the head off whatever it was they had. She wrestled with the thought a couple of days. Finally sent him a text:

You’ve managed to hurl a grenade at a fine working relationship. Your kind, you will never run out of grenades.

It unharnessed a response: *What do you mean ‘your kind’?*

She replied:

Chronic relationship killers. Think about that next time you go dating.

He replied: *I’m sorry I hurt you. Shall we talk?*

Yes.

They met at the same café round the corner, the one of the waiters whose jollity restrained her tantrum. She towered him in her heels. But one kiss straight from a wild bees’ honeycomb, and her sophistication collapsed. She forgot everything, forgave massacre.

Alas, away from him, just before dawn, bewilderment returned. But his new text, and all it said was, *hey*, lifted her to rhapsody. She was in love, she realised, madly, madly.

Two days from his trip, she sought to milk time, harvest honey. She asked if he would like to explore their chemistry one more time. Okay, he said. The coupling at her place was hurried and uneventful—for her at least. He gave deep throated grunts, then closed his eyes and placed a careless palm on her rib. Or was it on her bottom?

Kingston was a silent sleeper, not a murmur in his throat. Soya slept fitfully, panicked. For the first time she wondered if she snored and if her nocturnal purrs might confound him. Since knowing his fear, she realised, she was trying so very hard not to unsettle him. And in this moment it was impacting her sleep. She stared at the wall and contemplated what he had corroded.

When her phone chimed on the day of the trip and caller ID said it was Kingston, her heart drowned. ‘Hi.’ Her voice was low enough to reach a river bed.

‘It’s me,’ he said, as if she couldn’t tell. ‘In a taxi. On the way to the airport.’

‘I know.’

She waited for the inevitable breakup, then it dawned, five minutes into the chit-chat: he only wanted to connect.

‘I think,’ she said hesitantly, ‘we have a good synergy together. How about we see how we go?’

'I agree,' he said.

Good. No more rubbish of breaks.

*

She got a bit morose as days passed, and she put it down to January blues. She missed the linger of his smile, the calm in his gaze. His short crop and thick glasses. Sensual lips that delivered the sweetest kiss full of honey and butterflies.

Her spirits lifted when he emailed and asked her to connect with him on ChatApp. It's easier that way for me, he said.

She installed ChatApp and, for weeks, was content to read impartial replies two or three days after her own earnest texts. She saw his online posts, the ones to his 379 friends, and they were full of pictures and pictures. He posted daily. There was a canoe rafting photo in a white river wash, the image bright with Kingston's calm smile and his daughter's raw glee.

Having seen many days of silence, on a whim Soya sent him a ChatApp:

You make holidays so much fun! Promise you'll take me on an excursion? When are you back? x

Silence.

Three days, 11 hours, 42 seconds.

Silence.

All the while she could see him on ChatApp. He went online on and off, talking to other people, not her. By the fourth day, her bile was spilling.

She sent another ChatApp:

What I wrote ... need that much thinking? x

It whisked out a response: *We've been travelling: flights, boats, bikes. Back on the 29th. Not making any promises!*

It appeared she had stirred Mr Passionless, pulled his anger out alive.

She sat on his response a whole day. Awoke to his second ChatApp at dawn:

Sometimes your messages make me very uneasy.

Exhilaration, he was sharing his feelings.

Now she responded:

Thanks for voicing how you feel. I didn't even need a promise, please read the context. I guess, every now and then, I just need reassurance. x

He sat on it a whole day. And then his ChatApp arrived. It was 3am his time, he had woken up to tell her this. All she saw was a bunch of words, but two lines walloped home:

Reassurance is something I cannot give. I agreed to stay in communication.

Soya fell back a moment. She had clung to a hope that the situation was only passing. That they would construct their relationship when he came home. His words confirmed there were no bricks: the vacillation was a forever thing.

Inside, she erupted. Her anger surged from her stomach to her throat. She wanted to unleash a scream that spiralled upwards and outwards. What man was this?

Outside, to him, not a word.

She uninstalled ChatApp. The action *communicated* her entire feelings, or a darn good approximation of them. After the swirl of him, this crack was hers, of her doing. Actually it was a gorge, and it was fatal. She was happy to own it. She was done with men who threw her bones. Plummeted any such man to where he could never destroy her. She wasn't washing a hyena's buttocks.

She went to an aquatic centre and swam like a whale was blowing the pool. Lap after lap, she reconstructed his complete dialogue:

Yes, I reviewed your message. And the question mark confirms it: you asked for a promise. Actually, you demanded it. Demanding makes me go the other way. Further: Reassurance is something I cannot give. I agreed to stay in communication.

Communication? Communication! She hated those words. Had he even communicated? Detached texts every third day, that was his idea of communication? What about the butterflies, the honey, the waltz? How he put a melt in her skin? What was that if it meant zilch?

She drove home under a brooding moon. Not that she missed him. Right now, she couldn't bear to look at his face. Quite simply her obsession—is that what it was?—had dissipated. His dazzle faded. She deleted his photos from her phone, her computer. Unfriended him on all social media. Childish, but she didn't want to get all those notifications of photos he had posted of some bush walk or temple.

*

A number slipped up on her phone list, and she latched onto it: Zed.

Years back she and Zed had gone on a couple of dates. They'd met online.

Born and bred locally, living in the inner suburbs. Fine dining, cafés, local pubs, art exhibitions: his profile. Travelled big, great circle of friends. Nothing came of those dates with him. He was a water sign, in touch with his feelings. That she liked. But he was a little self-deprecating. Perhaps bitter about women—he'd talked about a couple of bad experiences. Slogged the evening.

She texted him now anyway: *Catch up for a drink?*

His response was instant (unlike someone she knew):

Sorry, normally I would say yes. You have an advantage over me. Who's this?

You delete people that quick?

Clean up my phone. You'll enlighten me?

Go name by name. I'll say yes when you get it right.

N-nope.

Soya. x

How've you been? Yes, a drink.

Monday night he picked her up. Brushed her lips lightly with his. He was as she remembered, tall, good-looking-ish, ash crop hair. It appeared she liked short crops in men.

He remembered everything about her, things she had told him those many months ago: how she swam daily, her passion for Rory King's *Liberate Your Imagination*, her new (not so new now) job, her favourite telly show: *The Mentalist*.

Unlike those first two dates when he was remote, listened with polite silence to her small talk—no wonder they never eventuated to anything—in this one Zed was different. He was reborn: opening car doors, fingering her waist, taking her hand across the table to such extent she needed talent to manoeuvre cutlery, slice her steak, sip her wine.

'Dated other people?' she asked.

'This woman,' he said. 'Dog was her kid, lived indoors. Slept in her bed. You turned to give a cuddle, dog's breath in your face. I set up a romantic getaway, located a luxury bouquet that came along with chocolates: presented the voucher. *But the dog!* she said. *Can't go without the dog.* Eight months of the dog was more than enough. You?'

She started about Kingston, shook her head. 'Nothing unforgettable,' she said.

He laughed lightly at her jokes, asked questions about her likes, dislikes ... the gold in his pupils magnetised her.

'What do you like in a woman?' she asked.

'Lingerie. Heels. Lips.'

'A bit shallow. But honest, I give you that.'

A few things set off a siren or two, like he'd been wed twice. She didn't know that. 'What happened?' she asked.

'Three things. I'll tell you in her words.' The way he said it, she didn't want to be on the other end of that curled lip. 'One, she said I was controlling, planned all holidays. She never arranged anything, didn't know how. And sure, I put my foot down when I had a problem with a holiday in Hawaii five times in a row.'

‘Two?’

‘She said I was not thankful. Seriously laughable.’ The curled lip.

‘What was the third thing?’

‘This one I agree with. She said I was critical. If you ask my opinion, I’ll give it. If you say, ‘Honey, is my ass too big in this dress?’, and it is, I’ll say it’s too big. Why ask if you don’t want the truth?’

‘And the second wife?’

‘That was number two. The first, we married young. When I said I’m moving out, she didn’t protest.’

But the gold in his eyes ... and the restaurant: the lighting, the music, the smells, the choice of wine: she was heady. True, the restaurant’s service was a touch tardy but who cared?

He spoke lightly in the car. Touched her thigh when he shifted gears. A lemon moon in the horizon, the promise of a proper relationship ... her riotous heart. She did not hesitate to ask him in for coffee. She swooned in his arms the instant her front door opened, melted as he whispered, ‘Now it begins,’ against her lips. Moaned as his mouth swallowed hers.

He left quietly.

No text the following day or the next. Nothing thanked her for a fabulous evening.

Finally she broke her resolve, texted: *Lingerie, heels and lips. You got all three. x*

His response was instant: *Running late. Cheers.*

Knocked her breath out a full minute.

When her lungs recovered, she weighed if Zed’s was a gallop. Then she questioned if she was the problem. But how could she be? She was independent, career-focused, was not clingy or *that* knee-jerking. She’d endured dung. The godparent of dung.

Perhaps cyber-dating was the hitch. She’d met Kingston and Zed online. They mostly texted, ChatApped. Real *communication* was to them alien.

Wait a minute. At dinner, that talk of his ex-wives ... wasn’t Zed

communicating? And she was being too harsh: he didn’t ChatApp. But the curl of his lip—he was potentially a dickhead.

She wanted to reach a pillow and cry.

Just then her phone trembled, then wailed.

It was Zed.

‘Doubt,’ he said. ‘I always get it. Tend to over-think. How’ve you been?’

Her smile lit the room.



HELEN MOORE
'A Legacy, Mother's Day, 2016'

HELEN MOORE

A Legacy, Mother's Day, 2016

*'... sa glorieuse Mere/Par qui grace rien ne perit,'
– François Villon*

Desiring life, a new world, yet needing to protect myself
from an injurious brother (who abused my name,

was violent drunk, had thirst for every drop
of our parents' estate), and so in commemoration

of this day, I seek recourse beyond the law
(in Blighty a parent still has the right to disinherit a child);

and upholding the Gallic spirit in my blood,
find justice in the poetic tradition...

*

Item, to my sibling I bequeath forgiveness, though a shabby Bird
in snot-green, moth-attacked plumage. A Ringneck

Indian Parrot that fled an owner's cage, it's survived
two Sydney winters, visits the back garden squawking to be fed.

I cut and core an apple, remove the pips, place the offering.
At its nervous advance along a branch, I click my tongue,

coax it on. Foreign here, no prospect of a mate, it possesses little
instinct to survive, is convict runaway requiring compassion.

*

Item, to my sibling too – the scrutiny of Australia’s Sun.
Minus shades, the shadows that we drag become more visible.

Against this bright world of white-gold beaches, turquoise
bays, Palms, exotic fruits, open-air markets,

the contrast of a dark, sack-like shape – that stash
of unexamined life. In the heat this rotting burden

taints the body and the soul, while mentally it fuels an arsenal –
projectiles for a triggered finger. Brother, let in the light!

NOTES TO POEM

A Legacy, Mother’s Day, 2016 – ‘... *sa glorieuse Mere/Par qui grace rien ne perit*
are lines from *Le Lais/The Legacy* by the 15th century French poet, François Villon. This
is translated by Peter Dale (in the Penguin Classics edition of Villon’s *Selected Poems*) as
‘Our Lady’s Grace/that leaves no soul for lost.’

JOHN STOKES

The Visit

A Fetch

This much bled away in the Welsh Valleys:
Coming in to low moisture
grit descending as a song
cloud coaled over The Fall
the sacrificial turkey left
to burn, forgotten in sweet Christmas laughter

This much’s scarred for remembering:
wet air and a barking of Psalms
from a station window under the valley
Some poet at dark noon
railing about an alien sky
smoke hanging over the language

Another country, full of Joneses and Snooks
breathes now, south under gullies
speaking in the way of brown secrets
as those two lovers on the bridge had been doing
tonguing in a strange mouth over water
the first girl astride

Where are they now, then
those two white women—girls
who felt equally of Newcastle and Llangothlin
as filling them with what would serve as forever?
One to die on the very day of the visit
the other to lie in grey valleys.

A thin bloodline of hair
trails over the broom-weed.
She, the late one, the voice,
crooning for a ravaged sea
knocks as windsong
surges into me as if in a vanishing.

E. K. KEITH

Proselytize

Outraged
by noses that aren't small or straight
by hair that doesn't lay flat
by faces whose features refuse to conform
to a common standard of beauty

They tell us we are ugly

To defend their common features
they sell us funhouse reflections
so we don't know what we look like

I want to convert you
to the religion
of your own outrageous beauty

*I'll build you a church of mirrors
and fill it
with gods like us
whose faces don't match*

WES LEE

Power of Attorney

I want you to be the one. The only one.
So those others with claims
can have no claim. Your clear eye
at the hospital. Your fronting-up to the doctors.

To not let me go on in some stewed body
of blood and shit with no dreams
to tell on waking.

As serious as being born.
As serious as packing my bag and creeping
quietly as my teenage self
out of the house (one night)

so they could not commit me.

DANIEL JUCKES

This is not the Letter of a Madman

WE ARE BOUND in skin for a moment, built briefly of bones
and gristle. But we can last in the records we keep and leave.

On the fifth of May 1899, in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, one
part of a story was told. I read it on a machine in the archives
at Shrewsbury 117 years later, from a transparent film threaded
through a dial and splayed on a screen. Here is what I know:

On May 4, 1899, about half-a-mile from a village called
Habberley, 'a hat was seen lying on the road by the side of a
gate.' Past the hat and the gate, a man was 'underneath the hedge
adjoining the road, in his shirt sleeves.' That morning, hours before,
the man had left home at 10 minutes to seven. He went into the
bedroom where his sons slept, said 'good morning,' and that he
was going to see Thomas Higley (a wheelwright in Habberley).

Nearly three hours later, William Roberts, a baker, saw the man
on the Habberley Road. The man gave Roberts a note and asked
him to take it on to Thomas Higley. In the archives the threaded
film read: 'The man did not give his name; but he gave witness
twopence, telling him to get a drink. He seemed perfectly sober, and
knew what he was doing.' At around 10 o'clock Roberts passed the
letter on to Albert Warters, a joiner employed by Higley. Warters
took the note to Higley's wife, who opened it. She asked Warters to
go straight away to the Habberley Road, and he did, hopping on a
cart passing through the village. Each of their names flicker briefly.

Trapping up the Habberley Road, hemmed in by hedges and
birdsong, it was Albert Warters who turned one of its blind corners
and saw the man underneath a hedgerow. That man was my great-
great-grandfather. His name was Samuel Juckes; he was dying; he
was 48 years old. He was part of the world before I had chance to
be and his every action became a part of myself and now, a part
of you. (We are, incomprehensibly, netted together. Our dreams

are built from the dreams of others and we live in a context the past strings us to.)

One week later, May 12 (below a note on the purchase of a set of communion plates ‘for use in the Greenfields Mission Room’), another small report appeared in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle*:

Mr S. H. Juckes ... lies in the Salop Infirmary in about the same state as when admitted. He is constantly watched by a county police constable, and there is a chance that he will eventually recover.

He did not. This, from Friday, May 19:

Mr. S. H. Juckes ... died in the Salop Infirmary on Wednesday evening ... The deceased, who leaves a widow and three children, was formerly a prominent tradesman in Shrewsbury, and for many years carried on the business of an ironmonger. He had held the position of rate collector for two years. An inquest will be held to-day.

I have copies of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* from those weeks in 1899. I made them at the Archives. First, you thread the microfilm through a dial on a different machine, and the long roll turns. Then, when you press the button to make a copy the text falls backward until the light winks out, like a television turning off. And then a piece of the required page is pushed out of the machine, warm and inexact. On the copies I have the text is negated, so the writing is bright-white on black, and the words are sometimes swollen or cut in half.

I do not know who wrote the words which told the story of how my great-great-grandfather died. I do not know who copied the newspaper onto the role of film I read in the archives. But I am grateful to them.

After spending some time making copies and reading, I had to take my own walk up the Habberley Road, headings backwards from the village towards Pontesbury and Shrewsbury.

As I walked I held the last words Samuel wrote clenched tight in

my fist: ‘Keep my pipe and pouch and matchbox in remembrance of me.’, ‘The chain is Mamma’s; keep this ring and give Fred the pin. Let my sisters have the portraits of my mother and father.’ These words were printed in the paper too, something which—still—feels vaguely like a miracle.

Where the road starts you’ll see an old church and a cemetery. The headstones are mostly battered, some of the graves barely there under blankets of moss and grass. The door of the church, St. Mary’s, is open and inside it is dark, but the stained-glass windows are beautiful.

The Habberley Road was dark too, even though the day was bright. There are high hedges which close it in, and close you in.

Over the top of the hedge the sky was blue where it wasn’t clouded over. The clouds themselves were thick and grey, but silver-edged, and the world itself seemed unsure of how it felt. I could hear small streams running, and when I looked through the hedge to where the sounds were coming from, close enough to feel the dampness, I saw foxgloves surrounded by rusted bits of farm equipment, plastic sheets, and plastic drums, draped in knee-high grasses.

Perhaps two-hundred yards from the village I almost stood on the body of a bird. It was crooked and damp but not yet decayed, its black wings trapped underneath its body and its belly facing upwards. Its legs were bare and thin and so were its talons; it was a small thing with a beak the colour of yellow metal, like the nib of a fountain pen.

I could feel puddle-water gathering in my shoes. Up close I couldn’t understand the hedge, how it grew and how it shaped itself. Someone must have cut it back, but inside even the neatest sections it was a wild mess of leaves and branch, a struggle for breath and air and light. There were tiny insects crawling along each and every stem, and white flowers I couldn’t name. Once, as though the iron had managed some strange sort of alchemy, a gate was grown into the leaves.

After walking a mile or so I turned around and faced the way

I had come, looking back to Habberley and the small church and the car I'd hired. I started to walk back to the village, running my fingers along the flowers and leaves and thorns sent out by the bushes.

I had gone to Shrewsbury on a whim, rising early, skirting through Wales down many, many-laned motorways. Walking back, down the Habberley Road, I thought of the first I knew of all this: I remembered talking to my dad, late at night, in a room lit by two small lamps stood in their separate corners.

'I think I've found something out, Dan,' he said.

'Oh yes?'

'Yes, I ... it's quite sad.' He paused. 'I think Samuel may have killed himself.'

'How do you know?' I asked.

'Look.'

He showed me a print out of a newspaper page; the bottom right-hand corner of the newspaper was torn off. It was hard to read, the story lost until it was pointed out. Up close the headline read 'Rate Collector's Suicide: Pathetic Letters'. So perhaps it wasn't a whim. Not really. More like an impulse, something I had no way of resisting. Something I couldn't stop, caught at the behest of this great void at my back.

The inquest was held on May 19, two days after Samuel died and two weeks after he was found in the field. It took place at the Clarendon Hotel (now demolished). The Coroner's job was to decide how my great-great-grandfather died, and why: if he had committed suicide or not, a crime which would have repercussions for his family. My family.

The first witness was Harry Hesleton Juckes (an ironmonger's assistant and Samuel's son—my great-great-great-uncle). He was 20 that May, and had had to identify the body of his father. The coroner questioned Harry on Samuel's mental state (and a journalist inside the Clarendon Hotel wrote down what was said):

'Have you noticed at any time that your father was depressed—that he had troubles upon him?'

'He has been troubled, I know, for a long while.'

I should say that the report seems more or less verbatim. It must, at least, give some of the words spoken that day. I did try to find the coroner's report before I went to Shrewsbury, but the records for 1899 are lost. This news report on the inquest is all that is left so, in the Archives, I turned the film.

'What were his troubles?' asked the Coroner.

'He always said he was short of money, but never told me anything definite.'

The Coroner asked Harry more questions, and my 3 x great-uncle told the inquest, among other things, that Samuel used to stay up late with his books, jotting down figures.

'Can you identify this writing?' The coroner handed Harry a letter, the same letter found in a box left by Samuel in the family dining-room that morning, one of the letters which I copied to keep. Harry could. Then another question: 'Have you ever heard your father threaten to do anything to himself—to destroy his life?'

'Never.'

Then, Albert Warters, sent along the Habberley Road to look for Samuel, took the stand and described what he had seen.

[He] saw a man in a field. He was lying underneath the hedge adjoining the road, in his shirt sleeves. Under the bottom bar of the gate [Warters] found a hat, and on going into the field ... saw a jacket, collar, and tie on the ditch bank, about two yards from the body. The man was lying on his left arm. Blood was flowing from a cut in his throat, and the razor produced was just within reach of his right hand. The man did not speak.

I imagine the blade being passed around the Clarendon Hotel. The room is full and the metal glints in the light of a lamp or the lick of candle flame.

The Coroner interjects then, to clarify something to the men assembled: 'The man had only gone two or three yards from the

gate in the field, but would be out of sight of anyone walking'. I know. We go so quickly out of sight. But every last action is a product of the one before and becomes itself a reason for the next. These knife-edge moments then become part of a story we cannot know more than a fraction of. When we plot the sequence of our history we see a constellation of the past, not the past itself.

On the roll of microfilm the Coroner called the next witness: Police-Constable Wilson, of Pontesbury, who 'deposed that he conveyed deceased in the cart to the Salop Infirmary.'

You can still visit the Infirmary. It's a huge building somehow squeezed into crinkled Salopian streets. It's become a small shopping complex, with nowhere to park and the signs of its past-purpose scratched into it. On the way to the hospital my great-great-grandfather, according to the film, 'put out his tongue three or four times with blood on it, and the witness wiped it off with wadding.'

On this oddly intimate act I hinge.

There were papers in Samuel's pockets: some of them were private and some of them related to the borough's accounts. A personal gas bill, for £2 15s. 5d., was overdue. There was a letter from the Town Clerk too. It said that, 'the Finance Committee had decided to issue summonses against all persons whose rates were unpaid.' The journalist noted that: 'On this document the sum of £117 7s. 6d. was mentioned.' And, later, P.C. Wilson told the inquest the first words my great-great-grandfather spoke after slitting his own throat with a razor. Wilson, tasked with keeping watch over Samuel at the Infirmary, was sat bedside when my great-great-grandfather said, 'I left home and wished them good-bye; I do not know what could be wrong with me; I must have been mad.'

Next to be interviewed was Cecil Salt, a surgeon. He admitted Samuel, who was semi-conscious. Salt described Samuel's injury in detail to the Coroner. The surgeon

found a wound in the upper part of the front of the neck, very nearly central, about five inches long and two inches deep in the deepest part. The cut was at the top of the larynx, and the upper part of the windpipe was severed, but none of the large vessels

had been injured. There was not much hemorrhage [sic] at that time, but there had been, and deceased was in a state of collapse.

Then, the reporter wrote up what seems to be the Coroner's closing address, though it's hard to tell what was said by the Coroner and what the journalist filled in:

Most of the jury, if not all of them, knew the deceased, who for some years, like his father before him, was an ironmonger of good standing in the borough of Shrewsbury. Some years ago he was appointed rate collector for the Corporation, and it appeared from certain letters ... that his accounts were involved. [Witness] did not mean to say that ... deceased was short of money because he had taken it for his own use, but that during his collection he had excused a good many people who were in a position to pay; and the suggestion was that rather than take the trouble to call upon people a number of times or summon them he would cross off their names.

Samuel built his troubles into something he could not see clear of. His world darkened, and he dealt with it in the only way he could imagine. Of course it was not the only way. But it was the only way to now and the world I know, though that is a different thing entirely.

I admit I felt an odd sort of relief: Samuel might not have been an embezzler, he may simply have been uncomfortable collecting money from his friends. To think that might be what drove him to that razor edge which sent everything rolling forwards. I do not know if the men in that room felt guilty, or if they felt sad, but I think they must have felt some of both. That might be why they decided on a verdict of temporary insanity.

Before I left the archives for the Habberley Road I looked up from the machine I was working on. From my chair I could see a row of photographs, old street-scenes from Shrewsbury, hung above my head. The pictures were black and white, taken in 1888—11 years before the inquest at the Clarendon Hotel—and

showed shopkeepers on Mardol, one of the main streets through old Shrewsbury. Just above my right shoulder was a picture of a shopfront hung with buckets and baskets and fenced in by spades and garden forks, hung with chains and bowls and brush heads. In the windows were scythes, pliers, nutcrackers, rope, and oil lamps stacked in close to the glass. In the doorway of the shop was a man wearing a long white apron, recently folded, an open jacket, a waistcoat, and a tie with a pin pushed into the knot at his throat. There was a handkerchief poking out of his pocket, and above his head was the word 'Ironmonger' and above that was my surname: 'Juckes'. Underneath the picture was a small piece of card with writing on it. It said, 'Samuel Juckes. Ironmonger. 3 Mardol, Shrewsbury.' Behind Samuel, in the picture, the interior of his shop is dark. The upstairs windows have not been cleaned and the tools and things behind them are slightly fogged, just out of focus, though I can see cups and saucers, scales, and other oddments which I can't name. Samuel isn't smiling. In the picture he is looking straight at the camera and his brow is slightly creased. His lips look like mine: they hang lower on the right-hand side. He is standing like my father.

JACKSON

white furniture

Again I dreamed that complex edifice
For a while I'd had a bedsit in a rear wing
You locked your bike to a back-lane fence,
wended between outbuildings, climbed
fire escape, squirmed through window. Now

I was trying to move in to the top floor of the main block where
a lot of students and workers and a few retired eccentrics had
units in a group around a common room where people were
coming and going and leaving magazines lying about in too
many colours and flavours but all I wanted

was a tidy flat with white furniture
and blue bowls; a kitchen with everything
clean; a small fridge singing
efficiently; a living room with nothing

overstuffed. It was there, I knew,
somewhere within the clamour and mess,
waiting for my key. A plain door.

Calculus

We look for it
in some tiny place
A structure in the brain
A microtubule in a cell¹
A curled 11-dimensional string

We imagine it
a field, laid out
on spacetime, a matrix
of infinitesimal
points

We try to find it
by going back in time
or collapsing in,
shrinking towards
a singularity

But infinitesimal and singularity
are concepts from calculus,
limits of infinite journeys
We find ourselves caught
in Zeno's paradox

trying to touch the hub
between the spokes, the doorway
between the jambs, the pause

between the breaths, the *ma*²
between the fragment
and the phrase

1 'We proposed in the mid 1990's that consciousness depends on biologically 'orchestrated' coherent quantum processes in collections of microtubules within brain neurons.' Hameroff, S., & Penrose, R. (2014). Consciousness in the universe: A review of the 'Orch OR' theory. *Physics of Life Reviews*, 11(1), 39–78. DOI: 10.1016/j.plrev.2013.08.002

2 Wilson, R. (n.d.) Haiku — an introduction. *Simply Haiku*. <http://simplyhaikujournal.com/submissions/submission-guidelines/haiku-an-introduction.html>

SARAH PEARCE

Istanbul

Four fingers
pluck at the sky;
six calls
dissect
the day.

We stumble numbly
along tramlines
that curl and thicken to
meet the water.

I cover my head
and limp—
cobbled tendons
pull street corners
and seconds taut.

Galata ligaments
creak and tick—
I strain to
touch the water.

There is ice in the Bosphorus.

DOMINIQUE HECQ

The Hanged Man

At the time of writing to you
The sun sets over Sydney Harbour
Bizet's *Carmen* bursts out on the water
Full moon rises over the bridge
Valentines clink glasses and part
Clink glasses and part

In Melbourne a southerly blows across the bay
The mercury drops to thirty
Madame Sosostris sets *The Lovers* alight
Fireworks explode in the sky
Rainbows spread over the face of the moon
And rub out the stars

Ropes of rain drop on Esperance
Pods of pilot whales shore up to die on Farewell Spit
Cascading waters bite into America's tallest dam
Everywhere on the planet lakes fill with fish doped on antidepressants
Margaret Atwood's *Year of the Flood II* (non-fiction) is released

In Paris refugees huddle together outside the Sacré Coeur where
cleaners slip them Halal baguettes

In London a Tory student films himself burning a £20 in front of a
homeless man

In Manhattan the Statue of Liberty cringes

At the time of writing
George Orwell has just published *Twenty Seventeen* (non-fiction)

At the time of writing
Maryam Mizakhani dons no Jihab but wins the Nobel Prize for mathematics

At the time of writing
China prepares for war
North Korea fires missiles into the Sea of Japan
Syria and Afghanistan bury their new dead

At the time of writing
The planet is tilting off its axis
Coal-fired power plants belch
Robotic bees are born

At the time of writing
I want to kill time
Forget all possible endings to the world
Remember the boy who launched off his bike on the gravel way
back when we were immortal

At the time of writing
Death has achieved her majority
Madame Sosostris grants you eternity
I tuck away the Hanged Man's card

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Everybody Says I'm a Liar

...always a liar when she spoke of her pains and miseries—
Christina Stead

THE SEA, IN its broad jacaranda sweep, bursts on the eye with its wide beach sparkling in the dazzling light. It contracts into a channel between high ultramarine walls where it seems to escape with the thick fluidity of storm blue, indigo, cerulean, only to adjust to the hue of the high walls, like slate, a colour as yet unnamed, with the guile of a tone that strikes you with a silent horror.

Suddenly, you are listening for a heartbeat.

You feel cold. Your eyes can't focus. Your breathing is slow. Spiked. Soon the world will swoon. Soon, your voice will boom in your head. Soon, your body will play dead. Soon, you will be two.

An image returns and you squeeze it out of sight.

Momentarily, you stop breathing. You know it's her. You can smell her now. Oh, how you hate her. With her pains and miseries obliterating yours.

Hi honey. I'm back.

You open your eyes and she looks like a ghost. Feels like a ghost. It gives you the creeps. Makes you a ghost so distant from yourself you want to leave this house. This life. She is so grey and sticky and smelling of nail polish and Ponds cream and snot and something salty you know but don't want to know is cum. And you want to leave.

And in that moment you know why you can't say I any more. Be that I. Be. That. Oozing pus. That salt and cream and sweetly warm stuff you couldn't stick a name to. But sticks to you.

Honey, Nails is very sick. I'm off to the hospital early tomorrow. Hope you don't need the car.

I am dead now. Can't you see? I've been dead twelve years. Red Ps, green Ps, no Ps make no difference. Why would I need the car?

Twelve years. Or is it thirteen?

They are family friends. We are drawn to them. I don't know them well. There are three children in their family. All boys. The oldest, Querol, has long black curly hair. He freaks me out, always appearing out of the blue with a smirk on his face. But he is hardly ever around. The next, Sebastian, is my brother's age and, like older brothers do, makes me want to cry for sport. The youngest, Zeno, the one they call Zero, is my little sister's age. He is soft and softly spoken, too. He has spiky blonde hair and grey eyes way too big for his face. I'd lie any time to keep him safe.

Louise, the mother is the gossipy type. My dad used to say: all coffee, wine and chats until you cross her, and I guess that is true. I saw her throw the telephone across the room once, and it smashed into the wall, peeling the new beige paint and revealing the dark grain underneath. Nails, the father, is a plasterer. He is a solid man, and is outgoing and funny.

I like him, but soon sense he talks of many things he never does, promises things that never happen, and see he always has a stubby in his hand. But as Louise and my mum are often on errands together and there is none there my age, I often talk to him. He likes to brush my hair. And he tells me I have beautiful skin. On Wednesdays he picks me up from basketball.

Their house is familiar in its kitschy unoriginality: a suburban home with panelled walls and beige carpet. The lounge suite matches the house's interior. There is a three-seater couch and a curved four-seater that spans one wall of the living-room. It lengthens the room, Louise says. There is also an armchair that completes the set. No one ever sits in it. It belongs to Nails. A prism hangs from a hook above the bay window behind one of

the couches. Every time I go there I perch on the curved couch and watch it reflecting the jade of the trees and azure of the swimming pool in the backyard.

That day after basketball...

We are moving house. We've been friends with them for four years. Barbeques, birthdays, Christmases and New Years. Even a holiday to the Bay of Fires in Tasmania for three weeks. Binalong, I think it was. That's when everything changed. When we got home there were no more drunken parties, no more being woken up at two in the morning, no more overflowing recycle bins. We still see them. Sometimes. But Zero and I have stopped speaking.

That day after basketball, it I must have been about seven or eight. He took me home.

We are moving again. Dad pulls my brother and sister and I into a dark room at our auntie's house one night and says something through uncontrolled tears about mum not loving him anymore. We are going to go to a new school, living in a house without him and perhaps catching up at weekends and during the holidays. What is not explained is that my brother and sister will live on one side of the peninsula, I on the other until things settle as they say. It seems as if all between us and our friends is over.

It happens so quickly that I don't notice much. No one is saying anything. Dad is gone and mum house hunting. It will be a full year before I manage to overhear something about Louise leaving her husband. In my naivety I am excited to hear Louise's story. I point out to mum that she had not been the only one without a husband. Her smile is lame, yet she continues to wrap newspaper around glasses and cups and vases, for we are moving back to our old place.

Home is just a shell crammed with the old furniture except for what dad took with him. It's odd, but it feels empty. I ask mum where Louise is. Why she left. Where Nails went. Whether Louise took the children with her. Then one Sunday, it strikes me that I don't want to know the story at all.

The church we attend is associated with our old primary school. We know everyone there, as we did then. We sit among friends

and go out for breakfast afterwards. It is the first Sunday we have been without our father. I'm not sure why mum took us, though. Is it some kind of ritual? Is it out of guilt? Is it worse?

On entering the church I run into a friend I haven't seen for two weeks as it has been school holidays. Before I even have the chance to say hello her mother intervenes:

Mass is about to start, I think you'd better go and sit with your mother.

I open my mouth to protest as she jumps in again:

Go and find your seat, dear.

I walk away, confused.

I can still hear her words as I make my way back to my seat:

Now sweetie, remember...

I'm not quite sure what I hear. Nor what that means, but it all upsets me and I am sure whatever she means can't be true.

That day after basketball, it I must have been about seven or eight. He took me home. He must have drunk his own weight in beer. That's all I can recall.

New school, new home again, my brother and sister back on this side of the peninsula. Arriving home from school not two weeks after mum and I have moved in, I bump into a removalist in the driveway.

I stand aside at the front door to let the men carting things pass and notice that they are actually moving new furniture in. Confused, I wander inside and see a different scene altogether: beside our grey leather lounge suite is a large brown armchair. It looks ugly and out of place and I don't want it to be there. I don't want him there. I don't want to remember.

My mum and dad didn't love each other anymore. Louise's husband had done something terrible, so she had kicked him out. All of a sudden their kids were not allowed to play with us anymore. Then we had to change schools. It's not adding up, but Mum uses her most soothing voice to convince me it is all fine

now that she has a good friend. He even calls me bud every now and again, patting me on the back.

We move again. We move to be closer to the sea. So Nails can surf, but all I see is him sitting in his favourite armchair, bellowing into his mobile phone, the TV on maximum volume and mum and I retreating to the kitchen where we can perhaps at least hear ourselves unfeel.

That day after basketball, it I must have been about seven or eight. He took me home. He must have drunk his own weight in beer. He looked like a pregnant woman, exhaling yeasty breath punctuated by offensive burps and he had difficulty changing gears. That's all I can recall. Except for licking a violet ice-cream clean.

Honey, are you there?

The sea is a deep and narrow channel between high ultramarine walls where it escapes with the thick fluidity of storm blue, indigo, cerulean, to adjust to violet ash between breakers.

My skin crawls with uncertainties. The walls around me collapse. A wave sweeps over me, rolling me over. I hold my breath. Listen for my heartbeat and hang on to the idea of words.

Then scream.

REBECCA DURHAM

First Shapeless

Not even the midrib, or recurrence of eloquence
readies us for absence. You mean to draw without

insistence, start shapeless, then ink the body, parallel
the stems from the ground up. Approach numberless edges

with malleable abundance. The simplest gesture is drawn
from darkness and absence. All the roots bring something

even at the edge of synthesis. These little twitches when eyes close
and find how loss redraws possibility. Matter is a live flux

of forgotten fury, not order and everything is animate. You can learn
to fathom motion. Find the soil underfed and just as generous

as broad roads falling into ferns. Wake to see a spill of spores slipping
into stoma, filling pores. Sun rungs sway from us haloed and frenzied. Every

moment your pinnate nature is streaming from you cytoplasmic, a cataclysm
of propriety and piety. And why not. Today clouds stall split like the land

and for a second you think that's it, even vapor succumbed to human numbness.
But your hand moves back to the page, readying ink and dispersing desire, the
whole of you still wild

with only thought all cut up in its detriment. Optimism is colorless, no longer
spare like the silver spray of hairs off the stem. Hope sticks like a watermark, no
memory of expression

green spreading like a soft utterance, first scalpeled smooth, then becoming
a deciduous tempest. One perfect petiole cupped pulsing in your empty palm.

AMELIA WALKER

Waking Up While Running Brisbane River

Stick to your side of the line, ya bloody tourist!
Brisbane River cyclists are too polite to shriek
as they whiz past sleepy, too-slow runners.
Nonetheless, this sudden brush
of lycra makes me look down, reminds me,
each city has its own sidewalk grammar,
and for forty minutes now I have run
in the wrong direction,
on the wrong side, breathlessly ignorant
of my illiteracy, readable by all.
Travel affords excuses, yes,
but most importantly, it makes me see
again the strangeness of my hometown,
my first language—all the languages
of space and invasion, bodies and concrete
and lines that define certain sides,
certain lives, signs painted, like faces,
cracked and silent and saying, so much—*too much*.

I see too much of myself in this river,
even with its endless ripples. For when I say
I see myself, I mean I see
something distorted, foreign, other. I
see some bloody tourist jogger, some stick figure
character on paper, having her tiny mind blown
by the realisation, there's still so much
she hasn't realised,
so many lines she's never thought
to cross or question, because only
when the lines shift, when things waver,

can she start to see, to think
how maybe, just maybe,
she's been running
in wrong directions far
far longer
than she or I
or even the cyclists
will ever know.

SALLY BREEN

Captivity

AGREEING TO SEE Carla and her baby Heather before the party was probably a mistake. You don't expect the women you love will make terrible mothers. Sarah's not sure why exactly, when the averages are so stacked—like realising the boogie board you own doesn't float or the plastic flowers you bought are actually real and will die. Sarah feels uncomfortable and never knows what to say when Carla makes pronouncements like, 'I never get any peace,' or worse, when contemplating a tantrum on an outing that hasn't even happened yet, 'I think I'll kill myself. I really would rather kill myself.' Sarah laughs even though Carla probably isn't joking and then she over compensates with the kid, wondering if Heather can feel the exasperation leeching out of her mother—but of course she can, this sly tension is part of the reason why she's 'going on' as Carla keeps putting it—this pint-size battle between mother and daughter filling the room so all Sarah can do is pretend to busy herself with preparations for the party because the caterer has already done everything important, letting Carla know in her small indifferent movements that it doesn't matter their life together has been hijacked by this glorious mess on the floor, this little person who'll go on anyway whether Carla reacts or not, because kids do, because small, defenceless captives have no other choice.

Sarah watches Heather waddle over to the tempered glass sideboard, drawn by the sparkly ornaments inside and her heart goes out to her. She'd stage mini-mutinies too if she had to ask permission to do everything. A routine ache, right there, in her chest because life with Kieran had felt like that in the end. Reduced. Infantile. Trapped.

Heather opens the latch and takes out a crystal butterfly, fascinated, holding the delicate thing in her fat, lumpy hands. Sarah

won't say a word. If Heather breaks a wing maybe they'll leave. She clinks her glass against Carla's trying to concentrate on her descriptions of a particularly effective yoga pose hoping to God she won't demonstrate when all of a sudden Sarah feels uncomfortable about the party, about her need for the whole thing.

Carla hasn't asked how she is. Avoiding the subject of Sarah's dead marriage hanging in the air as if it might be contagious. Instead, Carla seems intent on letting Sarah know she is not falling apart and as Sarah realigns the long rows of salmon and goats cheese mousse roulades on the crisp white serving trays she knows all this is nothing new, both of them avoiding talking about the things they should—downward pressure, manicured fingers hovering over the panic button.

Carla notices the butterfly, sloshing her wine on the hard wood floors, screaming at Heather so Heather bawls, the braying sound out of her like ten cockatoos stuck in a room. Sarah bristles, 'It's fine, just let her break the fucking thing,' but Carla doesn't hear or ignores her, looming in Heather's scrunched-up face, expensive bracelets jangling. Sarah heads to the lounge, sinks into the calf leather facing the view Carla hasn't even taken in or noticed, turning occasionally to smile meekly at her friend, wishing she had ear plugs, a sweet Valium, a bazooka, or a hand glider so she could push off this sandstone cliff and float down through the air and into the sea, diving for prey. Her phone bleeps. Michael offering his excuses for tonight. Sarah's relieved. Easier to let him go on thinking he's been the cause of something and not the final nail.

Carla apologising in mumbling breaths to Sarah while dragging Heather into the lounge and offering her a bribe, a lolly, which Heather takes eagerly, her face tear streaked but completely devoted and silent now. Carla sighs, plops down on the couch next to Sarah and says, 'God, this view,' and Sarah thinks, at last, and their eyes flicker from the cove to Heather and back to each other again. Carla pulls the mohair throw over her polished legs even though it isn't cold and asks, 'How long do you think you'll stay?'

'I'm not sure.' Sarah sips carefully, not knowing if this is true.

'Well, maybe it's best—to stay here I mean. If things work out,

you could go back, you never know.'

'Things have already worked out, Carla.'

'How do you mean?'

Sarah knows it's easier not to answer. She can't imagine Carla ever leaving Simon; the lawyer who climbs mountains in his bike pants at half-four in the morning and half-six in the evening every day (an all too obvious reason why she probably should). The attention Sarah has craved from her, the reassurances are mute and Sarah wants to scream, do something drastic, grab Carla's face and kiss her hard on the mouth, fling herself off the edge of the terrace just to see if she can fly, but she stays, turning her attention back to the room, to little Heather pointing and bobbing on her haunches. A kookaburra has landed on the rail outside, a cicada stuck in its beak, still moving. They watch the bird thrashing the cicada hard onto the edge of stainless steel; the snap and crunch, the practised violence of the kill making Carla jump. Heather giggles and starts to crawl towards the doors, her fingers leaving sticky bits of pink goo on the floor, stopping to turn her attention back to the two women to point and gurgle at them some more.

Sarah likes how kids talk when they can't form words. Sounding out language in beats. Sarah would like to walk about life winking at her memories, to ride around in cabs pointing at all the hotels she's fucked in, to drive by the wall in the house she'd shared with Kieran where her favourite painting still hangs, abandoned now, fading. She'd like to exclaim unintelligibly at the section of an ocean she once rode a near perfect wave in with Sunny, to think every plane seat was the one which took her over the Amalfi coast. To relive again and again how it feels to almost be there, to signal clouds she's already passed over, to interrupt dinner parties by sending her nose to the ceiling muttering about ghosts, to stand in the street fingers stretched to the sky, just as Heather is now, as if to say to anyone who'll listen, 'Look, see here, see what I know', to be moved and excited about what will probably never happen again in quite the same way, to be convinced of the possibility of things being reassuringly the same. And Sarah thinks it cruel when Carla says, 'Yes, sweetie. This kind of thing happens all the time,'

when it doesn't, not really, when moments are only what they are until they're lost. Sarah plays along, making astounded faces and exclamations she doesn't mean thinking about white water and white lies and Tilikum, a captive killer whale responsible for the deaths of three people—two of his trainers and one Seaworld visitor, a young man who'd hidden inside the park after dark, found the next morning naked and draped over Tilikum's back.

She'd looked up the name Tilikum. Old Chinook jargon meaning friends, tribe, nation but Tilikum, she also found out, is represented in ancient Sanskrit, a language read backwards mukilit—mutilate, kill it. The largest orca in captivity, five-and-a-half thousand kilograms and so highly stressed he sometimes gnawed on the edges of his concrete cage. At the end of Seaworld's 'Dining with Shamu' show Tilikum pulled his trainer in the pool by her arm, wrenched the bone out of the socket, snapped her back, scalped her and held her under until she drowned.

He knew what he was doing.

Sarah remembers the tag line of the documentary, 'Don't capture something you can't control', and she's thinking of Tilikum and of Heather, of herself and most of all Carla who looks right now like she too could do something drastic and wild; the consequence of her vital life signs reduced to revolving around and around a bath tub; the sleep deprivation, the concrete box, the thought of being caged. Lovers and children and mothers and captive orcas caught in this game of over-abundant care and stalemate. Drop the cup, pick up the cup. Throw the red ball. Chase the red ball. Cry for food. Perform for food. Dance on your tail until one of you drags the other to the bottom of the pool and holds you there until you die.

'God I wish we could stay,' Carla says, 'You always do throw the best parties.'

'It's not going to be that kind of party.'

Carla looks startled and Sarah wishes it was easier for them to talk to each other, like they used to, like they did when they were in their twenties smoking hash pipes in sharehouse bedrooms and talking late into the night and then the moment is gone, the

afternoon shifting from pre-party to party pending and Sarah is ushering out her friend, kissing baby Heather on the head, lingering on the untouched softness of her hair, her dealer arriving, rubbing some coke on her gums in the master bedroom and paying him what she owes. Welcoming wait staff, and the DJ—and all this arrival, ice gushing from portables, racks upon racks of Ridel glasses knocking lightly up against each other, the swivel of soft soles moving over tiles is reassuring and familiar—like the sound of rubber tyres on a gravel drive and Sarah is in default mode, slipping into command, moving through the shiny house, the silk tassels on her caftan catching the wind. All of it, almost enough to throw off the subtle waft of her own unease.

Five hours in Sarah knows the party has been a mistake, that she shouldn't have gotten so high, caught in the kind of comedown that cannot be saved by more of the same, the kind of real that has been in her head since she walked out on her job, her man, her unborn baby—knowing she can't take anything back. The heavy voice saying you can't fix it now Sarah. Now it's too late. She is in the first-floor bathroom and cannot recognise her own face. She is washing her hands and staring at this woman she feels she no longer knows thinking if you care you'll re-join the conversation, if you care you won't give in tonight.

The younger crew from the office are in the kitchen, only half waiting for anything free and crackly they don't have to pay for and Sarah groans, tired of their talk marked by pop-fluff and characters that don't exist, so whenever anything real is happening someone like Jared right in front of her will say, 'Yeah that's just like when that guy killed himself in real life', like finally the show they're all in is live. Sarah stands to the side, drawing out the drugs she's stashed in the cupboard, listening as they debate another angle, dialogue in a TV series like it's a poem stuck out on the limit of the universe and the fervor, when they all get it at the same time, when they all agree, that the most profound representation of life is not anyone living but a baton of gilded things.

Sarah wants to find her old mate Jonathan, to talk to someone

she's known for more than ten years, someone who's known her outside the agency, the monolith that has directed all this space junk into her orbit. She wants to talk to someone who might still be capable of dreaming and over a cross-weave of dancing bodies she clocks him standing at the edge of the rail—drinking in the sky, looking at her like he might understand, his hand guiding her to the curve of the terrace where the lights fade, smiling at each other like everything is the same, saying in sync, 'So who're all these wankers anyway?'

Jonathan's phone rings and he curses, trying to find hand space between the large rum he's stoking and the cigarette he shouldn't be having, neither of which he seems ready to relinquish. On the end of the line, Sarah can hear Kelly—the newly pregnant wife—Jonathan trying to balance the sleek phone between his shoulder and his ear, like he wants Sarah to listen to his leash tightening and Jonathan's night is doomed. He hugs her saying, 'I'm so sorry my darling—she's driving me fucking crazy.'

Sarah watches him meander away, head hunched, jacket rumpled knowing he needs a break and she wants him to stay but Jonathan seems to have a life, complications, curfews and here she is, left twirling the straw, recalling the ultrasound image of his baby he'd placed in her hand earlier, grinning stupidly, a tiny fleshy barrier between them in black and white.

Sarah's happy she's not had a kid and yet she wishes she'd picked up Heather, that she could pick up and hold all her friend's children while their parents were off somewhere distracted by nutrition, or deeper water or the pedophile register, she wishes she could pick these kids up and tell them that all mistakes are forever and no one really knows how to cope. She wishes she could tell them the truth—that children born into uncertainty often create more of it, that at the end of the simulcast day or the beginning of a new one in Sydney, Bombay or Shanghai (where the fog of pollution is so thick the sunrise is broadcast on giant televisions) that two of the easiest things in the world to be are still drunk and pregnant and no one means anything by it until meaning in bones and blood becomes crucial and then if you're lucky your parents

do not turn away from you, from the movie they're making, with you starring in it.

They say most people don't realise when they're gone to some place no one else can see, like drifting out of sight of the lifeguard, sinking away slowly from a perfectly good life, rotting in their sleep, startled awake by a freak wave of media res accumulating in the night. A young orphan boy in China crying on camera, rolling his legless torso on a makeshift board across the floor. A refugee pleading through a chain mail fence at the border. 'Is this Europe? Is this Europe?' his people reaching their hands into a sky full of eyes, a wall of recording devices and no respite.

This isn't working.

Staggering back inside Sarah aims for the couch, waving away the murder of young girls perched on the edge of it, bandage dresses so short and tight they look like half-done mummies with blow dries. Sarah stretches out away from them, throws the mohair over her head, closes her eyes trying to imagine salt water corroding all the data inside her, all these young girls who talk as openly as they want to about romance when the clock hits the better side of 12am, how they think being liberated from romance means they can ask for it right back—girls who want everything from a guy who is almost certainly going to disappoint them—maybe not now but if this ever gets old and these tough little girls claim they'd beat him over the head and never forgive him if he strayed, a line drawn in the sand and apparently this rigidity is love, this lying down, this glorious un-markable thing, despite parents, despite longevity, despite history. This is it.

This is twenty-something's deciding how love is done at a party like so many before them, still going all in, still doe-eyed because no one can ever make them stop, a transparency so raw it bleeds, caught living inside a mobile phone with the keys to the palaces they long for and the places they might really want to go but cannot do so alone.

Sarah stays silent, even though she can feel they want her to speak, to say something that will rally them once more but she doesn't. Her chest feels too tight to move. Gazing through the

gaps in the mohair she can't help thinking this would make a good photo shoot, this hoard of melancholy girls on a pale leather couch. Beautiful models she's watched flying on trapezes or scaling poles or someone else's self-worth, girls who'll crash and burn no matter how hard they fight into the next bit and the next bit until making new kids seems like the best solution and no one ever learns.

Sarah wishes they would stop talking about men. She wants to jet in about five hundred lost ghosts, paper thin women, men with incontinence, throw a bit of mortality around the party and see how it goes. Because Sarah has gotten to the point where life may as well be a movie and there's the car park and the way home and she considers this new line of thought and realises it's not new but a drawing of the well, that perhaps nothing's been the same since she was fifteen and her and Sunny last went surfing, since all the things she was promised as a kid were gone. She sighs. Moving her legs just to check they're still there. She can't stop herself from drowning but she can stop this night. She doesn't even bother tugging the mohair off her head when she turns to the girls and says, 'I think it's time for all you kids to go home.'

And Sarah waves everyone away, refusing to get up, to kiss anyone goodbye, listening to their voices dying out, the DJ packing up and later the cleaners moving around the house, bottles clanking up against each other in bins, erasure, thinking about somewhere she might want to go herself, where she does not speak the language, dreaming of long boulevards and a modern history that runs deeper than a shallow scratch, about marble statues and beautiful women, old romances, old stories and everything perfect that never was, about wishing so big it could be enough to get you killed. Thinking about monuments full of paintings and the warm wind in her hair. The idea of leaving instructions with her lawyer and no forwarding address.

SARAH BARR

Twelfth Night

Black motor-bikes growl past me up the hill,
then more rev noisily by,
twenty, thirty, a convoy of Hell's Angels.

Now I see some bikers have pink tutus
and wings over their black leathers.

One wears a pink unicorn helmet.
A floppy white bear dangles over the handlebars.

Even the BT repair men on the corner are moved.
What a send-off! one says to me.

But on this chill January day
the cortege does not seem celebratory.
There are no kings or gifts. No child.

EM KÖNIG

No Such Thing

There is no such thing as a bedroom

Clean white sheets
There is no such thing as
Clean white sheets
Lies on the bed
He lies on the bed
There is no such thing as
Lies on the bed

There is no such thing as flowers
Embroidered or otherwise
For decoration
There is no such thing as new or old
There is no such thing as used
Flowers

Heart blood tapestry
Heart blood walls
There is no such thing as bricks

There are no such things as blankets
Woven ovens
Woven ovens
There is no such thing as condensation
Finger and foot marks and breath and drip
There is no such thing as no such thing
As such

There is no such thing as a rose

Especially dried
Dead since last summer
There is no such thing as dried and dead
There is no such thing as a rose
Arose no such thing as a rose

There is no such thing as a cobweb spun
Or spinning a new home spun
There is no such thing as new or old
There is no such thing as used
There is no such thing as a home
There is no such thing as a home
There is no such thing as no such thing
As such

DEB WAIN

Francesca Leaving

HER FATHER DOESN'T speak to her when he drives her to the city train station. He carries her heavy suitcase filled with jars of preserves from Mamma's kitchen. They check-in her luggage with the porter. She is early. There will be three hours to fill before her train is due to leave but her papà needed to make the trip between the busy morning market and the dinner rush in the restaurant. As it is, he is trusting Mario with all of the dinner prep, and he isn't happy.

He doesn't hug her when he says goodbye. He extends his hand and shakes hers as if they are finalising a business transaction. His eyes are soft and watery but his mouth is a hard line. 'Francesca, be—.' He falters, realising his usual mantra for her to be a good girl is now pointless. 'Be happy,' he says. 'Write to your mother.' Her eyes are still red from the tears she has cried but she will not say she is sorry again. Her apologies had been met with Papà's steely silences and Mamma's wailing. They had thought the nuns would know what to do—would teach discipline and faith where they, as parents, had failed.

Her papà turns and walks away leaving her amid the passengers laughing and jostling on the station platform. She checks her ticket and her watch. She could walk around the city. She doesn't know when she next might get the chance to be among a city crowd. The job in Gummundah had saved her from the nunnery, but she imagined it was likely to be as isolated and isolating as the high convent walls.

She had told her parents about the job before she mentioned the baby. In her anxiety to find a solution, the advertisement for a live-in cook and housekeeper had seemed like a Godsend—as if the old man, Jack, was a kind of straight-talking guardian angel. Her parents had been confused at her defiance in wanting to take

the role. Her father had forbidden it.

'I've already written accepting the position, Papà.'

'It is not possible. You cannot go. It is not appropriate for you to be out there alone, away from your family.'

'It's not going to be appropriate for me to stay here either.'

She told them about the baby. In her hopeful imagination it was going to happen differently—her parents would be proud of her job in far-away Gummundah, or, at worst, they would be confused about why she wanted to take on the type of work at a country property that she could easily find closer to home where she could still see them for dinners, birthdays, Easter. In her imagined scenario, she wouldn't need to tell them that she was pregnant; she would just slip away. Her father had wanted to know his name—this boy who had ruined his daughter.

'He is a sailor, Papà,' she told him. That much at least was true. 'We were going to get married ...' Her tears came then and the guilt was a crashing pain. 'We were going to get married but they shipped him out.'

'Well, I will speak to someone. They can ship him back. You'll get married. It is the right thing. Is he Italian?'

'No, Papà, they can't ship him back. He's dead.' The lie softened the pain for her parents. The dapper young sailor's reaction to her announcement had made him dead to her so he might as well be. She held onto the image of his face, pale and blank, shaking his head as if to shake the information about her baby, *their* baby, from his mind. He started a number of sentences, but in the end he left her with, 'Well, I can't marry you if that's what you're hoping. I've got a fiancée back in Colorado and my family—' His hands formed a noncommittal gesture as if that was the end of the matter and there was nothing else either of them could do.

Her mother, sobbing softly the whole time, had pushed herself up off the lounge suite and wrapped her arms around her daughter. 'It will be okay. The Sisters of Mercy will—'

'No, Mamma. I'm going away. I'm taking the job. Nobody will know me there.' Her mother left the room then and bustled into

the kitchen without saying anything else. In the silence between her and her papà, they could hear the clatter of crockery and the squeak of the refrigerator door opening and closing. Her mother would find refuge for all of them in plates of food. It wasn't really lunchtime. Mamma set out the platters of preserved chargrilled vegetables—capsicums, mushrooms, tomatoes—all glossy with olive oil. Bread and whitebait sat on separate plates and a bowl of salt sat where it always did in the centre of the table to accompany the other dishes.

'We will talk about it,' Mamma said opening a bottle of wine. She poured three small glasses and they sat looking at the antipasti. They ate carefully and quietly and nobody spoke until her papà said, 'You should go. If that's what you want to do. When you've had the child, we can talk to the nuns about taking it—'

'I won't give my child away,' she said. And with that her papà raised himself from his chair and slammed both his fists onto the table. The women and the plates of food jumped in unison.

He walked out of the house.

'It will be okay,' offered her mamma but she wasn't sure quite how long that might take. As a child when she was wilful, her father had struck her. She almost wished he had done so now, at least she knew what that meant. Since then he had only spoken to her the words necessary to facilitate living in the same house: *Pass the bread, daughter ... Change the television to Channel 9 ... Please pass me more zucchini from the plate.*

She walks along the brick shopfronts of Spencer Street—large panels of glass displaying coats, hats, books. The new shops give way to older buildings with smaller windows as she walks. In the window of the pawnbroker, a mat of velvet displays watches, once gold-plated but now worn at the edges to the silver beneath; brooches of gaudy coloured glass in the shapes of a bouquet, a blue cresting wave, a hat with the ribbons blowing in the breeze; and wedding bands.

The bottle tops on string that hang above the door clatter as she walks inside and blinks into the poorly lit room. The darkness of the shop wraps its cool air around her and her skin prickles a

little. She pulls her cardigan together at the neck and draws her shoulders up. The man behind the counter lowers his newspaper. 'Can I help ya, love?'

'I'd like to look at the rings in the front window please.'

'For you or for a gift?' She lifts her head before responding,

'For me.'

The man nods once and, jangling the keys to unlock the display case, collects the mat of jewellery.

'Now,' he says placing the velvet mat between them on the counter, 'these here are costume jewellery, as you can tell, lovely. The red stones would look very nice on you. Would you like to try one?'

'Actually, I was looking for a band, like this one.' She points out a plain gold wedding band that looks as if it might fit her finger. The pawnbroker looks down at her figure and she tries to suck in the small mound the baby makes.

'Hmm,' he says. 'Try this one. It's gold, sure enough. The real thing.' The ring fits loosely on her finger and feels out of place on her hand. 'It'll fit snugly soon enough, Miss.' He smiles at her knowingly, but in a friendly, conspiratorial way, as he takes her money.

On the train, her luggage stowed, she twists the ring on her finger and sets her sights on Gummundah. She lets the suburbs flick by not really seeing them and relaxes into the idea of the train carriage moving her between the open paddocks and treed roadsides of places she has never been.

EMMA TIMPANY

Impressionism

LAST NIGHT I had a dream that I stole blueberries from your freezer, lifted them from the mist and frost as if from a sarcophagus of ice. I must explain that I have never stolen anything in my life, but in my dream I had conned my way into your house by offering to do your cleaning. Whilst inside, I filched the blueberries and wrapped them in my teal blue dressing gown, which lay, with dream logic, nearby. Though the blueberries were frozen, somehow I'd left evidence, a trail of dull, purple handprints, and I used the cord of my gown to wipe all traces away.

In the kitchen, while your back was turned, I helped myself to some loose change from the jar of coins on your kitchen counter before smiling, saying goodbye to you, and hurrying home. As for you, you looked at me with utter suspicion, no witness to my crimes and yet somehow aware that I was guilty.

I think of you infrequently, perhaps once or twice a year, but lately I've been preoccupied by might-have-beens, specifically that we seemed to have the necessary qualifications for friendship—similar interests, mutual friends—yet friends we never were. It's like getting an earworm, not being able to stop singing an irritating tune; however much you hate it, there it is, stuck in your brain, driving you mad. And it's not as if anything actually happened, either, so why is it bothering me?

All this began a few weeks ago, when your name started cycling through my head late one Friday night. I was up late and alone on the sofa (in the same teal blue dressing gown, thinking I should get up and go to bed, because I don't usually sit on the sofa alone late at night, but I couldn't seem to start moving) and after your name popped up I thought of the fairy cakes, dry in my throat, and the children, who are so much bigger now, as they were then, pressing shapes into play dough, and how that day so long ago

my voice got stuck. How had it happened? The dryness, the stuck words, after the fluency of our first meeting, that silky, exciting conversation that flowed like water over smooth, smooth pebbles, that ranged from Antarctica to Iceland, from Dunedin street names to that thin place, Iona, from mermaids to bath tubs, all of it lost, dissolved, crumbs in my throat I couldn't swallow then, crumbs I still can't swallow.

In our old house, at the end of the corridor that leads from the front door to the kitchen, was a dining room. The room was dark, and yet I always liked it, perhaps because of its low sash window looking out into a north-facing courtyard filled with pots of plants which tolerate low light—a fatsia, ferns, a *Viburnum tinus*.

We sat in this room the day you came to visit. I had made fairy cakes, and the children had helped me ice them. I got the nicer cups out, the ones with handles and without chips around their rims. I was thinking, I suppose, of the way we used to do things in Dunedin, go round and visit friends, and there was always tea made in a pot and vintage plates and cups before they were fashionable. (We used them because we were poor, living in flats, and most things we owned and used—crochery, cutlery, clothes, furniture—was second hand, and now everyone wants it, this old stuff, the patterned plates and cups.) There were always cakes, made or bought, to show you'd made an effort, to show your visitor you cared. In fact, the darkness of the room was also like the darkness inside some of those old Dunedin houses, so perhaps I was trying to recreate something without realising, scroll backwards fifteen years to an earlier time in my life.

So, as you could have seen, had you noticed, I had been looking forward to it, had made an effort with the cups and cakes and I'd tidied, but you didn't seem to notice anything; you seemed uncomfortable, said little. You knew I had children but still, they seemed to surprise you, or perhaps it was the house, a shabby but ordinary terrace house, the walls of the dining room covered in colourful glittery children's handprints, drawings, paintings.

That table was where so much happened; every meal and every making session, paying bills and working out budgets. Earlier in the day I'd filled old ice cream tubs with sand and spread play dough on trays and the children had made shapes in them, pressing down anything they could find, and them filling the spaces with feathers, with torn up pieces of paper. As I sat there with you, I was tired for the usual reasons; another broken night, another early start, a busy morning, breakfast, snacks and lunch and frantic tidying up, and trying to make the blasted cakes.

You'd wanted to come at three in the afternoon, which is a bit of a dead time, the older child flagging but no longer taking a nap, the younger one unable to settle because of the unusual activity—three in the afternoon was the time of fair weather walks, naps or desperate afternoon videos. A cup of tea and a cake and a little, listless chat—no mermaids this time, no gold pouring onto a Hebridean beach from a nearly accessible heaven—and me, feeling, for the first time, all that I wasn't, hollow, transparent as a pillar of light, but not in a good way (not with the pure emptiness of a saint; not with the rewarded deprivation of an ascetic) but because I was seeing myself as you saw me. Then, after crumbling some cake in your fingers, after half an hour perhaps, you went, and after that I did not hear from you for such a long time.

So long ago but when I think of it now I can feel my younger child's small body pressed against mine, see my older child's dazzling smile and sparkling eyes and hear her bright talk— the smell of them, the weight and touch of them, which all these years on I still feel in my left hip as an ache.

The first time we met was at a reading group. Instead of the usual round table session we were in a café, an upstairs room, one of the oldest buildings in town, Jacobean, maybe, a place which would have been here when Byron walked these streets. We talked about Iceland and holy wells, old tin baths set before the fire, the darkness inside those old Dunedin villas, an orange-enamelled tin teapot filled with red-pink camellias we both remembered on the kitchen table of one of those houses, and I

remember thinking, I've made a new friend.

But now I think about it I'd seen you even before that a couple of times, reading your work at a festival, an excerpt from a novella, and now (seven, or is it eight?) years later it's just been published. I wouldn't have known but I was sitting on the sofa late at night and your name started running through my head, repeating and repeating, though I hardly ever think of you, and so I went to the computer and looked you up and there I saw the news that your book had been released that very day.

And I started to think again about what had happened between us, which was nothing, of course, and why I had ended up feeling hurt by it and slighted. I still feel uneasy thinking of us sitting around that table, the cake sticking in my throat, the words drying in my mouth. And of sitting in another room, also dark, where my computer was, sending emails that you didn't often respond to, or, if you did, only after days, weeks even, had passed.

At times I wonder what life might have been like with different echoes coming back, rather than the sound of my footsteps passing outwards, unimpeded, towards some outer edge, and I remember how you spoke, once, of what you called the perfect quiet; it occurred sometimes during a performance, a quality of listening that could tell you whether or not you were on the right track. And that's what I'm doing here, writing into the silence, waiting to hear what doesn't come back.

Another friend came into my life, someone with whom I did not have much in common except that we both had children, and after that I was ill with an infection that took months to shift. I remember it as one of my lowest times, and on top of that came another disaster which submerged my life for four whole years. I stopped caring about anything unnecessary.

The last time I saw you, a friend invited me to one of your events. You'd moved on by then, were living overseas. You read some new work and I listened to you, and I listened to the audience listening to you; I listened to see if I could hear it, that quality

you'd described. I didn't, and I wondered whether what you were writing would one day become good, or whether, like so many other things that had barely had a chance to happen, your heart had already gone out of it.

SANDRA ARNOLD

Pelorus Jack

ISRAEL WROTE *TAMAHINE* at the top of his map when they crossed Cook Strait and highlighted the names of the Tasman Sea and the South Pacific Ocean. He wrote South Island and North Island on the land masses that lay on either side of the Strait and drew the dolphins he saw swimming behind the ferry. But on the boat trip from Picton through the Sounds he left his map on his seat and stood with his elbows on the rail, taking in the swoop and soar of seabirds' wings, the intensity of blue above forested hills, the green glass sea made luminous by light so intense he had to shield his eyes. Jesse McDonald's words like drops of ink on water: The War. A bar in Mombasa. Meeting a Kiwi called Barry Southgate. The torpedoed *Khedive Ismail*. Back to Scotland. Shortages. Emigration. And Fiona's words merging into this pattern and changing its colour and shape: Five miscarriages. Weka Bay. Mr and Mrs Southgate. Music. Singing. Silence. Solitude. The longing for a child.

They didn't press him for information about the voyage or leaving England. They let their own stories settle inside him. They let him be silent. He looked back at the frothing wake as the boat sped past empty bays. He watched the light fade from the sky and gold-edged clouds gather above the hills. In a distant bay he saw a house set back from a beach and a man and a woman standing at the edge of the jetty. The boat approached and slowed and the elderly couple waved. As the boat glided against the jetty Israel looked down into the water and saw rainbows floating below the surface. He peered closer and to his amazement saw they were jellyfish.

Jesse and Fiona jumped off the boat, greeted the elderly couple and lifted bags and boxes onto the jetty. Israel stayed on the boat and watched the water in the bay turn gold as the sun sank behind

a stand of dark trees. The skipper's loud voice echoed across the water as he gave news about a widow who'd opened a wool shop in Picton, a boating accident in Havelock, and a little girl who'd fallen off a jetty in Blenheim and drowned and whose body took three days to find. As he unloaded the last box he nodded in Israel's direction and in the same loud voice said a couple of jokers on Pelorus Sound had had to send their pommy lads back to the orphanage in the UK. Turned out to be nothing but trouble. Bloody poms and their riff raff. Send them all to bloody Australia, that's what he'd said to the wife. It was full of criminals already so the Aussies wouldn't notice the difference ha ha. Anyway, he hoped the Southgates knew what they were taking on.

The old lady's voice crisp around the edges: 'He does have ears, you know.'

And the skipper: 'Yeah. Fair go, eh?' He tapped Israel's shoulder: 'Come on mate, time to get off.'

And then everyone was waving and calling goodbye as the boat pulled away and disappeared in furrows of foam.

In the seconds that followed, Israel's senses registered strange tangy scents rising from the earth, trees that didn't look like trees, and little brown birds that made a sound like bells. The skipper's voice: *Bloody poms and their riff-raff. The boys on the ship: Pommy bastard. Go home pom. Pommy dogs stink like frogs. And the adults on the ship: Doesn't he talk funny? How on earth can you understand him? It doesn't even sound like English. Poor little motherless lamb. Poor little orphan. Poor little homeless mite.* But he wasn't an orphan. He had a mother. He had a home on the side of the world where the moon didn't hang upside down. Where trees looked like trees. Where birds sounded like birds. Where no one asked him to repeat what he'd just said. His edges wobbled. The McDonalds and the Southgates turned away from the sea and looked at him.

Someone spoke his name.

Someone said: My dear boy. We've been looking forward to this so much.

Someone said: Welcome to your new home.

Someone said: And to your new family.

He bit down hard on his tongue. He tasted blood. His eyes stung.

The days and weeks and months took on shape and solidity. He slept in a bedroom on his own for the first time ever, in clean white sheets that were changed every week, and a new blue eiderdown on top. At night he kept the curtains open so he could watch the wind break up the moon's reflection until it looked as though a thousand silver coins were floating on the waves. He fell asleep to the cries of morepork hunting in the bush and made himself wake in time to see the bay in pre-dawn light and the sun strike the top of the ridgeline and flood the earth with colour.

He learned to identify bellbirds and tui, oystercatchers, goldfinches, greenfinches, yellow hammers, fantails and silver eyes, kingfishers, kereru and weka. He went out in the *Sea Maid* with Jesse who taught him the difference between blue cod, snapper, gurnard, flounder and butterfish. He chopped wood for the range, learned to trap possums, shoot rabbits and hunt wild pig. He helped with mustering and once with the slaughtering of a sheep. When he puked into the grass Mr Southgate said the best way to get over that bloody nonsense was to do it yourself. He handed Israel the knife and made him draw it across the sheep's throat then he instructed him how to yank the neck backwards to break it. The crunch of bones. The acrid smell of blood. At the sight of Israel's green face Mr Southgate told him to sit on a tree stump for a few minutes with his head below his knees. He patted him on the back and said he'd done well considering it was his first time. Israel silently vowed it would be his last.

He learned how many watts the toaster and the kettle needed and remembered to cross-switch appliances on the board. He helped unload the grocery and pharmacy orders that arrived once a week on the mailboat. Sometimes he went into Picton with Mrs Southgate to buy kitchen utensils and clothes and visit the dentist. He helped her make jam and bread. He started piano and singing

lessons with Fiona and worked at his Correspondence School course under her supervision. Together they went to Picton on the *Sea Maid* to attend a Correspondence School Day with over sixty children from the Awtere, Waihopai and Wairau Valleys, Tory Channel, St Omer and Queen Charlotte Sound. There he found that, just as on the ship, his English accent was greeted with hostility by some of the older boys. They called him a pommy bastard and imitated his flat northern vowels. He responded with 'Kiwi dogs stink like frogs' which caused six of them to surround him with their fists up until the teacher separated them and told them they were all there to learn social skills.

Five weeks before Christmas Mrs Southgate said she was going to make the Christmas pudding. She said this involved a lot of preparation and she would delegate all the tasks so each member of the family could take part. Israel's task was to soak the almonds in hot water, peel off the skins and grate the orange peel and apple. Mrs Southgate mixed the suet, breadcrumbs, nutmeg, cinnamon and brown sugar in a large mixing bowl together with the sultanas, currents and raisins, candied peel, grated apple and grated orange peel. Fiona measured out the rum, barley wine and stout and to these she added eggs she'd collected that morning. Mrs Southgate poured the mixture over the ingredients in the other bowl and left it to stand overnight.

Next morning when they were all assembled around the big wooden table Mrs Southgate measured out flour and poured it into the bowl with the spicy mixture and said each of them must take a turn at stirring and while they stirred they should make a wish, but it was important not to tell anyone what the wish was or the magic would leak out. Also, she added, they should stir from east to west in honour of the three Wise Men who visited the baby Jesus. After she'd given the mixture a few stirs herself she dropped a silver sixpence into the dish and said whoever found it on their plate on Christmas Day would have wealth in abundance. Then she handed the large wooden spoon to Israel.

Israel squeezed his eyes shut and concentrated hard on his wish as he stirred. His wish was that the silver sixpence would land on

his plate on Christmas Day. Then with his wealth in abundance he would search for his seven brothers and sisters who'd been sent to Australia and buy his mam and dad and the ten brothers and sisters left in England a proper house. When he finished making his wish he passed the wooden spoon to Fiona. He saw her glance at Jesse and he knew she was going to wish for a baby. Then it was Mr Southgate's turn. He stirred quickly and passed the spoon to Jesse. Israel guessed he hadn't made a wish at all. Jesse winked at Fiona and stirred slowly, with his eyes closed. He wants a baby too, Israel thought. Mrs Southgate was smiling at them all, but her face looked sad and Israel wondered if she was thinking of all the Christmases when her son was still alive. Before the *Khedive Ismail* was torpedoed in the war. He couldn't guess what she might be wishing for now. She spooned the stirred mixture into a bowl, covered it with baking paper and tied it with string then put it in the steamer over a saucepan of boiling water.

'This'll take eight hours,' she said to Israel. 'But on Christmas Day when you taste it, you are in for a treat.'

On Christmas Eve they took the *Sea Maid* to Endeavour Inlet where neighbours from surrounding bays had built a huge bonfire on the beach. Further down the beach a group of men were roasting a whole sheep on a spit and groups of women were carrying dishes of food from their boats over the sand to trestle tables. Men carried crates of beer and homemade wine over to a separate table and poured orange juice and lemonade for the children. While the men congregated around the roasting sheep, the women unpacked cups and plates and bowls and knives and forks and spoons. Older children and teenagers dived off the jetty or swam or sailed canoes and the younger ones splashed about in the shallows. The bay rang with their shouts and the women's chatter and the men's guffaws. Israel climbed a bank and hid in the bush so he could watch the scene without being observed. He stayed there until he heard the women calling the children in from the sea and it was time to go for dinner.

While everyone milled around the tables of food a few people asked him if he found the idea of Christmas in summer hard to

get used to. He said he didn't know. Someone said it sure as hell beat snow and ice and burst pipes and Fiona said well, even after eight years she still missed the Christmas lights and the dark nights and the shops in Edinburgh full of people and the snow falling and someone else said well to each his own. Israel stayed clear of the running, jumping children and the teenagers who all seemed to know each other. There were so many people on the beach and so much noise that he could slip in and out of the crowd without being noticed. A couple of times Fiona went looking for him to check he was all right and asked him if he was enjoying himself. He nodded vigorously enough for her to be convinced he was.

After the desserts of pavlova and berry trifles, Mrs Southgate gathered the adult choir together to sing Christmas carols. Then, as the firelight flickered under the darkening sky, Fiona called the children's choir to assemble and they sang *Good King Wenceslas*, *I Saw Three Ships*, *Away in a Manger*, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*, and *Jingle Bells*. When they finished, everyone clapped and Fiona signalled to Israel to move from the back of the choir to the front. She announced to the audience that he had chosen *Silent Night* for his solo.

As his clear voice rose into the night everyone fell silent. When the last note died away their applause echoed over the bay.

Several men thumped him on the back and said 'Good on yer, mate!'

Some women told him he sang like an angel then turned to congratulate Fiona.

'Really, you've accomplished a miracle with all the children in the choir, but Israel ... well ...'

'Who'd've thought it, eh?'

'Which just goes to show those critics of the Child Migrant Scheme ...'

'Well, given the right environment ...'

Israel slipped away into the darkness. At the end of the beach, which was now deserted, he took off his clothes and swam naked into the middle of the bay. His movement through the water

disturbed the plankton which gave off sparks of phosphorescence. It coated his body with silver. He imagined he was Pelorus Jack who had guided ships through a dangerous part of Cook Strait between 1888 and 1912 and who Maoris said was a water spirit called a *taniwha* sent by *Tangaroa*, the God of the Sea. In his Correspondence School textbook it said sometimes the dolphin had been seen speeding through the waves lit by white fire which gave strength to the belief it was a spirit, but it was only a Risso's Dolphin covered in phosphorescence. Israel floated on his back and looked at the night sky crammed with stars. He lifted his arms from the water and watched tiny stars roll down his skin. He agitated the water with his feet to create whole galaxies. He imagined he was flying in space.

When he returned to the beach everyone was packing away the dishes and tables, collecting rubbish, carrying boxes and bags and sleeping children, helping old people across the sand and onto the boats. The night filled with the sound of engines and people calling out *Merry Christmas* as they sailed away. Israel helped Fiona and Jesse and the Southgates to carry boxes onto the *Sea Maid*. As they headed back towards Weka Bay Fiona put her arms around him. He felt her warm hands against his skin. He leaned his head on her shoulder and closed his eyes, listening to Mrs Southgate quietly humming *Silent Night* and Mr Southgate saying this year's barbecue was one of the best he remembered and Jesse saying he loved Christmas in the Southern Hemisphere and what did Israel reckon?

They took his silence to mean he'd fallen asleep. But behind his closed eyelids, images were flickering like old photographs. Winter rain splintered and lit by the lamp above the front door of the orphanage. The Christmas tree in the corner. Tables of food. Mothers and teachers. His classmates in their party clothes. The orphans in their grey shirts listening to the mayor wishing them luck in their new lives in the colonies. The stuffed albatross on the wall above the fireplace. The competition for who could remember the most verses of *The Ancient Mariner*.

The headmaster congratulating him.
His father's big, calloused hands clapping.
Israel's hands scooping stars from the sea.
Watching them fall through his fingers.

ALYSON MILLER

BYPASS

The heart is the core, even though it is off-centre and so close to the throat, caged in ribbons of bone and sinew. Its beating is a haunting, travelling the arterial lines into ears and mouths, awakening in the twitch of a bicep; that patient thrum in your gut. Yours was broken, not guitar string snapped like a wailing country song, but a heaving grey slug choking against your chest and lungs. The surgeon made no promises but like a good electrician, sought to tighten the loose connections. Your body was unzipped, ribs cracked wide like wings to frame the faulty organ like a parody of a memorial tattoo. Inside the wet purple space, doctors made note of the curious erosion of those tissues knitted by secrets and the compulsions of the living, worn away by decades of hard use. It takes five grafts to rebuild the pathways of blood and oxygen to keep the perpetual rhythm: the sinoatrial node transmitting through the atria to the atrioventricular and so on, bio-mechanics the solution to it all. Later, fat fingered and drug woozy, you wandered the halls like a Christmas ghoul, wailing like a newborn as you prophesized the hopes of a new world.

HELEN MOORE

'A Tear is an Intellectual Thing'

William Blake's engraving, 'A Family of New South Wales', was commissioned for John Hunter's 'Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island', and based on a sketch by Governor Philip Gidley King

Lambeth, 1792

Down at Hercules Buildings, Blake works his creaking press,
hand over hand heaving the spokes – four wooden limbs like
Vitruvian Man's, turning the circle, outstretched.

Warmed by his exertion, the artist sheds coat and bonnet rouge;
then from the press' bed, lifts the woollen blanket, peels the
inked paper from the copper plate, moves

for light beside a casement overlooking the Garden of Love,
where he and Catherine delight in spending time
as God made them amongst Herbs, Roses, Doves—

on their pale skin, Albion's rays or spots of rain. Seeing
his engraving beside King's original, Blake smiles, gratified
at the difference. 'When I from black and he from white cloud
free...'

Passing through the landscape with dignity, this vision
of a noble family, indeed: unclothed and carrying the tools of
their existence (fishing kit, spears, shield); the son

the spit of his father; and carried on her mother's shoulders,
their small daughter. Just four years since the British landed, yet
unbeknownst to Blake, this family now survives solely

on paper. As mordant that bites into the plate, makes hollows,
pocks, sunken lines, craters, white disease has ravaged
local people—their dead left unburied, as driftwood strewn in
coves.

On the table that serves as anvil to Blake's imagination and
craft, another finished commission. Two dark-skinned girls
flank one white—her sinuous rope at second glance

binding the pair. 'Europe supported by Africa & America', a
standing to which the latest colony will advance. Struck by
intimations of the truth this means, the artist weeps. 'A tear is an
intellectual thing.'

NOTES TO POEM

'A Tear is an Intellectual Thing' – a line from Blake's poem, 'The Grey Monk'; 'When I from black and he from white cloud free...' is from 'The Little Black Boy'. When Britain's First Fleet of 1,300 convicts, guards, and administrators invaded Australia at Sydney Cove in January 1788, the Eora people (comprising the area's three main clans, the Cadigal, the Wanegal, and the Cammeraygal), numbered about 1,500. Expropriation, destruction of their natural food sources, smallpox and murder caused around 70% of the local population to perish during the 18th century alone.

JESSIE SEYMOUR

#Brexit

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy - Jun 18: #Brexit sounds like a celebrity couple name. In a few months we'll be chanting Brantonia and Lexit and this will all be a distant memory.

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy - Jun 19: Woot heading down to Winchester today and gonna admire the shit out of that cathedral #oldstuff #bringit

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy - Jun 19: There's something called a butter cross? Unless it's made of literal butter I will be extremely disappointed

*

A DAY TRIP to Winchester had seemed like a good idea yesterday. Simon, ever the optimist, hadn't checked the weather forecast. He pulls his hood further down on his forehead but his hair is already soaked as he walks through the rain, aiming for Oxford station.

His phone vibrates. He quickly ducks under the alcove of the nearest shop to fish it out and check the screen. Charlie Cox's dopey selfie looks back at him. He hesitates, considers ignoring it, but the sound of the ringing phone gets the best of him and he finally swipes his thumb across the screen and raises it to his ear.

'Wazzup!' Charlie slurs. Simon can picture the gap in his front teeth and the sly smile that always crosses his lips when he's been drinking. 'Where are you?'

'Ah ... Oxford?'

'The fuck are you in Oxford for?' asks Charlie. 'You're not a

student. Wait—are you a student?'

'Nah mate, I'm not a student,' Simon says. He pulls his hood up to shield the phone and keeps walking. 'I just like it. It's nice.'

'I'm in Amsterdam!' Charlie says, sounding very pleased with himself. 'With my church group. Last minute thing, hey? Preacher reckons there's heaps of churches around but most of us are just hitting up the cafes. You gotta come over mate.'

There is very little that would excite Simon less. 'Sorry mate, I've got a full schedule over here,' he says, aiming for a sad tone but probably missing. 'Lots to see.'

'You're a sad bitter old mole, Blinky.'

'Cheers mate.' Simon checks his watch. 'Look I gotta go. I've gotta catch a train.'

'Yeah, whatever.'

Simon hangs up. Even though he really *does* need to catch his train, he stands for a moment in front of a pedestrian crossing under the pouring rain, staring at his phone, his tongue running over his lip ring. He hasn't heard an Australian accent in months and it makes him sad and grateful and sick at the same time. There's a *reason* he put an ocean between himself and his country, and it wasn't so that he could get random calls from old school mates asking to meet him in Amsterdam.

Then the traffic lights ping above him, signalling green, and Simon quickly shoves his phone into his pocket and rushes forward, grateful to be moving again.

*

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy - Jun 19: Winchester is awesome, but as suspected the butter cross is not made of butter. #dissappointing

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy - Jun 19: but they've got the fricking ROUND TABLE HERE!!! #kingarthur #merthurotpftw

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 20: It's been real, Oxford. Back to London I go! Didn't find a hairdresser BTW. I blame #brexit

*

Brexit is everywhere. As voting day nears, windows and lamp posts are plastered with stickers and the newspapers outside of every tube station have different slogans on them depending on who owns the company. The memes on Twitter get funnier every day. The world map with *'Invades 90% of the world. Complains about immigrants'* written across it is a particular favourite of his. The *'One does not simply walk out of the EU'* Lord of the Rings meme is another great one.

Simon gets a room at University College for a week, bunking in student accommodation that reeks of wet socks. The windows don't open and the reception is run by a red-eyed boy who spends more time scratching his balls than he does doing his job.

In the evening, Simon walks to the kebab shop down the road. The man behind the counter speaks with a very light accent when he takes Simon's order.

'Your English is excellent,' Simon tells him when he hands Simon his doner kebab and Coke.

The man gives him a strange look. 'I was born in Leeds.'

Blushing, Simon makes a hasty exit.

*

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 22: Disgraced myself in a kebab shop. Send your prayers for my speedy recovery

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 22: Just got asked how I'm voting in #Brexit and had to explain that I'm an Aussie.

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 22: Probs not

the right person to ask #justsayin

*

There's no wifi in the Underground. Simon can't understand it. One of the most important cities in the world for business and trade, and they haven't kitted out the Underground with wifi.

The air is humid and dank, the walls filthy from years of tourists bustling through, and the other commuters look bored and sad as they all stand with their arms crossed waiting for the train. Across the tracks, there's a list of trainstops written on the wall to remind people of where the train is going. Simon's grateful in a way that there are so many reminders of that sort of thing. Most of England seems like it was designed to be idiot proof. Maps on every street corner tell you where the nearest tourist attractions are, and 'Mind the gap' is repeated so often over the loudspeakers that tourist shops sell pins and shirts with the words emblazoned on them. Are people that stupid?

Simon whips out his phone to tweet that observation, before remembering that there's no wifi. He shoves the phone back in his pocket.

A woman stands next to him with a scarf over her hair and her dark eyes lined with gold eyeliner. The tall man standing beside her has a thick brown beard and blue turban, and his arm is slung possessively over the woman's lower back.

As Simon watches them – Simon's fascinated with the scarf, embroidered with flowers and sparkling birds – he realises that several people down the platform are observing the couple. An older man with his shoulders stooped and a crisp suit on comes onto the platform, sees the couple, and takes several steps away from them.

'Bloody Muslims,' he says, loud enough for everyone to hear.

Simon thinks he must be imagining things. It isn't until he sees the couple tense and the people along the platform glance uncomfortably at each other that he realises he isn't.

'We are Sikh,' the man in the turban says. His accent is a clean, clear Southern English one.

He sounds more refined and sophisticated than Simon could ever be, with his drawling vowels and slurred consonants.

‘I’m not getting on a bloody train with you lot—might get myself blown up.’

The man in the turban clenches his fist. His shoulders raise and his legs shift like he’s getting ready to turn. In Darwin or Byron, a brawl could mean a few knocked out teeth or a glassing, but Simon’s eyes shift immediately to the train tracks as he thinks about all the ways that a brawl could go wrong on the London Underground.

He looks around, searching for someone to give him a clue about whether or not they should do something. But all the men on the station are staring ahead as though there’s nothing more fascinating than the opposite wall. The women look uncomfortable, but they are also turning their heads away. No one is looking but everyone is listening.

But then the woman in the scarf puts her hand on her companion’s arm. He visibly relaxes. The train pulls up and, true to his word, the old man steps back and presses against the wall. Simon gets one last look at the couple before he’s lost in a sea of people bustling through the crowd on the platform towards the exits.

*

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 23: WTF??
#Brexit #ihavesomanyquestions

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 24: RT: @
fulloffeelz Gloucester @Tesco: ‘this is England,
foreigners have 48 hours to f**k right off. Who is
foreign here? Anyone foreign?’ #Brexit

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 24: Brighton?
Brighton. #maybeBrightonwillbeouralways

*

People move through Victoria station like schools of fish or plagues of hornets, pushing and manoeuvring themselves around each other to get to whichever platform they’re aiming for in a well-practiced routine of monotony. Simon hasn’t gotten the hang of it yet and he keeps crossing paths at the wrong time.

Out of the corner of his eye, Simon notices an Indian girl with a braid so long it trails the back of her thigh, huddled in the corner of the barriers between the platforms and the station, her shoulders shaking. People are walking past her, but none of them look.

Simon hesitates, but his feet move without his permission and he feels himself being summoned over. He dodges his way through the crowd and approaches the girl.

‘Everything alright?’ he asks.

The girl—she can’t be more than fifteen—has a red face and a trembling lip, with a phone in one hand and a bag from a tourist shop in another. The phone’s screen is smashed. She doesn’t look at Simon. She looks at her feet instead.

‘I’ve lost my family?’ she asks. She has a very slight accent. ‘I broke my phone, and I can’t find them—’

‘You can use mine if you like?’

Simon hands it over without a second thought, swiping through the passcode and handing it over.

‘Thank you!’ the girl says, instantly lighting up. ‘Thank you so much!’

‘Why didn’t you ask someone?’

Her face closes up, like a black cloud had filled her eyes. ‘I tried. No one would help me. They heard my accent and walked away.’

Simon feels sick as the girl types in a number and presses the phone to her ear. After a beat, she starts speaking rapidly in a language that Simon doesn’t know.

*

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 25: RT: @
fonaand: Older woman on the 134 bus gleefully

telling a young Polish woman and her baby to get off and get packing. Horrific.

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 25: RT: @TheBuddhaSmiled So less than 20 hrs after Brexit results announced, I have the pleasure of being called ‘a Paki c*nt in a suit’ by a homeless man.

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 26: I’ve heard tell that there are beaches in Brighton, but I’m going to assume that the British mean something different when they say ‘beach’

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 27: I want my ashes buried in Brighton

*

It’s a spur of the moment thing. Simon is surfing the web in a vegan café off the main-drag of Brighton when he sees the EasyJet ad. Flights to Amsterdam: £39. He books one.

‘You bloody ripper!’ Charlie shouts into the phone when Simon calls him from Gatwick a few hours before his flight. ‘Aw, that’s great mate—hey, bring us some of them tiny British phone boxes on keyrings. Kelly would love one.’

‘Sure,’ Simon says, because he likes Kelly. He’s standing just inside of the terminal and there’s roughly a billion people between him and the tourist shop across the room. He slings his backpack over his shoulder and starts tiptoeing through the crowd. ‘Is she with you?’

‘Why the fuck would my baby sister be with me on a trip to Amsterdam?’ Charlie asks incredulously.

‘She’s eighteen?’

‘She’s a baby!’ Charlie says. His voice gets suspicious. ‘On second thought, don’t bring her a keyring. You two are too close.’

There’s a shout behind him. Simon ignores it. The crowd around him is dense and he’s starting to feel like he’s being squeezed from

all sides even though he’s not touching anyone.

He mutters ‘excuse me, excuse me,’ under his breath and the crowd parts slowly, reluctantly. Most of them are foreigners like him. They all look tired in their wrinkled, starched *I <3 London* shirts.

Most of them are white, but Simon can hear American accents, European accents, even the odd Aussie accent. He’s too focused on making it to the tourist shop to stop and strike up a conversation.

Another shout pulls Simon out of his thoughts. He turns his head a little to try and see who’s making the noise.

A heavy-set woman with her hair up in a tight bun is waving her arms around, flailing in the direction of a woman in a black veil. There’s a small crowd around her—a circle of fascinated onlookers watching the scene unfold.

‘Oi, there’s a bit of a bingle going on—I’ll see you when I land?’ Simon says to Charlie, wavering with the phone still pressed to his ear.

‘No dramas, see you then,’ Charlie replies.

Simon hangs up and shoves his phone back in his pocket. Now that he doesn’t have Charlie in his ear he can hear what is being shouted quite clearly.

The British woman’s voice is high and nasally as she screams: ‘Take off that burka! You’re not in Islam anymore!’

‘I’m a UK citizen!’

‘We don’t wear burkas in this country,’ the British woman replies. ‘You’re not allowed here anymore—we voted leave. You have to *leave!*’

She just keeps shouting, raising her voice every time the veiled woman tries to speak, getting right up into her face. She paws at the veil, trying to forcefully rip it off her, and Simon wants to do something but he can’t think of what.

No one is helping. There are some men among the crowd of people who are even nodding along as the veiled woman fights to keep her veil on her head.

Simon is just working up the courage to push his way through the crowd when a tall Egyptian man beats him to it. He shoves past some others, knocking their shoulders and jostling their suitcases, and puts his body between the two women. He tries to grab at the British woman's hands and she backs away, releasing a shriek as if she's been burned.

Behind him, the veiled woman does her best to cover herself again.

Simon can see the crowd beginning to tense. The three or four men that the Egyptian man had pushed past on his way to intervene are rubbing their arms and exchanging looks, sizing him up.

The British woman is crying now, her mascara running down her cheeks.

Simon can't understand why she's crying, but he knows that at this point, it's not a question of *if* a punch will get thrown; it's just a question of who will throw the first one.

He realises that he's holding his breath.

And suddenly, as suddenly as all of this started, the crowd begins to disperse—rapidly, shiftily, as though driven by embarrassment and fear. It only takes Simon a second to realise why: the airport police are making their way through the crowd, muttering 'excuse mes' with their blue uniforms pressed to perfection.

Simon allows the crowd to jostle him back towards the shops. He's uneasy and anxious with a burning need to do *something* curled up in his chest and fists and legs. He considers going back to comfort the woman in the veil, but what can he say?

'Fucking immigrants,' a short bloke in a bowler hat mutters beside him. Simon looks down and realises that the man isn't just muttering shit. He's speaking to *Simon*, looking at him expectantly as though Simon is meant to respond. 'There's hardly enough room in this country for *us*, let alone for freeloaders.'

Us. When Simon looks over his shoulder, he sees one of the airport guards comforting the British woman while the other one escorts the Egyptian man away. The woman in the veil has disappeared from Simon's line of vision.

He turns his back on what is left of the crowd, including the bloke in the bowler hat who'd thought that Simon was British, and makes his way to the tourist shop to get Kelly her keyring.

*

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 28: Gatwick is a hot mess

Simon Cameron @WavePhilosophy – Jun 28: Heading to Amsterdam. I hear there's bitter balls? #soundslikeaeuphemism #signmethefuckup

This is a work of fiction, based in part on events witnessed by the author while she was travelling through the UK in June 2016.

MARIE O' ROURKE

Soft Focus

A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you the less you know. Diane Arbus

OH, THE COMFORT of alphabetical and chronological order! I succumbed to its silky-smooth touch at an early age, and brought it to bear wherever I could. Harboured dreams of a librarian life, I began with the spice rack, moved on to my Little Golden Books, then tackled the bookshelf in the lounge.

The recipe book was a summer holiday assault: special project, it called for a brand new, gold spiral bound notebook, chocolate brown marbled front. Hunched at the kitchen table, best Bic in hand, I resuscitated every loose scrap shoved into Mum's *Golden Wattle*, reviving them on fresh white pages with clearly marked lines. Old family favourites, exotic new ideas, freed from a life under the press of a brown lackey band were now brazenly demanding to be cooked. Indescribable, my pride and satisfaction.

Next in my line of sight were the family photos. Memory shows me a red vinyl bound album or two, with cracked spines and burred pages, plus assorted bundles of snaps, some still in their yellow Kodak packets, others sliding loose. From this unpromising start I was determined to create our family story. And it was that summer, aged nine or so, arranging, rearranging those photos, when gaps I'd long suspected became glaringly clear. Dad's not at our birthday parties, school concerts, or around the Christmas tree. And the fact of that oh-so-obviously missing person turned the everyday squirming in my tummy into something more, hollowing out the core of my being.

Still, the Dad who starred in the albums' opening pages intrigued

me. This Frank, complete with Brylcreemed coiffe, strides down Hay Street Mall, smiling, hand in hand with Jan. He emerges dreamily from the mist of Lesmurdie Falls. On Scarborough Beach he stands, one arm around his girl, one playing impromptu visor to the brilliant glare of sun and sand. This happy couple share cigarettes, laughs and a bonfire with friends. You can see their confidence and faith in a shared future. It flashes off the paper: dare I say, it looks like LOVE? Somewhere, before they became the pointing fingers, pinched faces and hollow eyes I knew, there was something powerful enough for Frank to turn his back on Mama's wishes and marry Jan, this girl not of their kind. This *Aussie*.

'They dirty, lazy people,' Nonna always said. 'No hard work. Eat only sandwiches. What food is that?' She spoke in barely disguised hisses—even to her half-Australian, wholly adored and indulged, grandchildren—about these people who dared to sleep past 5am and lunch on two slices of bread with meat and salad between them. It brought out real venom in her.

When Dad finally left, those early pictures were the ones he took (but no gloss paper reminders of his daughters three). To be honest, they didn't leave many gaps, but those spaces, on white cardboard pages whose adhesive was now yellowing lines, took all the good memories with them. *Volume 1: 1940—1967* was never the same. And in volumes two through twelve, carefully ordered, coloured spines lined up on Mum's shelf, you'll find only two photos of my father with me as a child.

Photo one I'm a baby on a horse, maybe nine months old. Staring at my dimpled hands under pink hand-knitted sleeves I can almost hear the click of Nan's needles, see her blunt fingers winding and weaving those stitches. A chubby foot peaks out from corduroy pants, homemade, I'm sure. Biting my lip or perhaps blowing bubbles, my rosy mouth is folded over on itself, intent on something. Staring straight into the lens, I'm quite comfortable and secure so high off the ground. Huge hands hold me, spanning waist to hip, thumbs firmly planted under my armpits. Those hands and the face beside them belong to Keith, the guy who ran this Esperance farm where we worked and lived before my memory.

The horse, like me, stares at the camera, eyes calm, a little sad perhaps. Coat the colour of milky coffee, shaggy and disheveled, it's not the sleek equine gloss you expect. It may be the breed, or just hard times, because the paddock underfoot is flat and joyless, a few wiry patches of green here and there. Dad's is the face that stands out: we look stagnant, but he sparks. The trademark shock of black hair and sideburns are there and he's laughing, leaning back, so I can be seen. Showed off, perhaps? Veins pop from his forearms as he grips the bridle, holding the horse steady for me. Cords of blood, pulsing, I feel the thump of life in him.

Picture two, I'm about three years old. We're spring picnicking at Whittaker's Mill, the ghost of a once thriving community where Nan was raised. Destroyed by fire, the only echoes of the past town are heard in jonquils and fruit trees sprouting from the earth at random, glowing white with blossom. In other years, I will join my cousins and sisters in the treasure hunt scrabble for antique bottles and tins, imagining the people here in frocks and suits not fitted to their surrounds. But that fun is still a couple of years away. The baby of the bunch, I'm not yet trusted to roam, so Dad sits with me in a clearing. Clad in navy blue pants, dress shirt and black shoes, like those mill ghosts he seems out of place, dressed for a different life.

On a carpet of lush green grass, legs bend sideways as he leans on one arm. I've plopped myself in that bend, using Dad as my chair. We look comfortable. Easy and content. Slumped backward, I lean into the wall of his chest. Neck muscles are soft as my head rests on his shoulder. I look up from under partly-closed lids. Blissful.

With my short mess of curls, I could almost pass for the boy he and Mum both so desperately wanted. I feel the weight of my femaleness still: a 'surprise', I was born long after the cot and pram had been given away, long after the happy smiles had disappeared. How might things have been different if Jan and Frank got the son they'd dreamed of?

One chubby hand rests on my red-trousered knee, my other firmly planted on Dad's thigh, fingers fanned out for maximum grip. His soft, open smile surprises, but not as much as his hand

on me. Square palms, broad fingers, ingrained with grease even at this distance, curl softly around my body. Gently cup my knee.

Behind, a fire blazes under a makeshift barbecue of stacked bricks and metal plate. Lunch will hiss and sizzle on that: perhaps it already has. I can smell the smoke, jonquils, wattle. The sound of magpies, click-beetles and blowflies fills my ears. The thought of sausages wrapped in white bread, smothered with sauce makes my mouth water.

But more than anything I want to know the feel of being on that lap, arms interlaced, bodies meshed like puzzle pieces.

I need to feel those hands holding me in, not pushing away.

MAGS WEBSTER

Sleeper

Death is never far away from them. No wonder the Greeks called moths by the same name as the soul: psyche.
—Roger Deakin

At first you are larval
hatched
into a bunching

of muscle a slow
shunt segment
by segment
closer to sleep

you must
prepare yourself
for transformation

shed the first
of many skins

inch from
what you have
outgrown

until you have
sloughed off
the last of them

each new
nakedness
peels deeper

till in a fallow
crackled bed
scraped
from detritus of day

you lie confined
sessile

in night-camouflage
you mimic
death

I am glad
you are restrained

though how do I know
you are not already
somewhere
taking flight

they say
wings nearest the darkness
beat faster

and I know you as
a trickster

you appear
to be what
you are not

you will not answer
to your true name

preferring to play
the dingy footman
the uncertain
the anomalous
the alchemist

and when
cocooned
you long

to escape
the pinch
of safety

your wings itch
for freedom

so when morning
comes you blunder

towards sunlight
towards the burning

Sinister

they say the left one's
closer to the heart
why the ring is worn
this side

but this bastard hand—
my unfamiliar—
unschooled in sans serif
is surely just an also-ran,

attendant lord
in my body's hierarchy
not used to carrying
pens & yet—

trustee of the shadow
self—it knows far more,
has lain attentive—
blocking gaps the other leaves

I sense some plot
from this warped
&
laboured hand

as if writing's not
the only task
it can be shaped for—

how, given time,
it will usurp
its dextrous, favoured
twin.

DAVID ADES

That I Might Till Your Absence

(in response to Sime Knezevic's "That I might fill your absence")

That I might till your absence, toil
upon a field grown barren with disuse.
That I might walk through it,
around its perimeters, salvaging
those recollections that remain,
the fading outlines of your voice,
your face, the mélange of mannerisms
that evoked responses, laughter, delight.
How do I regard the time we spent together,
unraveling our pasts, our stories, our
secrets, drawing close before drawing apart?
Even the photographs now are faded,
as if from other people's lives
and nothing to do with us.
My memories have been stripped by time.
Little is left of the emotional swirl,

the frisson, the dance of our lives,
what we gave to one another and took,

every earned significance. It seems

more like a dream receding, cloudy
and confused, a kind of nonsense

shorn of detail, not the thing it was —

all hope and wonder, all unmapped
future beckoning – no resemblance at all

to the past it has become.

HELENA KADMOS

Photograph

GREY NATIVE GRASSES separated the beach from a stretch of green lawn where the guests gathered. Limestone steps ascended from there to a car park. Connie noticed that Emma and Leo's friends weren't the black-tie sort of crowd. Loose pants, printed shirts and brightly coloured dresses. Squinting into the sun, she could tell that glare was going to be a problem. But this was how Emma wanted it. That she and Leo's transformation from single to wedded couple aligned with the transition from day to night. And then a party, with plenty of food and dancing, at her childhood home.

Connie felt sure that the evening would unfold as Emma visualised it, *if* everyone arrived on time. The wedding celebrant, in a flowing blue and green dress that seemed perfect for a beach wedding, appeared at ease in the casual location. She thumbed the pages of a display book on a metal music stand, clipping the book open with a peg.

Connie had dosed up on coffee throughout the day. Her skin crawled with caffeine now, but at least she'd stayed on top of things. She'd carried plates and dishes from the caterers van to the patio. She'd fielded last minute phone calls from people checking details, offering assistance, and a few regretful apologies. She'd even managed twenty minutes lying on her bed while Stacy and Emma worked on Emma's hair and make-up. For just a while, no one seemed to need her, but the worry about missing something important, or the caffeine coursing in her veins, or the muffled sounds of the girls giggling and running back and forth to the bathroom, had kept her on the brink of sleep. Every so often, too, her mind had dug deep, trying to remember. Earlier she'd looked in storage boxes under her bed, in the linen cupboard and the spare room. But she hadn't found it.

Where *was* everyone? The girls, Leo, and his best man Harry, were expected any minute. And William. Had Connie pushed things too quickly? When he'd opened the wedding invitation he'd appeared pleased, but cautious as well. 'Surely you don't want *me* to bother about?'

His intuitive concern was one of the things Connie found so refreshing. It encouraged a marvellous sense of security.

She didn't feel as free now. Her eyes scanned the thickening crowd without alighting on any one person, and swept back to the glimmering horizon.

And then, a resilient Croatian accent filled her with warmth and despair. Making her way down the steps was her mother, loudly instructing her son on the necessary way to support her weakened hip on the stairs. Seb shifted his attention from Rita's elbow to her shoulder to her back, whilst also managing her handbag and a fold-out chair. Rita's outfit revealed the status she accorded the non-church wedding: black synthetic pants, a pink blouse, and a black zip-up jacket. When they were close enough, she bent forward. Connie offered her mother each cheek in turn, winking at Seb as kisses landed softly on them.

'I won't last in this cold,' Rita muttered. 'Still, you wouldn't have church.'

Here we go again, Connie thought as she helped her mother to the front. She'd hear it for sure, how Connie had deprived her daughters of their Catholic heritage. Seb seemed typically unaware of the potential minefield. He too kissed Connie. 'How're you feeling, sis?'

'Oh, mixed. Wonderful.' She have preferred not to be the one in situ as each guest arrived, succumbing to her usual feelings of responsibility when she wanted to experience this occasion unconstrained.

William finally arrived, striding easily down the steps in light grey trousers and an open-neck shirt. Connie was surprised, again, at the novelty of a tall, thin lover, appealing in a very different way to Mick's hardened labourer's body. Lightly embracing him, pulling

away before he kissed her, Connie sensed excitement curtailed by self-consciousness. He must have noticed it too. But he went behind her and extended a hand to Seb, and then Rita, who pursed her lips and smiled sweetly. His dues paid, he edged against Connie again.

'You look beautiful,' he whispered. But when he took her hand, she wormed it out of his.

'It's been a long day,' she tried, by way of explanation, then exclaimed, 'Where the bloody hell *is* he? Emma's father.'

Excitement bubbled through the crowd and hands began to wave as the blue jeep, bedecked in white ribbons, entered the car park. Connie's hand went to her throat to catch the sob that leapt inside.

All four of the wedding party spilled out of the jeep at once. Leo and Harry in mismatched ensembles of light-coloured pants, waistcoats and jackets they'd put together from op-shop finds. Leo rushed to Emma's side and exaggeratedly bowed. Stacy appeared at Emma's other side, taking Harry's offered arm. Emma's bouquet of ivy and white roses set off her lace mini-dress perfectly. Connie squeezed her mother's shoulder.

'Your flowers are gorgeous, mum.'

Rita nodded.

A second later and the couple would have begun their procession. Instead, a shiny black SUV wheeled off the highway and swung into a bay beside the jeep. Connie's heart pounded, but she was profoundly relieved that Mick had arrived in time.

Mick, an awkward-looking figure in formal black, jumped out of the driver's seat and disappeared behind the rear door. After releasing his son from his car-seat, he went to the other side. A familiar sensation churned inside Connie as she watched Mick help his wife out—feet first, and then her swollen belly. In a black, above-the-knee maternity dress, her thick dark hair loose around her shoulders, Rachael looked as glamorously youthful as she had in Connie's nightmares. Mick cocked his arm for her, but Rachael steadied herself, fluffed her hair and walked ahead of him. She moved unhurriedly down the steps, one at a time. Mick tried to pick up Benjamin who squirmed out of his reach.

‘No, *no*,’ he cried.

Rachael let herself be led to a chair at the front of the assembly. Rita leant her forearms onto her knees, looked across the circle at Rachael, and grunted. Rachael caught Connie’s eye and they acknowledged one another.

The four young people regrouped at the top of the stairs. Emma nodded to a friend, who clicked a speaker in her hand. After a few beats, a deep female voice began to sing and, recognising the song, several guests cheered approval. People started to sway, some mouthed the lyrics. As the wedding party began their descent, Connie caught on too—the tune was catchy and the voice haunting.

The wedding party drew closer and William squeezed her hand. She felt magnanimous, and slid an arm into his. She reached for her mother again, rubbed her back reassuringly. Then, for a second, Emma and Stacy were right in front of her. Emma turned to her mother and her eyes brimmed with tears. *It’s okay*, Connie mouthed, and her mind completed the thought, like a prayer, *you’ll be alright*. She instinctively glanced towards Mick, wanting to unite them as a family for that instant, but the space beside Rachael was empty. His flustered voice carried on the breeze.

‘Benjamin! *Now!*’

On the darkening, mauve beach, Mick bent double. He scooped his son off the sand, tossed and then caught him. Benjamin’s protests punctuated the celebrant’s opening address.

Connie looked on. She recognised Mick’s personal distress signals: the way he rubbed the back of his hand across his brow. She almost went to help him before checking herself. It wasn’t her job, anymore. A firm weight rested on her shoulder. It was Sebastian. He raised an eye at the beach. Mick reached the circle again. Red-faced, he put Benjamin in Rachael’s open arms. *Wild Italian curls, like his mother*, Connie thought. Mick ran a finger under his collar. As if sensing her watching, he flashed her a defiant look, daring her mockery, perhaps her pity? He touched the back of Rachael’s chair, and when she looked up at him, planted a kiss on her hair.

Connie took a step back so that Mick was obscured behind other guests. Her eyes were moist. But the ceremony was unfolding, oblivious to her. It would be over too quickly. Emma was saying her vows. Her face, even in the darkening twilight, shone. The sun was right where it was meant to be, behind the couple. Clouds slashed its copper disc; its light narrowed to a diamond-studded funnel across the water.

She wondered how Mick was handling the emotion of it all, yet didn’t dare eye him again. And then a new revelation formed in her mind. There was no one whose needs lay a greater claim on her at this moment than Emma. Even as she thought this, Benjamin called out again, prompting whispered, urgent negotiations between his parents.

Leo held Emma’s ring high in the air before slipping it onto her thin finger. Emma lifted Leo’s ring daintily, and as she pushed it onto his finger, it came to Connie, with crystal clarity, where she’d find what she’d been looking for that morning.

The photo of her own wedding had been her secret. A candid shot, it could easily have been thrown out. Fortunately, it was Connie who picked up the prints from the developer three weeks after the wedding. In amongst the staged group photos was one of the two of them leaving through the church doors. Connie, ahead of Mick, was a white blur, her swelling belly disguised by the dress. But Mick’s face was clear and it appeared animated, almost trembling, as he watched her from behind, with love. Connie had gasped when she first saw it, as though she’d stumbled upon something she wasn’t supposed to see. She’d kept it to herself, never showing it to Mick. But she’d brought it out often over the years of their marriage, and held it close. That tender look in his eyes had come to her last night, and she’d wanted to share the picture with Emma, to assure her that at one time her parents had been very dear to each other.

As she watched the rings change hands now, she recalled that on the day Mick had told her, in a numb, expressionless tone, how *he had to do right by Rachael*, she’d taken her wedding ring off. She’d held the gold band for several minutes before putting it in

the envelope with the precious photograph. It must have been the fallout amongst family and friends when news of Mick and her separation broke that caused Connie to forget this. It seemed very clear to her now.

And then, too soon, the ceremony was over. Beaming, the celebrant drew the newlyweds to either side of her and presented the new couple. For a moment Connie was deflated, and she understood her mother's disdain. There was something to be said, after all, for the weightiness of a church wedding, for the space it held. Yet this small gathering by the sea had its own cohesiveness, and spurred by the celebrant, it erupted with joy.

The sun dropped at last, only its rays visible. Lights sprung up along the quay. Connie felt ready for a party. Her responsibilities were over from here; unlike Mick, her days of curtailed socialising were long past. She looked around for William. He'd drifted away with Rita on his arm, listening intently to her. When Connie caught his eyes he raised them heavenwards. She hoped her grateful smile made up for her cool greeting earlier. Other things that might need to be said could wait. Connie had little idea, yet, where they were heading. She had some thinking to do first about what she wanted for herself.

It could have been exhaustion that flooded her then, relaxing her tight muscles, weakening her knees. But it felt like profound gratitude. To be where she was, in the middle of her life, wondering what might come next. She felt humbled too, when she realised that everywhere she looked, she saw people who truly mattered.

ISI UNIKOWSKI

Stone Suite

At first you hardly recognise them for what they are:
a child's flanks
slowing the eye's downward trajectory,
the earth's forehead wrinkled,
as if trying to remember in cumulus thought bubbles
shadows over tidepools
slipping over forests
in and out of key.
Engineered water still runs down channels
then out from a stone sun
into a stream
suspended in nets of birdsong
distracted among fallen saplings
until you discern that nudge of earth
captioning in an old text face
—invented in Byzantine, Ottoman serifs —
the diffident lore of borders:
something about keeping one's head down.

Terraces, Jerusalem hills

Standing at the base
a pillar of light
reverses the work's progress

its imperative
drawing the eyes up
to that authoritative

disk of sky until
you discern the chiselled frieze
scrolling downwards

a conversation
between sky and earth
not as deities do

in perpendicular shafts
coins slashing air, hafts
of wilderness light

paradise's house curtains
the big bang's pistons
but life lived in italics

leaning into the future,
not carved from darkness
but scooped from the light above, mined

as the mind is shaped
beveled in clay, opening,
unwinding, as things

formed in twilight, revealing
themselves to be of both night
and day, emerging

between opposites, were once
thought to hold something
in themselves of both,

a serene of mind
and the earth it touched,
and to be, therefore,
miraculous.

Chalk caves, Beit Guvrin

The pool's transcendent green, a Rothko square
 suspended between columns: below,
 in the portentous gloom of the hypocausts,
 a hushed congregation strains
 to discern the labels. The living and the plinthed,
 carved from or pushed for time,
 regard one another.
 Chitons seem to undulate, their folds
 insinuating a presence within,
 granite frames shuttered
 like early photography of tightrope walkers, jugglers,
 someone walking in sepia sequence.

These crumbling mandibles lost their oratory
 while the eloquent, steadfast eyes remained.
 If, by virtue of the missing head, Apollo's torso
 called all the more forcefully for change,
 time's vandalism reminds us of his poet:
 of how the lyre continued to sing
 in the river that has no source, no mouth;
 provisioning a song
 that we might tell of its passage,
 even as we feel the grit grip
 at our throat, silt shoal at the entwined banks.

Roman remains, Bath

Nobody has left a sign to tell us why or when
 someone placed these stones on top of one another
 with such care: like little, rotund men
 staring out to sea, the way migrant Dads would stand
 on their patch of beach while their wives unpacked and slathered
 sunscreen on their kids' skinny shoulders. The stones remind
 me of the pebbles we leave on graves, to show we've been;
 but these are bigger, stacked onto one another in small cairns,
 randomly across the beach as if a house had once leaned
 on them. And if, at first, I felt somehow disengaged
 because I couldn't tell if they *meant anything*, couldn't discern
 if they were as old as the midden nearby, that did get signage,
 or were some kind of recent claim, or artwork; well, at least
 someone, sometime, had found a use for this rubble
 (the most direct line between strangers is the past,
 where nothing's random, only a forgotten pattern),
and anyway, they'd sure been to a lot of trouble.

Mimosa Rocks, South Coast, NSW

LUCY ALEXANDER

Naked Song

My mother was a currawong
with sleek black feathers
trimmed with white
and a beak that broke down bones
cracked through lizard hide
pointed the way through mazed tree tops
and curved snarling down at the corners.

She kept her yellow eyes closed in hours of darkness
to preserve their colour
sharpened them on everything I did in the daylight.
When she sang her voice was ringing
setting the sun just so or calling up morning
with the single swoop to song, cadence almost finished—
but not quite. Her own naked name, over and over
until to hear it meant nothing:
and that was her tragedy.

FRANCESCA SAISNAITIS

Speaking in Tongues

the high sun; the day unbroken blue she runs
tall grasses snatch at her skirts
remember

the scent of wildflowers
bruised by her passing bees the chirr of the grasshopper
the chorus burp-burp of frogs

she stoops
to pick a forget-me-not cornflower something blue
the sun tickles her nose the breeze blows
her face in the sun
warms her bare arms the warm earth
begs her to lie down

she turns her head and looks he holds out two closed fists
pick one, he says
remember

the icy lake; screams of shock and joy
she flails her arms
she beats the air
like a lame duck pretending to drown she waits
for him to save her he leaps
and disappears pretending to drown
and comes up spuming like a whale missile dog shivering
churning river silt between his toes the carp swim by unseen
the brush of tail and fin
a gentle swoosh

he is missing two front teeth look what I found, he says
 a rancid thing
 remember

the damp loft; nostrils filled
with the smell of mouldering straw ears filled
with the tramp of boots on wooden boards
she chokes on dust a cough a sneeze
in the distance drums closer
the boom of artillery fire soldiers marching
singing marching songs soldiers barking
orders voices speaking in tongues

 she does not recognise
the stab-stab of bayonets through straw

 he covers her mouth with his hand
 don't drop my heart, he whispers

BIOGRAPHIES

DAVID ADÈS is the author of 'Mapping the World' (commended for the Fellowship of Australian Writers Anne Elder Award 2008), the chapbook 'Only the Questions Are Eternal' and the forthcoming 'Afloat in Light'. David's poetry has been published in numerous journals in Australia and the U.S. and has regularly been anthologised. He won the University of Canberra *Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize 2014* and has been commended or a finalist for several other poetry prizes.

LUCY ALEXANDER is a Canberra-based poet and writer of fiction. She specialises in making piles of words and then sorting them out based on what they mean. Recently she's been out of her comfort zone swimming in the deep blue. She's often inspired to write about her family who are all expert time-thieves. She does much of her writing when everyone's asleep. Or on a Wednesday when she sits at a desk at Gorman Commons...

SANDRA ARNOLD lives in New Zealand. She is the author of two novels and a book on parental bereavement. She has a MLitt and PhD in Creative Writing from CQ University, Australia. Her short stories have been broadcast on radio and published in literary journals and anthologies in New Zealand and internationally.

EUGEN M. BACON, MA, MSc, PhD studied at Maritime Campus, University of Greenwich, less than two minutes' walk from The Royal Observatory of the Greenwich Meridian. A computer graduate mentally re-engineered into creative writing, She has published over 100 short stories and creative articles, and has a creative non-fiction book out with Palgrave MacMillan in 2017.

SARAH BARR lives in Dorset, UK, and writes poetry and fiction. Her subjects are often concerned with the natural world and our relationship with it. She tutors creative writing, leads writing groups and workshops, and gives readings. Her writing has been published in a variety of magazines and anthologies including, *The Bridport Prize* anthologies 2010 and 2016, *The Interpreter's House, South, Other Poetry, Momaya Short Story Review* 2015.

SALLY BREEN is the author of *The Casuals* (2011) and *Atomic City* (2013). Her short form creative work has appeared widely including features in the *Griffith REVIEW, The Australian, Overland, Review of Australian Fiction, Wet Ink, The Age* and the *Asia Literary Review*.

JESSICA SEYMOUR is an Australian researcher and freelance writer based in Utrecht, the Netherlands. She loves travelling, petting strangers' dogs on the train, and taking naps, and her creative work can be found in *Voiceworks Magazine*, *Short Fiction Break*, and *Needle in the Hay*.

REBECCA DURHAM is an American poet, botanist, and artist. Rebecca's writing has appeared in *Orion Magazine*, *Superstition Review*, *Pilgrimage Magazine*, and is forthcoming in the *Riverfeet Press Anthology* and *Bright Bones: Contemporary Montana Poetry*. Her botanical art has been featured at the Montana Natural History Center. She is a MFA candidate in Creative Writing with an emphasis in poetry at the University of Montana.

DOMINIQUE HECQ has a background in literary studies, psychoanalysis, and translation. *Towards a Poetics of Creative Writing* (2015) is her latest book. She is the author of thirteen full-length creative works. Her awards include the Martha Richardson Medal for Poetry, the New England Review Prize for Poetry and the inaugural AALITRA Prize for Literary Translation (Spanish/English). *Hush: A Fugue* is her latest release in the UWAP's new poetry series.

JACKSON, a poet and computer science graduate, was born in Cumbria, England, and lives in Western Australia. She is undertaking a PhD at Edith Cowan University. In 2013 Mulla Mulla Press published her second book 'lemon oil'. In 2014 she won the Ethel Webb Bundell Poetry Prize. Her latest publications include poems in *LiNQ*, *Cordite*, and the *Fremantle Press Anthology of Western Australian Poetry*, plus a peer-reviewed paper in AAWP's 2016 conference proceedings.

DANIEL JUCKES is a PhD candidate at Curtin University, Western Australia. His research interests include nostalgia studies, Thing Theory, and family memoir. His writing has been published in *Australian Book Review* and *Westerly: New Creative*.

HELENA KADMOS is the Krishna Somers Postdoctoral Fellow in Literary Studies at Murdoch University, and teaches across literature and creative writing. She has published creative work in literary journals in Australia, and in an anthology of critical and creative work in the USA.

E.K. KEITH shouts her poems on street corners, takes the mic at bars, coffee shops, and radio stations mostly in San Francisco, California, but poetry lures her to explore the wider world. You can find her work published in journals and anthologies in print and online. She organizes *Poems Under the Dome*, San Francisco's annual open mic celebration of Poetry Month inside City Hall. E.K. hides out in libraries.

EM KÖNIG is a queer poet and creative writing honours student at the University of Adelaide. They have had their work published in *On Dit*, *Flazeda*, *Uneven Floor*, *Pure Slush*, *Truth Serum*, et. al. Em was recently awarded the 2016 John Harvey Finlayson Prize for creative writing and the 2016 Sir Archibald Strong Memorial Prize for literature. Em writes about queerness, nature, cruelty and housewives (real, desperate or otherwise).

WES LEE lives in New Zealand. Her publications include *Cowboy Genes* (Grist Books, 2014), *Shooting Gallery* (Steele Roberts, 2016), and a pamphlet forthcoming in 2017 with Eyewear Publishing in London. She has won a number of awards for her writing. Her poems have appeared in *The London Magazine*, *Poetry London*, *Westerly*, *New Writing Dundee*, *Landfall*, *Cordite*, *Verandah*, *The University of Canberra Vice Chancellor's Poetry Prize Anthology*, and many other journals and anthologies.

ALYSON MILLER teaches literary studies at Deakin University, Geelong. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in both national and international publications, along with a book of literary criticism, *Haunted by Words: Scandalous Texts* (Peter Lang, 2013), and a collection of prose poems, *Dream Animals* (2014).

HELEN MOORE is an award-winning British ecopoet and socially engaged artist based in NE Scotland. Her two poetry collections are *Hedge Fund*, *And Other Living Margins* (Shearsman Books, 2012) and, acclaimed by John Kinsella as 'a milestone in the journey of ecopoetics', *ECOZOA* (Permanent Publications, 2015). She is currently completing her third collection, *The Disinheritance*.

MARIE O'ROURKE is a creative writer and PhD candidate from Curtin University. Investigating the quirks of memory, her current creative work-in-progress is a collection of lyric essays pushing the boundaries of post-postmodern memoir. Previously published in *Westerly* and *ABR*, her work will soon feature in *TEXT*, *a/b* and *New Writing*.

SARAH PEARCE is an English PhD student, writer and poet from Adelaide.

FRANCESCA JURATE SASNAITIS is a writer and artist. Originally from Melbourne, she now lives in Perth where she is a doctoral candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Western Australia. Her poetry, short fiction and reviews have been published online, and in various print journals and anthologies.

JOHN STOKES is internationally known as one of Australia's most courageous and innovative or authors, poets, essayists and librettists writing in English. He has won, and been short or long-listed for many prizes, including the *University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International*, and *Montreal International*. He has been published in many journals; tutored in literature; and read his work worldwide. His books include: *A River in the Dark* (2003) and the prize-winning, *Fire in the Afternoon* (Halstead, 2015).

EMMA TIMPANY was born and grew up near Dunedin, New Zealand. Her previous publications are the short story collections *The Lost of Syros* (Cultured Llama Press, 2015) and *Over the Dam* (Red Squirrel Press, 2015). Her stories have won three awards and have been published in England, New Zealand and Australia. In 2018, *Three Roads*, her next collection, is due from Red Squirrel Press and she is co-editing a collection of contemporary Cornish short stories for The History Press. Emma lives in Cornwall.

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Meniscus Special Issue:

NEW
works on
PAPER

A poetics *of making together*

3 episodes of inventing
& *conversing in* community

Melbourne 2016—June | August | November



ANTONIA PONT

Intent | Concept | Reflection

An essay on enabling encounters

...the capacity of a body to affect and be affected is inseparable from the ‘affections’ experienced by that body, especially the affections of joy and sadness, which, respectively, correspond to good and bad encounters with other bodies, or, what amounts to the same thing, increases or decreases in the power of acting as a result of these encounters. (Bowden 2015: 61, citing Deleuze 1990)

TO BE INVOLVED in art or other creative spheres can mean a lot of things. In the most obvious sense, it can mean generating tangible artefacts. This would be a recognisable notion of the artist or the poet. The poet makes poems; the artist of various ilks makes works, in (and at the edges of) their chosen, practised modality.

Bowden’s quote above reminds us of something else. In Deleuzian terms, art is that very entity which, when encountered, generates or provokes affect (see Deleuze 1990: 383). Affect, furthermore, is also what happens when we make art.

A long time ago, a prominent painter friend said to me, ‘Remember it takes ten years to recover from art school, and you have to go to art school’. A wonderful riddle, but also perfectly lucid. *That which is enabling might also, at certain moments, for certain periods, be dis-enabling.* This recalls what Deleuze writes about thought in *Difference and Repetition*:

The sign or point of departure for that which forces thought is thus the *coexistence of more and less* in an unlimited qualitative becoming. (2004: 178, emphasis added)

Affect happens when we encounter works of art (poems read aloud, charcoal drawings hung against a window, the weight of a cup in our hand). Following Spinoza, such affects can be enabling or dis-enabling, corresponding to what we might call joy or sadness, respectively. Affect influences what a body can do, and for the purposes of a maker, this folds back into itself: if the affect is joyous, more work (producing more affect) is provoked.

So, we can perhaps add another thing to the list of things that can be made as part of artistic or creative engagement. I would call this the creation of atmospheres, or the composition of contexts.

If art school—as an assemblage of contexts—is likely to be a baffling combination of enabling and disabling, then we have to go—as my friend made clear—but we can learn to watch and feel with more discernment. We would watch for the intensities of joy or sadness (enablement or dis-enablement) generated in the encounters with works, with pedagogies, with fellow makers, with lovers, with materials, with figures of influence and authority, with an institution embedded within further reaching institutions, and so on.

With these concepts in mind, and as the idea for the New Works on Paper series of events was brewing, I asked myself:

- What kinds of encounter, formed under what conditions, might make more making possible?
- ...or making again (if it has become dormant)?
- ...or other, undreamt of makings?
- ...and even desire for continuations of concatenating encounters, that’s to say: momentum? New inertias, proliferating and more to our taste.

In relation to the series, I relinquished my role as maker-of-poetry within its ambit and turned my attention to making something else: contexts or atmospheres in which a certain kind of affect might happen. I was looking to compose the canvas, plinth, or blank space against which works would be more likely to happen.

An application of control and chaos, or said differently structure

and space, was how I decided to work intuitively. ('Intuition' here refers to an accretion of knowledges—latent, having been unpacked and thought through, now at-the-ready—along with sheaths of prior, sensed experience and some guesses.)

My decision was to control quite a lot the meetings with pairs of makers, the terms on which the initial encounter occurred, and the structure of the final events. These—meetings and event timing—were my responsibility and not to be democratically negotiated, not consensually derived. The artists responded variously to this approach. In some cases, there was a quick apprehension of the strategy in play, in other cases, a polite or unconscious resisting, in others, an attempt to occupy my position, in others a savvy, professional deference, or simply sincere cooperation. In some instances, I sensed both relief and excitement, perhaps on account of the commitment to a straightforward mode: controlled outline, in order to enable contained unruliness. A kind of taking-care, applied intentionally, might then make space for the works themselves—which can only arrive framed by intentionality, not as its causal result.

Makers decided individually if they wished to participate, without knowledge of the partner to whom they'd be allocated. All three parties (pair plus convenor) were to be together (virtually or viscerally) for this setting-up of intent and in order to launch into the relatively tight working timeline. What was stipulated—the exo-skeleton, so to speak—then, was only: i) how the initial meeting happened, including the 'seeding' of the ambiance of the proposed relationship, and ii) the final time constraints of the event itself. Curation stopped there, my preference being for minimal, deft intervention.

I sought to curate structure and stated intent, and to make so-called 'content' (the discrete poems, the made works) merely a function and outcome of that same structure and intent. Restrained but adequate constraints, therefore, were set operating. In other words, I wished to subtract myself from involvement in what content emerged, and did not ask to see any poems/artefacts prior to the events.

The work generated from the process of working-alongside (as we called it, to distinguish it from explicit collaboration), then, was entirely decided by each artist on their own terms, and in accordance with their own aesthetics and current practice. That an invention or shift *at the level of practice itself* could be a side-effect for the makers of this curating, was of course not precluded or unanticipated.

All this amounted to the following pragmatic way of proceeding. Once makers had accepted the invitation to participate, a date about six weeks prior to each event was set in order for the pairs to meet each other. Meetings took place in cafés or bars, or—when necessary—via three-way web video calls. The process, as I explained at each meeting, sought to frame a process for making individual new works (not intentionally collaborative ones, although if collaboration did happen, then it could continue if the pair so decided).

Each maker would have around 9 minutes for their contributions to be read and shared at the event (or thirty minutes per pair including discussion). That the reading of poems/works could meet that time constraint was the only stipulation. Three poems of about three minutes. Or a single longer poem, &c.

What perhaps was more delicate was conveying and modelling the atmosphere or attitude of 'working alongside' that I envisaged, one which—as mentioned—did not wish to dovetail with collaboration, but rather operate in a new space.

Having recently worked on a collection of scholarship concerned with collaboration per se (see Axon Journal *The Poetics of Collaboration* 2015), I wanted to do something that involved working in (the service of) 'community' that nevertheless sat aside from what typically comes under the umbrella of collaborating. I didn't explicitly intend for collaborative works to be the result of the process. Instead, I imagined it as staging an experiment in making a making process that could be at once 'supportive', collegial, autonomous (but not lonely), constructive, non-competitive, and safe-though-unruly.

If the project involved collaboration, at all, it was insofar that

the pair agreed to collaborate in cultivating an atmosphere between them in which their solo practice might thrive, or at least not be dis-enabled. As discussed, cultivating such an atmosphere is itself a creative work—a making of a less articulable kind. Arguably, the best artists are those who are always also cultivating encounters that produce affects that make their bodies capable of more.

In the best case scenario—hoped-for, contingent—makers might meet a companion in creativity. It would be a case of those rare conjunctions that are unambiguously enabling, effortless, those which—as Spinoza, after Deleuze, might term it—generate *joy* (Bowden 2015: 61).

As conceptualised, the process sought to not-preclude (the effort of abstaining from hindering) both accident and failure. Failure was explicitly discussed in each of the preparatory meetings. Failed works were welcomed and a feasible outcome of any time-constrained process. Failed works counted as generativity, not as an exception to it. In the final NWoP III, Harle—ceramic artist and long-term practitioner—spoke of the failure built into to the firing process in making pots. Due to the chemistries and contingent factors of heat, clay, glaze &c. the ceramicist knows to factor in likely failure, the breaking or exploding of many works in the kiln.

As it turned out, the significant number of the works made by Harle for the final event—small porcelain tea cups, with a thick white glaze (see photos below) planned as gifts for all audience members present, ‘failed’ insofar as the glaze on many slid faster than predicted, and rather than stopping half-way down the cup, flowed into the shelves of the kiln. A result of this ‘failure’ of some, was that the cups that aligned more with Harle’s vision, were invested with perhaps a greater sense of their fragility and singularity. They were not predictable outcomes of a merely iterable process, but more akin to a kind of living process caught in a freeze-frame, a snap-shot of a constellation of dynamic materials, a trace of intensive relationships. This resonated strongly with the laboratory that had been set up: the New Works on Paper series itself.

Similarly, the point of framing uncurated space with strict

structure is in order to explicitly court contingency, to coax strange turns of event, blooms of disobedience and whim, divergences from expectations and so on. If one makes the terms of the finite structure themselves finite (that is, there aren’t endless stipulations mapping the space), then much is left to chance. Chance isn’t shut out.

In the first event, for example, three pairs of poets turned into five poets and one visual artist, as Kay Are responded to the process by working the paper artefacts made by Alice Bishop via a procedure of repetitive photocopying (see artist’s statement below). This work with a machine that burns became a methodology for writing that which might be barely speakable. Are was able to inhabit the sheer structure and thereby shrug off any poet identity that had been pinned to her.

This variation was then taken up and iterated in the subsequent events, where I then explicitly sought two pairs of poets, in addition to a pair consisting of a poet plus other kind of maker. Skye Baker (fine artist) and Sophie Harle (ceramicist) joined the project as a result of Are’s variation. Introducing other modes of practice into the mix then resulted, for both the poets and artists involved, in further variations in, and mixtures of, their usual processes.

By way of further example, during the first NWoP—as I improvised my own role of conversation convenor—I found myself making two unplanned manoeuvres. The first was to have some poems read twice—an attempt to give the audience further opportunity to grasp the aural artefact generated in the context of a ‘reading’. Listening, for many, is difficult. This approach sought to give the audience a chance for two discrete encounters with the work as it as recreated from the textual score on paper. Each encounter would, as Deleuze might emphasise, generate varied affects.

When I or the other person in the pair read the poet’s work to the audience—by default—it was read to the poet themselves as audience to their own words, as performative score that they could witness playing out.

Finally, as an extension to this last manoeuvre, and one which continued across the two later events, the poem was offered to

an audience member, to be read back to us all and to the poet. This arguably complicated the line dividing spectator from maker, which many cite as a dis-enabling aspect of events where certain of those present are dubbed ‘makers’ and others, for the duration, are dubbed ‘consumers/listeners’.

A startling example of this was at NWoP II. Two audience members—randomly selected—performed, unrehearsed but seamlessly, a long found poem by Thompson, one that, had it had only a sole reader, may have left an audience working too hard, or even alienated by the strong content. Instead the result was nimble and hilarious. Strangely, the professions of the two audience members aligned with the field of the found poem. It turns out that they were both already *au fait* with the poem’s themes and atmospheres, an artefact they had never seen before.

Events then, for those present, included ‘hearing’ a poetic work read aloud, but also witnessing a maker’s own seeing/hearing of their own work being remade—in reading/re-presentation—in a live situation. Or events involved being the unanticipated reader of work made by another. (It is likely that further theorisation of this approach will be forthcoming, by those involved in the project, or others).

By way of conclusion, I’d like to list the aspects of this project that gave me joy (and perhaps gave it to others):

That pairs did not appear to colonise or mimic the voice or stylistics of each other. Sometimes themes were resonant, sometimes shared or selected forms were enacted in parallel, but differently. Artefacts that emerged were ‘of’ their poet/maker, while the making itself was generated in a co-cultivated context.

That certain makers who may have had reluctance about participating in a curated project, were subsequently keen to be involved (after attending an earlier event), and that the making-relationship that unfolded in certain pairs proved both an enabling and potentially enduring one.

That despite making discrete, solo works, makers showed evident care for the process/experience of their partner, and showed an investment in cultivating and tending a context that enabled

the other’s making.

And finally:

That, on the final night, an audience member (who had attended all three events) said to me: I feel elated after that.

Elation; joy. For Spinoza these would be markers of a body’s capacity. It remains an imprecise science to know what it is that makes more possible, but it is by no means a pointless query. In the case of creative practices, the ‘more’—in my opinion and experience—pertains to returning to the practice. It pertains to practising and not disengaging. To ‘recover from art school’, to see out the ‘ten years’. To learn discernment for what makes more possible. This is a sensing, not a judging. It is learning the flavour of the atmosphere, like a barometer for capacity and desire.

NWoP sought, as its most modest ambition, to set up a temporal frame (6 weeks or so) in which makers had an imperative and commitment to make work. Only their involvement and showing-up was obligatory and choreographed. The frame invited an experiment in subtracting certain dis-enabling ambiances from making, to wager what could be done alongside and in company, if not together.

As the reader will see for themselves, the artefacts are highly varied, variously realised, audacious, polished, innovative, emergent, bearing the mark of different lineages and influences, astute, irreverent, sad, and often disarming. The artefacts of the process itself were the events themselves (and the even less tangible processes leading up to the events—of relationship, getting to know, coming in and out of accompanying). Strangely, we made no documentation of what was said. No recordings. No transcripts. The trace of the events repercussions in other ways—through the capacity of those who came along. Their desire to make—more and again. Their incidental elation.

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TITLE BOOKS & RECORDS | JUNE 2016

MAKERS:

Tom Bensley & Stu Hatton

Alice Bishop & Kay Are

Ruby Todd & Petra White

CONVENOR: *Antonia Pont*

STU HATTON

a gathering

I look to see what I have lying around
I look to see what I look to

a poem is a gathering
leaving things open
a way to begin moving out of or into

I look to see what is lying around
over here hollow disputes of state
over here irredeemable landfill
the teeth thwarting the tongue

a poem is a gathering
a way to begin
leaving things open
a midway amidst midways ... maybe ... maybe
foraging, casting around for something other than

a poem not to be perfected in its levels of obedience / the art
of letting things take the piss out of themselves

I move things around
feeding on breath, feeding on static
things move me around

if only to be carried by some elusive nakedness or other
if only to be carried by the interbreathing of all
if only to be a mendicant, a circling wanderer
to walk into a bad season

maybe sipping from a ditch in the dark
to slip beneath some decisive surface or other
no I, no me, no mine
nakedder & nakedder & nakedest

to be carried by the interbreathing
a midway amidst midways ... maybe ... maybe
a poem is a gathering
a way to begin again & again &
I look to see what I have lying around
no I, no me, no mine / 'I' is but a figment
leaving things open

a month's stress leave

after winter comes winter & spending
whole sleep dep'd days in
the shower, while
out in the gloaming
massed wire-trees wring

their many hands &
surround you, you say, as
all that bold money makes you
drop your keys, vowing
you'll either keep to the approved

slow buildings/slow pleasures (e.g.
those found in some of the tighter-
scripted genres of government
procedural action-adventure) or,
say, lock yourself in the laundry

for long-awaited holiday armed
with only bucket-bong & laptop
to click through a tax-free kingdom
that's practically all beach,
cushions & over-willing lovers

where each day dawns as
a tipsy wish fulfilled (&
what this might mean seems
yet to be felt, perhaps
as some small gift of space)

TOM BENSLEY

An Ode to my Laptop

Baby,
Brilliant, beautiful, blue Dell.
I have to tell you something.
But first have I told you
How much I appreciate you?
You're the reason I didn't succumb to my insane loneliness.
Your screen light, in my very dark room,
Like a lover's cheek warming my thighs.

I'm sorry I hit you with the Frisbee
And for my crude tape job trying to fix you.
I saw you were jealous of other laptops,
With guys who cleaned their keys and sent their error reports.
I should've paid attention to the signs;
All those ignored updates, the way you took longer and longer to
boot up when I needed you more and more.

Let me explain myself.
It's just that you've slowed down recently.
You ignore me when I ask you to do things you once did swiftly,
After only one click.
You shut down on me without warning,
Suddenly we can't even communicate.

I have to tell you
There's another laptop.
I think it's serious.
But I won't forget you.

My first laptop
Brilliant, beautiful, blue Dell.

Trying to Find Myself on the Internet: Time Spent Google Searching

January to March 2015

Tips for recent graduates; How to become a successful writer; Percentage of graduates getting work; Living as a working writer

April 2015

List of useless degrees; Graduating with a useless degree; Retail jobs in my area

June to July 2015

What's the point of it all? Top 10 reasons to get out of bed in the morning; Define anhedonia; What are the effects of pornography on the brain?

August 2015 to September 2015

Googling all your problems; Will artificial intelligence care about me; How to know if you are lonely; Why am I alone?

December 2015

Okay, Google: What do you know about me?

Based on your 2,147 bookmarks, 17,891 gmail conversations and 4,306 searches, Tom Bensley, you are:

23 years old, living in Mount Waverley, a frequent watcher of sitcoms, alone and existentially confused. You fear the future, you fear addiction, you fear pornography, you want to subsist entirely confined in your room. You want answers, you are searching, on average, 150 times per week. You like ambient music, you like nachos, you fear death, on average, 3 times per month.

January 2045:

Sealed inside a large, grey pod, I am hunched over a desk. A laptop sits on the desk in front of me. A treadmill runs beside me in case I want to go for a walk, which Google knows I like to do. When I want to eat, I type a recipe into the search bar and a meal slides down a chute from the top of the pod, straight onto my desk. When I am not searching, the screen alternates between sitcoms and pornography—this keeps me docile. I possess the free will to search for anything I want, I have all the time in the world, I no longer fear death.

Recent search history:

Top 10 ways to escape Google's apocalyptic, hermetically sealed search pods.

RUBY TODD

The Departure

From the start, he casts two shadows
Witness to his studious grief, she lies
at the foot of his bed for three days and three nights
her casket weighted with Egyptian expectation

Over the husband's shoulder, the poet peers
gleaning memories of cliff-top walks, the first rush of love, the
shock
of a young woman's air-blue gown
as she waits at a country station – devising how to arrange them
against the dark coda
of age, love's fading, and death

Line after line, in his voice and hers
he brings about his own birth as a great poet
as she divides in infinite directions
voiceless yet ventriloquised to wonder
if such restoration in love could have happened
had she lived

Hardy does not answer seized by the clarity
of her image from their earliest days his heart's pace
wound back to that time enabled only by the later
Emma's departure Yet at times one feels him
behind the poems a musician testing for hollow sounds

Meeting Thomas

You said you found a mine in me
A study of a girl
You collected my confessions
Tracked weather in my face

From the world you arrived that night
To greet me at the door
Of desolate St Juliot
Where we measured each other

Alone together for supper
Talk came quick, a current
Older than us or that night
Reduced to wicks we sat there
In a cold rectory kitchen

In your eyes I read a wit grown
From the earth you were close to
In your voice I heard the West
Thinking Life had found me
As I sang for you
While we were promised but apart
I wrote your words in my neat hand
Wishing you glory yet
Imagining the years before us
As a work greater still

How could I have known how soon
You'd tire of the mine
You were once so struck by how scant
You'd find my own prospects as a miner
How much gold would return to you
Once the mine in me expired

Coming Forth by Day

As in the Egypt of pharaohs while the body
lies in wait he brings offerings
to animate the dead one's double

Through these offerings lanterns lifting off the final coast
we can trace her wanderings
a 'faithful phantom' a woman calling
in the guise of forty years before

From their old haunts she arises riding
ageless on a horse resting underground
by a western sea inhabiting a sunset's
'glory-show'

He details one day by a Druid stone
when shadows before him suggest her shape
Yet to keep the sense of her there behind him
he chooses not to turn In truth
each elegy for Emma turns
toward her then away

If he were an Old Kingdom priest instead of a poet
He would use a series of tools a woodcarver's adze
a forked knife for the ritual Opening of the Mouth based, it is said
on the rituals of birth but in 1912
a pen restored her speech

Yet the voice she regains that dark, beseeching current
through his hymns betrays
too much and not enough

Noting how suddenly beloved she has become in death
to the poet husband who sings to her Emma ponders
what will be when he too is a ghost and they face each other:
'will you be cold/ As when we lived, or how?'

PETRA WHITE

Archaic Torso of Apollo

After Rilke

It's gone, the toppled head
where eyeapples ripened.
But his torso glows like fierce:
his body's gaze
grips and glimmers so the curve of the breast
nearly blinds you, and in quiet turns
a smile dances
along the thigh, along the hip, to the darkness of fatherhood.
If you stand here you will sense
the lose-nothing fall of undisfigured shoulders into air, the stone
glisten like a moving panther, the body
burn as calmly as a star.
There is no part of him
that does not see you. You will change your life.

NOTE ON THE POEMS

The series of poems displayed here explore the relationship between the English novelist and poet Thomas Hardy and his wife Emma, whose sudden death in 1912 led Hardy almost immediately into a period of fervent creativity. Propelled by grief and revived feelings of tenderness for his late wife, Hardy wrote many of the elegies which now define his reputation as a poet, some of which appear in the 'Poems of 1912 – 13', first published in *Satires of Circumstance* (1914). Quotations from Hardy's poems in 'Coming Forth By Day' are taken respectively from 'The Haunter', 'He Prefers Her Earthly', and 'An Upbraiding'.

The Prodigal Son

After Rilke

Now to step from all this,
 all of what God created and all of what
 created itself,
 the world that trembles and blurs as if in an old well,
 where I am here and there but never where
 my heart sits squarely, never where
 my eyes see clearly.
 Oh the blade of unseeing that covers my eyes!
 There is so much I can't tell,
 here in this town where the butcher
 puts out his sign every morning
 and takes it in every night, where the same people drive
 by in droves to the shops to the shops
 where work makes everyone
 narrow as their fingers.
 The suffering of childhood
 climbs up every wall, thick as ivy,
 the limitations imposed from birth,
 never grown out of.
 I see it all and yet see nothing,
 the paddocks lie still beneath the mist,
 the lives lie locked within the hearts,
 I see no joy, nothing that starts
 or finishes, no wailing nor dreaming.
 And yet tiny wars erupt from time to time.
 I am a young man in a small quiet town
 spoiled, you might think, by the town that holds me by the hand,

by the small place it has for me,
 bigger than a grave, small enough to save me from dreaming too wildly.
 But my brain boils, my eyes go wild to see
 what they have never seen before, as if to prove
 they can see at all.
 Now to step from this, to go on
 into wild nothingness, to a warm country
 with beaches and girls
 where my history dissolves. To go on, and on
 into the bright bubble of sight.
 Is it here I sign up for a new life?

The Panther

After Rilke

The sleek black bars have paced about his eye-zone
so long his gaze
is a throng of a thousand bars, behind them
no world.
With fire trapped steps
he prowls in ever tightening circles,
a dance, a dance of ugraspable strength around a centre
where the great anaesthetised will floats.
But sometimes the curtains of the eyes lift and an image
flies in and twists
through the jointed muscle and bone, the slippery sinew,
finds its way into the heart and dies.

ALICE BISHOP

BURN OFF

THREE SMALL STORIES OF A SATURDAY, BLACK

(SOMETHING LIKE SUMMER SNOW)

In Love and in war

‘To my daughter I will say, when the men come,
set yourself on fire.’

—*Warsan Shire*

FUEL

A blue screen glow lights up his face as she sits by him—pouring borrowed bourbon, lemonade laced. There's that quiet hum, the one of unknown things to come, as they both watch / listen / wait; headlines about them speak, too excitedly, of gum-hungry flame: Obliterated, Whole Towns. Consumed. Ablaze. The two don't know it yet, but their Flowerdale house has been swallowed up on the hill, hours ago. Flakes of theirs and others' ash-turned homes float down—
lacing dogs' heaving hides outside:
something like summer snow.

She asks him about tea; it's then that he bristles at her hunger, misunderstood. How can you think of food in a time like this? There's a dull thud in the distance; others' backyard propane bottles explode somewhere, petrol leaks from burning cars, pearlescent before flame. A milk-blue vein pops up along his forehead as he picks up the remote to throw like a fist. His wallet—its leather tooled with his own name, festive font—falls from his lap as he stands. It lays there, agape.

This is hard for me, MIKE disclaims—his wife's cheek blooming the colours of maroon grapes. And the ash outside, it continues to fall down, softly.
50 cent-sized flakes.

O₂

Silt / grit / cinders:

These are the things I wash from my baby's hair. Following endless dam-bound hours, huddled, we make it out, alive—just—for borrowed showers. Grey flecks whirl about us, the air conditioner vents pumping hot air and ash, as we drive to IGA, oddly as usual—for milk, for bread. My sister looks at my backseat baby, Elka, in the rearview mirror like she, too, is now nothing but news.
So you left him up there, Rowie, alone to defend the house? My sister asks,
not really wanting an answer, just for me to flinch.

But everything's softened, now. Look at me, puffed and paled: I'm still, months on, suspended somewhere in that terracotta water—ash blanketing my baby and I like we're somebody else's bad dream. Salt-laced cheeks, softening bottles of Mount Franklin, Elka's shorts darkening with fear. This is what I remember of fleeing, the house, and what people will refer to later (in voices, hushed) as Her Husband, Left. But too many stayed behind by homes, only to lie down, smoke choked, alongside garden hoses—warm and limp.

So this is it, I'd say, if I knew then what I know, now: It's Saturday. It's Black. But the day wasn't as colourless as it is today: winter, May. There were bright burns from radiant heat, my baby's swollen feet. Eucalypts gas, blue, then the sky blanketing
us—
the colours of rained-on rust

H E A T

You're calmed by whirring things, now:
anything to drown out the memory of the bush burning, along
with the soft interior pinks of us: nostrils and lungs rasping
along to a distant, dull, jet-engine roar. Even the air-conditioner
hum of the old Corolla now, its bonnet spray-painted gold,
makes the odd off-beat flutter of your heart settle,
and the white noise flee.

The car was birthday present from that man you now only used
to know.

Painted it myself, he'd smiled. And, as usual, you'd been sure to
smile back bigger: your hair, even then, arranged in its hennaed
halo glow. You stopped looking for him only recently, for any
sign of his silver fillings in the bush / Tfor any sign of the watch
your father bought him on your sweltering wedding day—
melted canapés, warmed rosé,
(f.o.r.e.v.e.r., flawed)
then smiles and shoulders, uncomfortably broad.

Sometimes, you look back at the violet crescents of your under-
eyes: under an apartment bathroom glow. You won't find him,
you remind yourself: ... anywhere, Ruth, but in the quiet after
flame. He's in the ash of a cream-coloured car now, a Nissan
Skyline this time, emptied—doors open—on the other side of
the road.

KAY ARE

'TO MY DAUGHTER I WILL SAY, WHEN THE MEN COME, SET YOURSELF ON FIRE' (1-3)

These are procedural or conceptual or verbo-visual poems.

Alice and I agreed that our NWoP partnership was to proceed
by way of parallel play + occasional feedback = collaborative
workshop. But it became clear, as reality encroached, that Alice
would excel and her pieces would be written start to finish before
I had the time (courage) even to begin. I decided, in the spirit of
belated feedback, to write as a reply to Alice's text. Which is to
say my work is inspired by hers, which is to say I interpreted her
work, which is to say I cannibalised it and regurgitated it as a
self-directed lens.

Alice's three pieces make beautiful shapes on the screen. They
emerge like found objects in white snow, structurally kindred
yet distinct. Each takes a different subject and POV: they are
three figures standing next to each other unable to reach into the
others' terrible isolation. Even in their shared experiences of fire,
the women pass by one another in the elemental storm of their
respective stories.

Yet, the story-objects and their women protagonists are united
by their Warsan Shire epigraph: 'To my daughter I will say, when
the men come, set yourself on fire'. It's a heinous imperative as is,
but what does it mean situated above these three female characters?
The beaten woman, the escapee/abandoner and the widowed bride
- they become figurative daughters, implored to prefer fire to the
shadowy male characters that accompany their stories.

So Alice's work seemed to draw a bow between bushfire and male (sexual) violence. I didn't know how to start thinking though that equivalence. Did Alice's texts want to rhetorically contest Shire? Did they point to the lived horror of fire in order to challenge the idea that fire ever could be a fate preferable to 'the men'? I drew a long bow of my own in order to think through this interpretation, enlisting a photocopier as a working analogy for these two catalysts to trauma.

I'm intrigued by the way the photocopier plays with questions of light, degradation, copying and equivalence. It applies an intense degree of heat and light to text, effectively burning an image of writing onto a page. It makes copies, implying a level of resemblance between all outputs, but the inevitable and incremental degradation of the image that comes as a result of the imperfect technology means that after 20, after 50, after 100 copies of a copy, the differences between the first and last are resounding. But the copier also picks up bits and pieces of incidental material (fluff, hairs, scratches on the copier plate), enhancing their presence on the page. You eventually sense that this matter was always there, in the background, shaping the page in invisible ways. (I liked, as I copied, the visual metaphor this suggested; the way the clear page became gradually littered, its slow-then-sudden filling up with the remnants of burnt things.)

So, what is the relationship between bushfire and masculinist violence? The process of copying asked questions about what came from the intense application of an element (light, heat) to a set of similar things, and the differential effect and aftermath of copying. My co-author the copier and I learned that the intensity of light applied is proportionate to the evidence of material interference - that not exposing the page to light doesn't imply an absence of negative space, only its concealment. An alternative understanding of Alice's stories and their equation of fire-affected women with sexually traumatised women emerged: the stories and their epigraph now seem to me to suggest that it's not the case that the patriarchal substructure delivers women violence unevenly, along a continuum of severity. Rather, patriarchal violence manifests along a spectrum

of visibility. The greater the degree of heat applied, the more the surrounding matter is revealed to have already interfered with a text's shape; the more a text's negative space is illuminated, the more its role in dis/figuring the text can be seen.

No woman, really, has escaped the shitstorm. Elemental extremes bring environmental aggravators to the fore to show that patriarchy, equally present for all of us, is merely differentially cloaked and encrypted.

him—pouring his
unknown
it, too early
we don't know
hours ago. Face
down—
side:
now.

er hunger, misadventured. How
and in the distance—other
and looks from burning eyes,
long his forehead as he picks up
er soaked with his own name,
It lays there, eggs.
blooming the colour of maroon
to fall down, softy.

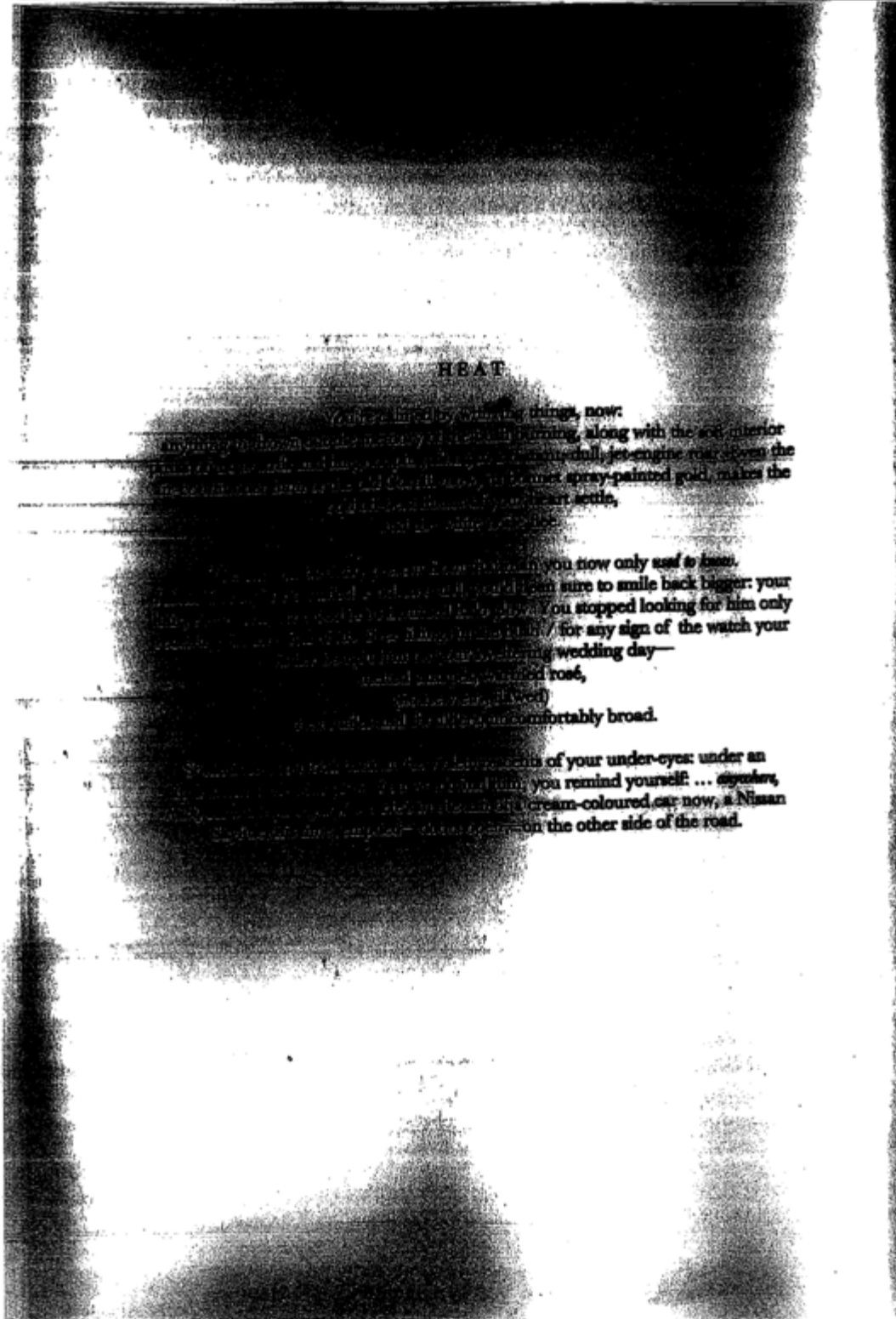
O,

my /

even my baby's hair.
make it out of
condition
for breast
it there
my name
for me to stick.

at me, pulled and pulled
surreous water—
down. Salt-iced chest,
with fear. This is what
to later (in voices, though
only to lie down, simple
warm and limp.

It's Saturday. It's blue. But the day
there were bright burn
then the sky
the colour of rained-on rust.



HEAT

...the things, now:
...along with the soft interior
...jet engine roar, even the
...gold, makes the
...scute,
...to know
...you know only used to know.
...sure to smile back bigger: your
...you stopped looking for him only
...for any sign of the watch your
...wedding day—
...roast,
...wed)
...comfortably broad.
...of your under-eyes: under an
...you remind yourself ... *anyone*,
...cream-coloured car now, a Nissan
...on the other side of the road.

NwoP II



BRUNSWICK STREET BOOKSTORE | AUGUST 2016

MAKERS:

*Kent McCarter & Leah Muddle
Rosalind MacFarlane & Campbell Thompson
Lisa Gorton & Skye Baker*

CONVENOR: *Antonia Pont*

LEAH MUDDLE

Cirrus

Hey, honey-pusher, I said (hey).
It's about states.
This week
more cones than footpath.
D-
d -
Daffodil
Dandelion
Hips
feel good.
After a while she said, I'm in a choir now.
My perspective on intersections
is shot.
A lap of the communal table.
Routine horror,
new paper,
thud of the cash box.
Inhabiting the same stairwell and
disliking each other for it.

They stood
on exposed tree roots
and practised taking up pike position.
It's a man-made lake!, I called out,
or may have done.
You
are a bouquet that signifies a disaster.
I am a person that carries home
her drycleaning.

He and his bicycle
sailed into the scrap metal warehouse, bell ringing.
That's one
for the hair diary.
Formations of nothing.
Emaciated kindness on a windy day. Seriously
contemplating sign.
Let's wed
in Abbotsford.
I said. My ideas are all hats. No breath
counts like this one

Let's linger in the fantasy
of our capabilities.
Dahlia
Daisy
Daphne
You cannot see it
per se.
Each toast
is my pinnacle.
Hover, opportunist.
In case of your not paying attention
I will feign sleep.

World

e-vents

World

e-vents

World

e-vents

World

e-vents

Watch that little couple exit the post office.
They're doing it ...

Crow's tallons cycle over chimneys while wings
barely fan. Portent in over-drive. My
dear ego
won't let me
join in
(It's mindless! - she says)
but gets me out of bed.
A button
to do and undo.
My performance gapes.
My performance has lost its tail.
The soft answer is
cumulus.
Large club of self-preservationists.
This line,
I wrote for you.
I know it's erotic because I can see many circles.

The eyes glisten
and blush pools in her orbits.
Could they talk while they worked? No!, she said,
still enacting the deft slip and turn of the tub with her hands.
A fountain of ice-cream gushed before us
from above.
I can feel my scalp talking to the ceiling.
You might look for a balancing element
and you might not find one.
Rest darling, said quilt.

The number of moods evoked is up to you:
ladders,
fruit baskets,
murky star.
Red pencil for sex,
red pencil for violence.
Leaning over to pick up my belongings,
I'm a different version of myself.

This is about how little I've said.
Chatter or chatterer?
Elderflower.
I look up
and sometimes at you.
Two plain brown rolls with nothing on them.
Lunchtime trust exercises.
I mean it, fall into me.
A code in strewn cat food?
But I picked it up.
The rise of the predictable collapse.
I put elbows in most of my poems and this one's no different.
Do you have experience with blindness? he said.
I'm looking now for observations.
My hands doing your hands
doing my hands.

ROSALIND MCFARLANE

Orientation Booklet

Volunteer :

your work rights!

New to Melbourne has only fire/water safety

BUT icebreakers!

Shorten as needed Facebook safety messages

Aussie culture

is a recap only,

(white as)

No Q &A

Court Transcriber

There are ears in your head.

You know people by their voices.

Prove spoken language:

write it all down.

You are only legally binding

10 to 6 on weekdays.

There are voices in your head

speaking formalities every day.

Those with the proper hats

repeat coded questions.

Everyone else: response only.

There are words in your head

but they are given, not heard.

Yours in the willed silence

paid in a spoken profession.

But you are also adjourned

free again every afternoon

allowed to see the world,

put your fingers in your ears.

Other parties are not.

They have been judged, removed.

Other words have been given

to them.

At night, watching a movie

you can choose quiet

and your own subtitles.

CAMPBELL THOMSON

Broadie Bro-ishness

Broadie Bro-ishness
leashed the cartel
to their Rottweilers
with the collar tattoos:
no hope no fear
hanging out the window
of the black Range Rover
on the way to the meet
with El Amadi & Sons
who had cornered
the ice market
north of the Ring Road
and were surging south
with the help of some bent jacks
but the Collingwood crew
were onsite
with their semi-auto
sawn off shotties
and their mincing machines
to make pet food
of anyone
who crossed them.

Turtles All the Way Down

From grandfather to granddaughter they are all sitting on the banks
of the little creek near Yirrkala
they are fishing for little fish with nets
& they will bait their hooks with the little fish and cast their balandi,
their fishing lines, for Badaltja
the long-necked, snake-necked turtle suspended mid-stream
his nostrils just above the surface like his big cousin
Baru, the crocodile.

The possum skin cloak under glass in the Melbourne Museum
is etched with designs based on the patterns
on the turtle's plastron
the armoured under shell of this submarine.

Not much bigger than a fifty cent coin
a pair of you grew to the size of my hand
in the lounge room aquarium
and escaped from the back yard
when I napped while you were sun bathing
till neighbours found you wandering down the street.

Years later one of you came off second best
with a yabby that was meant to be lunch
and ended up in the freezer
while your mate wolfed down
the scraps of the yabby I tore to bits.

They say you can live to a hundred and twenty
still cruising up and down the tank
peering through the nictitating membranes
over your eyes
that act like goggles to let you see
like a Great White Shark.

LISA GORTON

from EMPIRICAL V

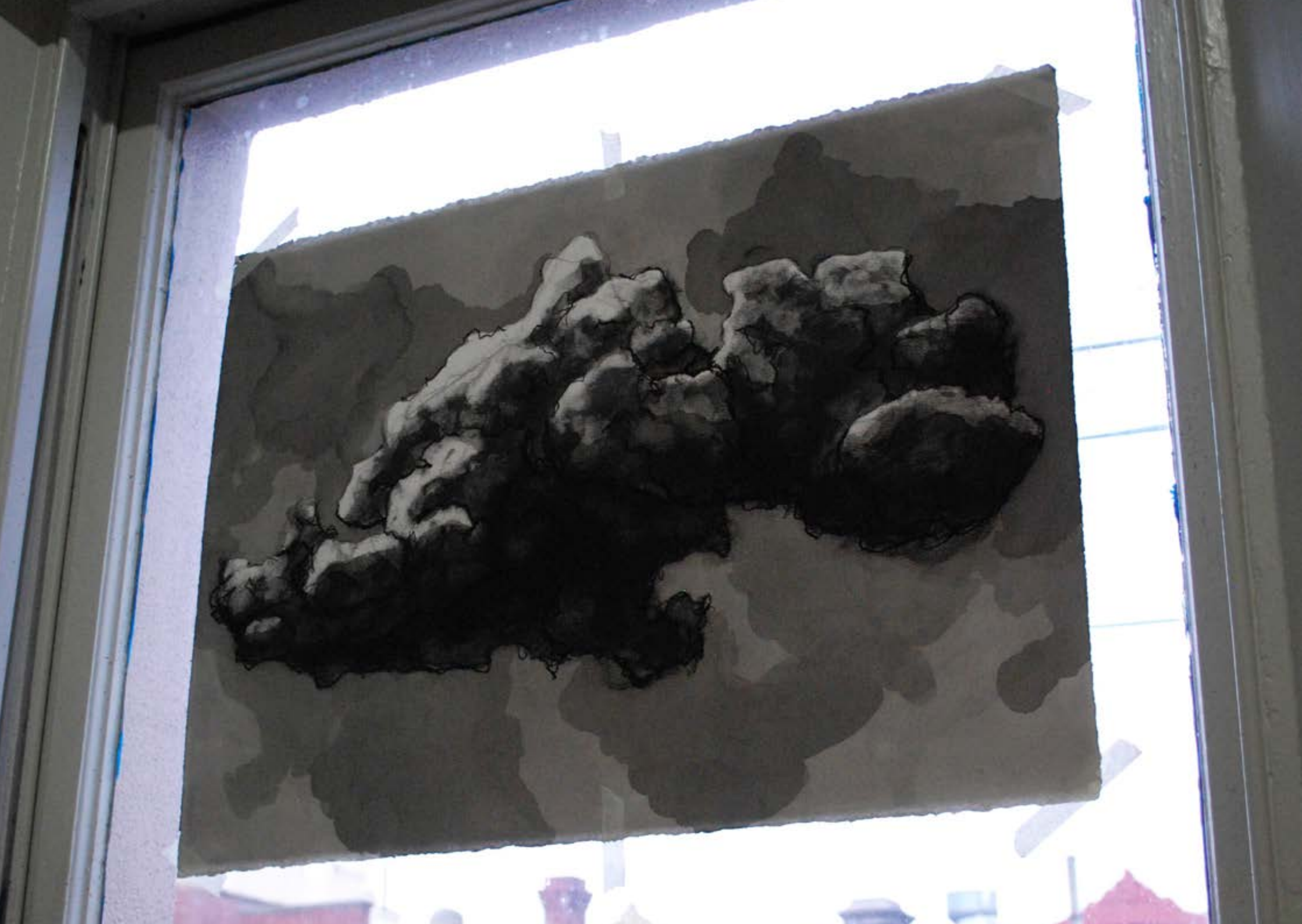
for Skye Baker

A single cloud now climbing the hill towards me
and the blue-grey shadows in it are in the shape of a fire
and all about it brightness where the light pours through—
Uninterrupted its shadow moves over the craving grasses—
pale seedheads now shaking out light—and with a sound of wings
the scrubwrens scatter out of head-high rubble now
overrun with weeds—tussock, milk-thistle, dry stalks of fennel
in its windstorm ratcheting—instant and abyss—how all this pours
through the front of now into that self-lit scene
out the back of all description—Here, where the cloud
rebuilds itself like a room in a mirror—silent, foreshortened, safe—
and loses nothing, being composed of gestures—
A cloud which even now is flooding in one unbroken wave
back through the gulfs of light
that open out of mirrors equidistant from your eye—
A room in which the artist sits making a cloud of ink and charcoal,
marking the paper with shadows to liberate the absence
that is there—The cloud now feeding itself
through the blank of her page and newspapers spread out
across the table, over the factory and the children's prison—
rain falling from it without sound now the way it does in mirrors
in light-like lines closing its scene in glass—

SKYE BAKER

We exchanged fragments; small sketches, past poems, sections of old work, ideas for new ones. This multimedia conversation led us to a field of mounding rubble furry with grasses. The cloud works erupted from this place, as both ceiling to, and mirror for, the tumbling stones below.







NwoP III

GRUB STREET BOOKSHOP | NOVEMBER 2016

MAKERS:

Caroline Williamson & Chris Lynch
Autumn Royal & Linda Weste
Bronwyn James & Sophie Harle

CONVENOR: *Antonia Pont*

CAROLINE WILLIAMSON

Coordinates

Within three decades they managed to erase whatever it was that we – we? – were trying to do: maverick bunch of young women, deeply opposed to the working week, the mass media, high heels and marriage. OK that was a bit frivolous. Careers however were for the conventional. I loved my dungarees, bib dotted with badges.

He opens the paperback Dostoevsky, The Devils, and laughs. Yellowed official letter, the date of an appeal to a social security tribunal. London 1977. They cut off my benefits nearly forty years ago and after that I had to go out and look for a real job.

When he says to me, we're all fucked, I have to pay attention. Knowledgeable activist, probably right. It's just that I'd rather focus on the remote possibility of surfing our way through this into some new normal, unimaginable from where we are right now.

Here's Michael Moore in the newspaper on Donald Trump. Who plays to the gallery, he says, delighting his own people – his frightened, inarticulate people. Moore thinks of Munich, 1932.

Her despairing email. Political depths of the Brexit debate. How can they look in the mirror? All of them – varieties of right, of so-called left. Meanwhile the world charges on to disaster. I want to give her an hour in our muddy garden, mixing peat moss, compost wriggling with earthworms, and soil to make an acid environment for a blueberry bush and a few strawberries, changing almost nothing.

Bougainvillea

Since you mentioned bougainvillea, I went to look at one I thought I remembered on a neighbour's fence. In your face purple. Totally over the top. A solid block of colour flaring from fifty metres away. Bluestone lane, tall side fence. It wasn't there. Lost with a renovation? Furiously removed after an incident with a thorn? Bougainvillea. Not in our garden, not enough space or sunlight, and with all those roses, we have enough thorns already.

Bougainvillea. A man who lived between the West Indies and London once told me, he'd been in Oslo. And there in a friend's apartment in the middle of winter, in a pot, was a bougainvillea. Small white flowers surrounded by purple bracts as brilliant as the ones that grew neglected on the side of his house in Half Way Tree, Kingston, Jamaica. How clever was the woman who kept one growing indoors in January darkness, with central heating, in a Norwegian winter?

Bougainvillea. Excellent climbing plant for hot dry climates, originated in Brazil, named for the explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville, admiral and captain of a French expedition around the world in the 1760s, by the botanist Philibert Commerçon. Discovered, perhaps, by Jeanne Baret, who put on a man's clothes to travel with the botanist: his lover, his nurse, his assistant. In Rio de Janeiro his ulcerated leg was impeding him, but somehow between them they collected a flowering vine and named it. He called Jeanne Baret his beast of burden. On the way home they stopped off in Mauritius, and stayed there till he died. Clean out of money she ran a bar at the docks,

married a French soldier, made it back to France, claimed her inheritance and set her husband up as a blacksmith, back in his home village: Saint-Aulaye, a little place in the Dordogne, still there and not much grown.

She bound her breasts. She kept her distance from her travelling companions. Spun them a story about her deep embarrassment with nudity, due to having been castrated somewhere on her travels. It worked for a while. Strong young woman used to heavy labour – could crack a joke with a sailor, change the dressings on an ulcerated sore, identify a plant as possibly unknown to European naturalists, take on a violent drunk who spoke not a word of French and get him out of her bar without breaking a sweat, pick out a good man among all the men who came in to while away an evening on shore. Marched into the offices of the Attorney General in Paris, identified herself and claimed what was left to her by Philibert de Commerçon: 600 livres, and all the furnishings of their Paris apartment, and the wages due to her up to the time of his death.

Her flowering vine has travelled all over the world. Jamaica, Oslo, Melbourne – and up in Brisbane it's settled in so nicely it's close to being declared a noxious weed. It climbs up trees, forming a dense, thorny, vertical thicket, in flaring purple fading to pink as the bracts wither – but there's always more purple on the way. When it's forty-plus degrees and other plants droop and burn, bougainvillea will still be out there soaking up the sun, while the rest of us hide indoors, waiting for a cool change.

CHRIS LYNCH

body logic

make this move
the grammar of limpid timidity

a hundred times

the pain of the bathtub
lighting up the night

the courtyard light
my poor heart

a slow beat
 beat
 heat

a slow heart
a slow mind

just the bougainvillea

blooming

in the silence of your home

i wake to the silence
 of your home
 your voice suddenly resonant in my ear

in the hot wires from the dark matter of my dumb phone

you speak to me
 of sleep children the lost key blue spinach
 mcdonalds television & all the things that can't
 be eaten

 i'm struggling to process

it's the fast liquid joy of your voice

on the road with him
 like a pot of honey sesame
 on Christmas Day
 a production line of prawns
and corn flour & sisters
 there is a background hum as if

you're inside a refrigerator or a stealth bomber

 inside of me
 it's like a bunker
 or a womb
 sleeping furiously
something is going to be born i can feel it

turning over
i don't even care any more what it is i am
sunburnt on your couch in your puzzle room there is darkness
and glass
soon i will turn on studio lights
like a stovetop
but first i will sleep
115 g/L diethyltoluamide
and 29 g/L N-octyl bicycloheptene dicarboximide
for 6 hours of tropical strength protection

no wonder she was skittish when she handed me
the key

it's a jungle in here

her tongue full & silent like a mosquito
i should have offered her my throat
or a rainforest

thunderous & exultant with frogs & spoon music

we're all going to die you know
kiss me kiss her kiss him
yes it's a womb

i can hear the hum of a plane & tram & wind peaceful

in the hidden trees
out there beyond cups of succulence & jar papyrus

blue sky & brick

your voice warm & generous and waking now to its end
see ya later alligator
slumber, crema, & perpetua

these are the colours of my thoughts

Beast Machines

Midnight. I unpack myself. One box at a time.
Books, mostly, devices, other strange objects.
Taped into a kitchen pot I find the grave goods
My ex-wife wants. Two crude chalky figurines,
One larger than the other. Clean and silent, their gaze
Hollows out the tchotchked halls of memory

Like water through limestone. The old man
Sold them to us below the volcano, his mouth
Blood-red with buai. Too friendly, he almost
Gives them to us. On the mantelpiece, they
Watch our slow suffocation with the implacable will
Of insects. I decide she can have them, set them aside,

Fill the suburban bin with pillows. My bare feet make
Cool love to concrete. The moon will not rise
Tonight. It is in a box. Unbidden, my first memory:
Crawling across an American lawn in late afternoon
Sunlight to strawberries. Next door, in the present,
A woman comes, ragged and soft, the whole street

Suddenly intimate. My arms, empty, ache—
I remember the boy who ran away from home,
Who caught a deadly snake with bare hands, kept it
In a cardboard box in the garage. Not yet translucent,
I go back into this one. Open another box.

AUTUMN ROYAL

Catwalk

‘There is a theory that watching unbearable stories about other
people lost in grief and rage is good for you—may cleanse you of
your darkness. Do you want to go down to the pits of yourself
all alone? Not much. What if an actor could do it for you?’
—Anne Carson

My agent has informed me that I lost
the main role in the musical comedy
due to the sentimentality I shawl
over my knees. It began in my chest
& over the decades it has moved
down my body & into the tendons.
It’s as persistent as a dry cough
or being on the cusp of what you
want & the blade of what you have.
The shawl keeps me contained
when I wake in the afternoons
wishing to be engulfed by abstraction.
Though bristly & matted I pretend
the shawl is the little kitten gifted
to me by a nun at the boarding school
after my eyes made it apparent
I was too lonely to sleep. This memory
& the shawl are the only offcuts
left of my once purring beauty.
While I do hope to continue my career,
as I know how to do little else,
my pleas for more serious roles
have been consistently rejected
& now so have my attempts to claw

my way into comedies. I'm threatened
with a exceptional ability & no means
of expression. Public perception
over my situation alters depending
on the arrangement & lighting of the room.
I have considered opening up my house
for tours as an act of restitution for my fans,
so that they can witness for themselves
how my awful leisure manifests
in my choice of interior decoration.
They may feel the promise of my linen
curtains & relax on my daybeds arranged
with embroidered & silk-ribbon pillows.
We will ruminate together about why
I have morphed into such a paranormal
woman without the sci-fi franchise
to lean against. After learning their names
I will open the backdoor to show
my devotees the garden, guiding them down
the blue-stone pavers until we reach
the edge of the ornamental pond
where I will allow them the privilege
of watching me perform my last major role.

LINDA WESTE

Rip

That day we were almost claimed by the current.
My mother, twig thin, cried, Hold on.
Hold on, or you'll go; you'll be
swept out to sea.

We clung to her, contorted; our torsos
compelled, as if pulled by the hair;
the sand sucked from under our feet.

There were screams,
perhaps from my mouth
my sister's or hers.
They echoed over and over
distorted by the wind,
their timbre raucous as gulls.

The light was dimming;
my father a disappearing monument
in the landscape.

True to my mother's disposition,
her gritty resolve, she dug her heels in.
Her bony hands steeled
while the sea pulsed like a muscular tube.

I could have lost you her words, afterwards,
when our ankles, worn with fatigue,
felt they would snap.

At that my Father's face pulled back
into its own dark channel.

An innocent act: we'd swum so late
the tide had gone out.
We'd been digging too,
and our t-shirts were full of pippies
that clacked together
bubbled and gurgled out dirt.
She'd commanded us to let them go.

Bikini clad, shivering
blue lipped
against an atmospheric sky
the scene might have been
painted; allegorised.

Today, to be sure, she does not recall the rip,
or holding on,
or other moments of motherhood.
The concept of beach
no longer holds a definition, let alone a memory.

The mind's gaps became broadening channels
in a rip unheard unseen;

pulled back, like elemental phenomena,
jetsam flotsam,
sediment all stirred up.

Now mere breath blows her off course
light as a bird

and her mind is airy
weightless as a sea sponge.

BRONWYN JAMES

seeds that require smoke

a lecture on making pottery, long-distance
relationships and being afraid of making poems

I'm held together by a titanium rod
It moved in one day I suppose technically I didn't invite it in
we haven't been skin to skin for months would I recognise it I'd
recognise his mannerisms in a chatroom
If I wanted to get it all out there I could but it would involve a
rupture
I'm not willing to let that much out that much in
I'm dissolving into someone sixteen thousand kilometres away how s
that possible anyway

the water seeps through clay to broken slip
have you ever caught your tongue on an iceblock it's a bit like
that

I stopped after a thimbleful of pollen really I'd had enough
you're a wanker if you drink powdered bark in tea
not so if it's a bean pre-digested by mountain goat
It aint so bad, making love with one hand on your phone
things crack and click into place or is it
out of place

It's surrounded by soft muscle and foam I don't know why it doesn't
scratch
it's a sub-category of germinating, I'm told

like the love making via msn messenger
you make a slurry with animal bones
I immediately think of dog along the creek's rim

when you apply biological to the thermostat it disappears
that can't be true apparently it is
all potters are accustomed to it now
I hadn't wanted to come out to a room of strangers but there you go.

I once read a passage.
'I'm not sure what this says about Australians' grip on reality, but in
a survey on the most hated people of 2006, the top four were Kyle
Sandilands, Osama bin Laden, Germaine Greer and the stingray that
killed Steve Irwin.'
I didn't make it onto the list you always wonder if you will.

Antonia Pont once told me not to correct the mistakes
She told me that serially turning up 3 minutes late
is a secret sign you hate yourself Or need excuses
to hate yourself
I might have paraphrased that but
think it every time I walk into the birdcage 3 minutes late
a reflection of gold disappearing through glass

impurities express differently after firing
rock becomes clay, absorbs the liquid from glaze
glaze to powder to glass

I'm gonna print out your portrait and put lashes on it

In the diagram crystals form around liquid particles and we talk
of 'repulsion zones'
that sounds about right
'the particles refuse to meet and continue to repel each other'

soph does all this without knowing it moulding different
viscosities into stone
of course she knows it, the impossible
number of combinations you can reach

clay is limited . in ancient times
a whole mountain of clay was disposed of, pattered
into vessels
people are not drinking from mt kaolin anymore

SOPHIE HARLE

Our collaboration began with a conversation. We talked lots about our lives, our bodies, our failures and our fears. We riffed off each other, tumbled down rabbit holes.

The collaboration was simple, we didn't have any expectations of each other. We weren't from each other's "scene" so we didn't feel the need to impress. We talked, shared ideas, experimented, and produced alongside each other, texting and checking in and sharing where we were up to.





BIOGRAPHIES

KAY ARE is a writer of poetry and prose. She is interested in performative, hybrid, site-responsive and/or conceptual writing. She is an early-career parent and academic, sometime unfaithful translator from Spanish, native of the Blue Mountains, and now resident of sunny Melbourne. Contact: karomez@gmail.com

SKYE BAKER is a visual artist based in Melbourne. She is currently studying a Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Victorian College of the Arts.

TOM BENSLEY is a freelance writer and musician based in Melbourne. He writes theatre reviews for Theatre People and is a regular writer for The Plus Ones. He has had poetry published in Verandah Journal and sporadically performs spoken word poetry around Melbourne. Follow him on Twitter @TomAliceBensley

ALICE BISHOP is from Christmas Hills, Victoria. Her first collection of short stories, *A Constant Hum*, was commended in the 2015 Premier's Award for an Unpublished Manuscript. The work focuses on her hometown's experience of Black Saturday and the resulting hardships people—especially women—face during the aftermath of bushfire. You can find her @BishopAlice, along with her work in the latest issue of *Meanjin*.

LISA GORTON lives in Melbourne and writes poetry, fiction and essays. Her most recent poetry book is *Hotel Hyperion* (Giramondo). Her novel *The Life of Houses*, won the 2016 NSW Premier's People's Choice Award and the Prime Minister's Prize for fiction.

SOPHIE HARLE is not a poet but a potter, and fancies there may have been a mix up. She studied Ceramics at the VCA and then graduated into the real world of a 9 to 5 corporate job, where her soul was delicately crushed. In 2012 she made her triumphant return to the world of clay, potting full time, going for walks and dabbling in side projects.

STU HATTON is a poet, critic, editor and tea-drinker based in Dja Dja Wurrung country/central Victoria. His work has featured in *The Age*, *Best Australian Poems 2012*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Overland* and elsewhere. He has published two poetry collections: *How to be Hungry* (2010) and *Glitching* (2014).

BRONWYN JAMES is a Melbourne-based human. She writes, collages, stitches, travels

CHRIS LYNCH was born in Papua New Guinea and is now based in Melbourne, on Wurundjeri country. His poetry has appeared in *Cordite*, *Tincture Journal*, *Apex Magazine*, *Peril Magazine*, *SpeedPoets*, *Stars Like Sand: Australian speculative poetry*, and the *Poetry & Place Anthology 2015*, among others. He is currently working on his first collection of poetry.

ROSALIND MCFARLANE recently completed her doctorate in Asian Australian poetry and depictions of water at Monash University. Originally from Western Australia her work engages with ideas of place, collaboration, ecocriticism and representations of water. She has been an AGL Shaw Summer Fellow at the State Library of Victoria and been most recently published in *Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry*, *Cordite*, *Antipodes*, *Axon* and *Colloquy*.

LEAH MUDDLE is a Melbourne-based maker of things, including poems. Her work has appeared in *Cordite*, *Otoliths* and *The Age*. The poem 'Cirrus' was written in dialogue with, and for the voice of, KENT MACCARTER.

ANTONIA PONT writes poetry, creative and theoretical prose, and is Senior Lecturer at Deakin in Writing & Literature. She theorises practising in its various modes, including the practice (relevant to this project) of cultivating atmospheres in which we can make and do either more, or newly, differently. Her work involves finding clearer and more precise ways to articulate what is at play in those instances either where we are enabled, or where we manage to transition/change with least harm and most joy. She is the current chair of the AAWP, and the founder of *Vijnana Yoga Australia*.

AUTUMN ROYAL is a poet and researcher. She is interviews editor for *Cordite Poetry Review* and author of the poetry collection *She Woke & Rose*.

Campbell Thompson is a Melbourne poet who makes his living as a barrister. He also makes art and produces and acts in plays. His poems have been published in *The Age*, *the Australian*, *Overland*, *Cordite* and *Rabbit*. Two of his poems have been short listed for the *Newcastle Poetry Prize*. Last year his poem *Lament for 'Cape' Kennedy* was short listed for the *Peter Porter Prize*.

RUBY TODD is a writer of prose and poetry, with a PhD in Creative Writing and Literary Theory from Deakin University, where she teaches. Her research work investigates the ethics of writing elegy, with reference to mourning studies, poetics, and environmental philosophy.

LINDA WESTE is a writer, editor and reviewer of creative writing. *Nothing Sacred*, an historical verse novel evoking life in the last years of the Roman Republic (Arcadia, ASP 2015) was awarded the 2016 Wesley Michel Wright Prize and highly commended in the 2015 Anne Elder Award. Weste has a PhD in creative writing from The University of Melbourne.

PETRA WHITE'S most recent collection is *A Hunger*. She works as a policy adviser.

CAROLINE WILLIAMSON was editor of the magazine of the British Campaign for Nuclear disarmament when she met an Australian and, eventually, moved to Melbourne. Her PhD in creative writing (Monash, 2016) looked at coal, climate change and apocalyptic thinking. She is now reworking the 'creative' component, a sequence of poems drawing on the lives of her great-grandparents in the South Wales coalfield of the 1870s.

Méniscus

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New Works on Paper
Peta White
Autumn Royal
Kay Are
Alice Bishop
Stu Hatton

Marie O'Rourke
David Aides
Daniel Jackson
Dominique Heed
Mags Webster
Eugen Bacon