



VOLUME 2, 2018

# TELL ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT

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*Untitled 02 (The sound in the form of a word)*

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TELL ME  
LIKE YOU  
MEAN IT

VOLUME 2, 2018

Guest Edited by

MELODY PALOMA

## Foreword

We are all always in a state of emergence, young(ger) and (more) emerging might act as a more fitting title. Like all of us, the voices here are in states of becoming, and like my own, they are in their earli(er) stages of speaking publicly through poetry. Their aesthetics and concerns are varied, pushing against axioms of gender, nation, class, bodies, love, as well as form (the ways in which these things interlink, of course, not being mutually exclusive).

I can't make any grand statements about my process in choosing who to commission for this volume, only that I chose poets whose work excited me for different reasons, that the variance here *begins* to map out for me the breadth of not just poetry in Australia, but also what it is to exist in Australia. These poems stand alone, but their uncanny affinities are also one of the joys of reading poems in journal form.

Interrogation of the self/selves are persistent in this volume. Jonathan Dunk riffs off John Clare's 'I am', placing the self at its centre with an 'I' that discombobulates, forgets and disintegrates. Kelly Poole and Jake Goetz work through the bric-a-brac of city living, independent bodies both become and interrogate industry. Who are the 'I's that make a nation? Benjamin Laird's indexical chart demonstrates what is possible through absence of a nation state, a needling reminder of the injustices that are present and cyclical. This is one of many reminders to disrupt – disobedience is also incited in Ellen O'Brien's ode to complicated girls, as well as Raelee Lancaster's divulging of secrets, and consequent unravelling of the systems that work to induce shame. Structures appear also in the work of Chi Tran, who offers the poem up as movement devoted to dissolution.

There are ongoing battles between language and bodies, as well as contemplations of the body as language. Frankie Hanman Siegersma's long and wandering/wondering prose poem confronts desire, encouraging a spilling on and over surfaces. Hanman Siegersma's is a multiplicitous desire that tends to both somatic and cerebral states. This is a desire that grabs at gesture, language, bodies, objects and devices. Molly Lukin's 'Butch Hands' slaps/gropes/kneads its way into the physical body and the body of the text, so that the poem becomes body and body becomes poem. Lachy McKenzie unpacks not just what is said but how it might be said (through poems, tarot, over beers), an insatiable speaking as gesture that finds him surfing all the way to Antarctica. Mira Schlosberg dissects and digests the body; the body is food that should not always be ingested, but sometimes pulled apart and thrown to walls and ceilings.

Darlene Silva Soberano and Zhi Yi Cham both look to water to chart the strange ruins of loss, documenting what sinks and what floats. For Sumudu Samarawickrama water is a job, one that indicates thirst and absence, space that cannot be filled. Charlotte Guest finds large

worlds in small rocks, for Mindy Gill worlds recede as easily as they appear. John Hand finds a family crisis in Spring, though the Spring-ness of the poem and what is found there, the amorality of its creatures, offers a smoothing or soothing.

Other poems look to celebrity for answers. Harry Reid's voyeurism demonstrates the distractions of narrativisation, and demands introspection from those we place on pedestals as well as from those looking up. For Susie Anderson, ariana grande offers an omnipotent presence as the poem's speaker looks skyward, encourages large (grande) dreams, transmits a commonality of dreams (even shared with grande), while also perhaps nodding to the inveterate presence of pop, here persisting like a Starbucks (grande) beverage. Gareth Morgan begins with Wordsworth as costume, asks how poetry and art is dressed and addressed, tries on museums like borrowed t-shirts to be thrown in the laundry, the poem then turning its cheek for a kiss.

The cover for this volume is taken from Arini Byng's exhibition, *the sound in the form of a word* (2017), which included photography, moving image, objects and performance. We find in this work the urge to look closely at the materiality of this world and its words, to not just glance at objects or pass them by but to interrogate how we might interact with that 'thingness' and how such 'thingness' might interact with us. Byng's blurring of material/object/body/language/thought/surface/gesture via repetition and slant looking is also not removed from social politics; it is a blurring that spurs relationality and conversation, ultimately encouraging empathy with the other, the goal of which is for that otherness to be eradicated (Hutchinson, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. Echoes of Gertrude Stein are important, a semantic and semiotic loosening, precisely a cosying up to appearance that allows language to move freely. I dwell here because Byng's work offers an opening in accessing these works. These poems are independent bodies, but they are also thing, material, surface, all of them considered gestures to the way language can both contain and liberate. These are poems that ask us what it is we want from this world and from poetry, alerting our synapses to what is possible.

*Melody Paloma*

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson, Georgia. Gallery text to accompany *the sound in the form of a word* by Arini Kai Cullen Byng, February, 2017, c3 Gallery Melbourne.

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# Route de pain

I

It feels complicated;  
my alignment to compromise  
too much for you.

You never exhaust, no;  
probably loaded, and moving  
to top, centre:

fly on in  
be steel  
save girls  
turn good.

We are happy of service,  
balancing sounds from garden.

We much more ready.

II

We compromise much  
We save and service

It probably sounds  
exhaust to you.

*My! Be of turn.*  
*Never too much.*  
*Good!*

You are happy moving  
steel in from garden,  
no more balancing  
top on centre.

For complicated girls  
– ready to fly –  
alignment feels loaded.

### III

Probably feels loaded  
much more complicated on top:  
never compromise  
too much  
exhaust

We turn to balancing,  
to alignment.

My girls –  
you from steel  
moving in garden  
no sounds of service –  
we are ready for you.

Save and centre it.  
Be happy.  
Fly good.

## going to tallahassee

how can he look so bacchanal, so wordsworth in his collard green  
and twenty seven? or is it nine—we wonder! we wonder!  
the cat knocks down a rock and breaks a window! you are eating cheese  
he racked from the supermarket, the italian in the room, cu cu!  
make up on your cheeks tonight rouge and goblinish  
the cat takes facetiously what you take codeinishly  
you make these sweetie pies on the blown-kiss couch, he  
guffaws n the ping pong table collapses under the weight of all his makebelieve  
its imagist like a fly under a museum swatter, its school holidays  
n were boycotting the museums! imagining losing my legs in a cycling accident,  
how i'd shake my skull like no fun is worth that, n become a teacher  
like you, strumming a guitar like a demon over breakfast,  
just kidding. your manners are tighter than that, my baby on the morning traffic,  
you make us laugh crossing the roads vertigo to tallahassee, oh! or 'just' bendigo

## BUTCH HANDS

Butch hands gives a good buzz in the shoulder blades. Puts cream on the apple crumble. Do the armchair at the foot of your loft, ask *what* a lot, want to know everything. You don't know me. I get the feeling your overalls listen to the blues. A waffle breakfast and the dirt around your fingers. Butch hands push my heavy breath down on the sheets. The ceiling just got closer. It's a shock when I see how I could fall from up here. It's a shock when I want to jump off, bleed on your carpet a bit seems appealing, like your hand on my throat. The laughing in a cute way, just a bit malicious I like it. Brings some bricks on my wrists. Butter some words up and put them on the fire. Butch hands don't know how to plead. Knows how to knead me. Wrestle the golden guts out of me. Write a cheque saying 'I think I could fuck you all day'. I didn't realise you were kind until I made you come. I wonder what your ribs think of all this. You can't know everything but it is valiant the way you say *what*. Nail polish says a lot about butch hands. I want to see those nails go hunting. Maybe wear a skirt and have butch hands lift it up. Get some compliments. A vegemite whisper on the back of the neck. Butch hands might make me wail but I can make my own toast. It's funny when you call me big boy and you take off your rings.

## ariana grande dreams

*right now I'm in a state of mind* the sun has just eclipsed the moon. the only way to describe is as if it gradually turned the same colour as cling wrap. that is: completely see-through. *the light is coming*, looked for it the same as always with a sense of security, comfort in knowing it would always be there to warm. had never seen this kind of thing before. gossamer sun-moon, seemed a trick of the light at first and blinking might bring it back. nobody seemed worried but all the breath went out of me. reassuring hand on shoulder nodded skywards explaining *god is a woman*. in one limpid movement the sun had slid into complete translucence. *this is. the part when*. gone completely. opening and closing eyes multiple times didn't change. *I say I don't want you*. ultimate source of our light had been extinguished somehow. everything was still visible even without. *I'm stronger than I've been before*. just like it had been erased. what happens to our days if all the darkness is removed. *this is*. when the sun is absent but it is still light. *the part when I break free*. soon its exclusion from the sky became normal, babies born into the world without the fiery orb orienting us to the universe. *right now I'm in a state of mind*. what had happened out there in space? *I want to be in like all the time*. we had always assumed an extra-terrestrial erasure of the sun would mean the end for our planet. *ain't got no tears left to cry*. but we went on. *so, I'm picking it up, picking it up*. the day is just the distance between two points of light.

## I thank the doors for closing, my physical and small notion of time.

- 1 I fear an absence so I dream it—told you in detail—hold, a round, glass vase. Desire for me has always been a strong charge, and the absence of it a disused space. Put something in water, I say to the vacancy. The cat turns onto her back, noticing no one else joins her. I am talking about corners as dust—

What a strange (strange word) shin is. She has closed in around the clip of sound moving you from the back palate to the front. There is a pause & here you might itch your insect bites or sit up a little straighter. Is desire always embarrassing? I desire you and I am afraid. Being ashamed of soaked parts of longing, how they look resting in a cheese cloth, draining the curds and whey. You must use a cloth that has the right weave for the type of cheese you are making, and is strong enough to be washed and used again. My desire as a hot heat, baby pink lipstick slaps.

Being *not sure* if the roof will fall in but enter (and cautiously) is not about bravery but the willingness to have a brick on your head for a good story/memory. On the pretence of desire that's incubated in the throat.

- 2 After three weeks of arriving They notice a big long piece of shell-white silk passing over orifices from which They breathe. Their girlfriend moves into a big house up the road from their old one and every texture seems to have brightened in its opacity.
- 3 In the past I found little remnants of your long golden hair throughout everything I owned socks, floor, body included at ease which turns pink the longer they walk down the road.
- 4 Is it a metaphor to say I have begun to notice my own hair. To walk confidently through someone and say, thanks, now my hands are melting. You watched as each strand of hair found itself in places we could've only dreamt about. What an exercise in thorns in a bowl. Do we leave the house to do anything productive? Taking a ladder and climbing to get the moss off the roof. Did he slip and crack his skull an egg. For when I fail, punish me deeply. Whereas I'll lay underneath a wet towel with you, in the future.

5 From Claudia Rankine's *Plot*:

'I think I am open to experiencing all drowning but I remain suspicious of landscape that is a mental rehearsal set down to wash recognition out of mind. I see there is meant to be plot, a burial, but the beginning reflection should have fewer maybes and tension should exist between the bank (our solidity) and the river (or dissolution).'

- 6 How I have an idea of my containment and absolute togetherness is through my such tremendous leakage. I sweat in the same measurement as love. Someone downstairs washes their feet in the sun. We use water as a neat trick for cleanliness, but are surprised when we can't see through it. Dear relational dust falling through us both: what was the first prison. From the crest we spot an 'abandoned' house ivy covers, no *hangs*, no *wraps*, no *hugs* the decomposition of boundaries. see this: stained desk with dried flowers my curiosity, clothes line my anxiety, coffee pot my aching, my aching, tall glass of water my fortune, white bed sheets my cooling off, the terrace on the mountain my futuristic yearning, iPhone without connection my additions, nectarines you picked my hot flush, ink sponge, my residue.
- 7 We are always switching perspectives; (in order to) understand how to mouth through an introduction. Tonight 5 months later they are going to float in a tank and for one hour we separate. They talk to their mother this morning about the floatation tanks; they were big in the 80s, she used to go with her friend S whose a lesbian Lesbian *capital L* simply belonged to me one night when a lover said we are lipstick lesbians I am *showing you* to my friends this friend of Their Mother was not *lipstick* but soft butch the kind I love later and one day we visited her in St Kilda we got ice cream, but the friendship between them *ended*.

Small acts of blue move between them sonically as Their Mother begins to cry she's been sick for three months *I've been grieving!*

You feel afraid and shouted at by your Own Mouth when your lover's ex-lover (bromance) walks into the room carrying an amp with your housemate. A line from a book also floats through (made sour by my vulnerability) you grab your pie and run. From the back that bromance looks like an orchard or tree trunk or orchid softly cornered furniture; you pick the nickname. It is exactly the insecurity I would've thought naff, if only for the sound of a heater slowly ticking on after the room has been warmed sufficiently. Consistently an envelope ( how I drew my body ) would come off after being licked: mum calls back *you*

*know how I said I was meeting my consciousness in the float, well I was actually going further from it, I liked being away.* In Giuleano Teatino I could Love Them In Distance and feel comfy swallow the juice of a fig not worry about letting the thin screen of silk paper down (showing all your data). Another being a threat is to say: *my slowing down of self* could be soiled. Similarly, we are afraid, You will look at Our letter box with that gay sticker and shrivel us up. Becoming frightful of my Love (I could one day drop my book in the water).

- 8 For Freud, says Sara Ahmed, ‘fear is indeed part of the story of loss in that one also fears the loss of the object of love’. She says, ‘Anxiety is then an effect of the impossibility of love; an impossibility that returns in the diminishment of what it is possible to be.’
- 9 This letter filled with items but lacking in materiality (folded clothes in the basket); how someone fits a flannelette sheet on the mattress (height of the bed length ways and down through every room They move into out parametre width stretchy). Anxiety through words (I am scared) smaller than the landscape of anxiety making up the gut.
- 10 A body transforms into hair, smoke, ashen, obfuscation in the bend of leaning. On the pretence of capturing a public care of siblings. For when the white family is the state and nation. Although you will saying nothing else on this matter. Almost forgetting you are a self serving unit of erosion, open. For when, the mother grows tired and the father leaves: not one narrative: not out of hate. The most obvious subterfuge was pouring hot dishwater on the child’s head like a glass.
- 11 The vending machine delivers an apple juice to the brother in the waiting room. I take in an adult sentiment. I give details like there there is a point describing your life as something which still lives and turns up to work. ‘Who they loved, where they went, what they were to another person’ (Kapil). Whereas I arrive into your sibling-hood first the bully, then bullied, I still find words and grab them. On the pretence of loving a film because it reminds them of eating macaroni with tomato sauce and cheese from a jar in your cousins house with a telly on wheels where we experimented for ages trying to get colour picture and sound to come out. Though you deeply love that movie you hide your desires at the cost of another person. Likewise, it is difficult to write with a sense of delicate motion, as if reaching out to satisfaction were pithy. Expressing self-content is rude and yummy. Almost all winds carry with them a kind of self-pollination.

- 12 The bronze image of the river and someone's spa you turn into a pool—it's bespoke. This angle is stretching like a farm. Time changed the way leakage was viewed in gender. someone said (in )—do you do things with soul? We open up—what does/n't soul mean to you (or spirit they suggest) Chi says *yes I commit all movements and increment with the most intense intentionality*. Standing up can permanently change all my bones. The line *you feel really good* with the knuckles of the fist, rock slightly.
- 13 Us on the dance floor trying to 'check in' but being the farthest people away from each other in the room. In the morning we take you to the doctor and in the consulting room he speaks to you in a considered, dad, stubble, alternative-school way, leaning against the bed-table, round framed glass on his balding head. (What is not understood about a lot of fathers, particularly white straight cis men who choose to be fathers, is that a lot has to be done about the particular way one might never – but only partly just) – The father takes you to a cafe where you cannot eat anything but he orders a big bowl of meatballs and a slice of toast and literally inhales it as you spot the trains roll in behind his grey. I go to say something, but like a snack, am totally withheld.
- 14 In my wish-landish approach, I strip your bed, put the linen in the sun. I make those chips of coconut flesh soaked in maple, liquid smoke, paprika, salt and pepper, tamari. When I arrive home after being in your blind-drawn room, I throw my body over the marble counter. In the reflection of the stone upside down mugs in loops and loops and loops; the hanging coming first and the hooks later.
- 15 Filling up on peaches, speech, translation, mint grows between buildings (crumbling). I'm serious, he made a peach and mint salad with the hecking wild mint that grows in the concrete.
- 16 I ask Mum's friend where she came from this evening, from Epping, Dad's in hospital. Her dad has realised life is all about desire. I say tell me more, I'm struck. Dad says he doesn't have any reason to live anymore because there is no more desire in his life. Dad, c'mon mate, she says, people desire your wit, your intelligence, your presence, your good spirits, your humour. Desire seems to him the fuel of life, fuel he's out of.

- 17 Almost return to the first point of labour. On the pretence of I am not cutting the grasses all to the same length with hair snipping scissors. When, in the dream, you must sculpt the grasses to look like sharp knives. Whereas this is a prelude to a disaster I already know and accept and hold close because I don't know how to talk about it. Opening up my mouth presupposes a warning to the soft edges which are your face, silk. Nearest to the curtain (your hair) you lay your rose-warm head on the pebble-cold table, and say 'where did that word come from'.
- 18 Whereas the inside of their teeth felt 'hairy' 'rough' 'unclean', the rest of them was a smooth bowl. This is a cube, this is my book to you, this is my letter. As the event unfolds both before and after, as the text of the present move rapidly it cannot be written, my hand is not ]as fast as it would I would prefer to be. Ignoring the plastic barrier, I cannot hear what you say downstairs into the ice glass. I said, here is a glass jar and you said we must change our name—now let's get one thing straight, the effects of weather are something slow, gradual, not sharing, closed, hard, a shell, a pursed lip, zipped up bag. By which I mean, sometimes you are sewn up to me—sometimes you are hidden, something loose/lose/loss/full//flexible/butter too much/folding/viscous.
- 19 Documenting the particular motion of the day is a way of situating myself in relation to you, or in difference, grabbing what's comforting, a huge relax. We decide in March to travel out of town for the weekend, a place I'd go a lot as a child. In the middle of the night, a dirt-sand storm so strong, when we roll over in our tent, the mattress has collected little pools of debris. I think, 'Perhaps there are many ways to answer this' – Anne Carson, *eros: the bittersweet*.
- 20 I begin on medication which, linguistically, is mystique and pristine. I am the long piece of white muslin fabric hanging over the window. From *The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers*: 'The feeling of my body. I feel like the man who is making a pathway through a forest of thorns. He wants to reach a place that does not exist until he touches it with his mouth' (Kapil). You are making shorts out of a t-shirt. I hear two people talking down the hallway. We're a memory hesitant in view towards a mountain. This is lunch This is a film. The sentences are flying spaces. Hydration —
- 21 *We look over the sea which we learnt as a status. A tall person with an American accent heaves their body to join us on the rock saying 'Oh yes, there she is'.*

## Loose change

dropped faces drown in imitation jeans  
along another pale shade the sky blue  
writing itself against the chance encounter  
of a magpie of clouds black and white  
sprawling through red-brick streams  
and on King Street she's an ibis  
irresolute before the breakfast menu  
as if a peppermint paddock and this is why  
you should buy Colgate hanging from  
a eucalypt a faltering of sorts of socks  
worn through walks recalling the bric-a-brac  
of shopfronts for *no one understands me*  
he carves in a tree and all of Camperdown Park mourns  
for the loss is a record on repeat

## state of the game

wayne carey stands resolutely on  
the beach like a centre-half forward  
of old he watches the tide go out  
and stoically puts his tips in for the age

wayne carey down at the shops  
in a pair of corduroy jeans  
his new car has a boot you open  
with a button but he forgets every  
time thinks everything's just  
too tricky now as he blows the little  
straw that starts his car

wayne carey watches  
the prelim finals from the  
commentary box crosses  
to daisy pearce on the  
boundary line with a smirk

wayne carey finally opens up  
about the affair and the coke  
for 10 grand on channel nine  
he wears a new suit and a serious  
tie sam newman bemoans the  
state of the game says it's all too  
pc these days billy brownless  
sets up a bad joke about women  
or maybe gay footballers to get  
sam riled up wayne carey laughs  
but is unsure what it's all about

wayne carey forgets all that  
wishes only he'd stayed a one-  
club man drives past arden st  
oval and thinks about popping  
in for a quick g'day but doesn't

wayne carey thinks maybe he died  
after the 1999 grand final and that  
everything since then has been a  
form of karmic retribution in fact  
he died in 2002 training with the  
dallas cowboys and was resurrected  
by our collective nostalgia for the 90's

we demand wayne carey  
gives us his opinion on who's  
the best full back in the modern  
era how he thinks gold coast  
are going maybe who's the  
cutest water boy anything  
to keep our minds off hawthorn  
finishing third and how things  
are going at home

wayne carey opens the door  
to his st kilda road penthouse  
loosens his tie turns the tv on

wayne carey with nothing in  
the fridge throws his jacket  
on the couch thinks about  
calling his kids instead  
he watches match highlights  
from games he won and loses  
\$50 on the last leg of his multi

# Antarctic Surfing

*for Holly Isemonger*

you make me read  
your tarot  
until you get

the moon  
the devil  
the fool

which i think is pretty cool

you say what's left unsaid  
should be turned on its head

that the iconic laconic is like  
the lazy way men masturbate

they just can't be fucked  
to do it right

you say onanistic is a way  
wanky way to say wanky

you say you want a lot from society  
just not what it is currently offering

a real cul-de-*sac*

(despite what you say)  
i know next time we get a drink  
you are going to make me read

\*sonnet of the asshole\*  
by rimbaud & verlaine  
& share it online again  
whether or not it is flattering

you say there's a sewage outlet at tamarama  
right next to the cable that connects australia to the internet  
& this is not an accident

you say not talking about the weather  
not looking at the moon  
is the lunacy of the self-proclaimed apolitical

(& ppl who don't give a shit about waves)

the greek word for weather is time,  
which makes for a cool take on sayings:

*the weather heals all wounds*

*the weather waits for no man*

*weather is money*

*the weather stays, we go*

*the weather, which strengthens friendships, weakens love*

*men talk of killing weather, while weather quietly kills them*

*the weather is what we want most, but use worst*

*the weather flies over us, but leaves its shadow behind*

*the memory of everything is very soon overwhelmed by the weather*

*the weather is the longest distance between two places*

but fuck all that, let's surf to antarctica  
we'll put on booties and i'll freeze off my toosh  
cool! it'll be a nice break from summer's bleurgh  
no one is ever "on" there, i swear  
you can take the tops off some icebergs  
& we'll get to the bottom of the world

we're a long way away...  
still, it's nice to feel close despite  
the torpidity of distance  
the cool confessional box of messenger

it's nice to exist within the same circle  
like shits passing in the pipe  
it's totally tubular!

oh, i just read that back—  
i'm not saying this right...

## Work Poem (3)

1

wavering through the creek of your own reflection  
a Greek epiphany robed in a painting of Brueghel  
Eileen Myles' voice if it is ready for picking  
pick it if not then buy the domain that will  
enable a rotting to co-exist in the elevator car  
riding one idea over and above the vascularity  
of the city unswerving the contrast of words  
stitching itself into a letter sealed in coal-powered  
electricity the loading bar of another Monday  
the sun reflects off Meriton a kind of caramel  
dripping down the wafer of the city

2

south of Sydney  
Kangaroos kick tourists  
hopped-up on carrots  
they've become  
addicted to

the office windows  
peel back  
and storm clouds scrape  
against the CBD  
like old wooden ships  
upon a reef

late today walking across  
 the Story Bridge wet from rain  
 the river dark almost black  
 twisting like a body  
 wrung out after washing  
 and draped over a Hills Hoist  
 in the pixels of a future  
*Rockcliffe Wines is located*  
*less than 15km from the Southern Ocean*  
 Outback Gypsies Michael  
 Kiwanuka 21,563,911 views  
 youtube on autopilot and  
 it could be Oakland storm  
 clouds coming on just follow  
 the yellow line 'believe'  
 if there's enough for dancing  
 your order is confirmed  
 i never could dance  
 coked-out Cali salsa trance  
 the world coming off Meriton  
 sometimes there's nothing left  
 'but thinking about where  
 I've been, ain't helping  
 me start'

## secret handshake

our parents let us sit together  
while they sat on the pew in front

they warned us  
*no giggling in the House of God*

but we always would  
if their beady eyes turned back

we made quiet for a time  
your shoulder pressed against mine

it was in those silent moments  
that i moved close & held your hand

beneath the flowering skirts  
of our Sunday best

our hands grew clammy  
our grip grew tight

your fingers played  
along the tops of my thighs

while mine danced  
around your knee

sometimes we'd alternate  
with our heads tilted low

in reverence            or guilt  
or to hide our matching grins

from the pastor  
from Heaven

we soaked in the Message  
as often as we soaked in each other

& when the service ended  
we knew to pull apart

*quickly quickly*  
*so nobody sees*

## ABRIL MIÉRCOLES 13<sup>th</sup> 2011

(Maconudo)

Duende was at the house and I was embarrassed because I couldn't see his beauty anymore. It was my parent's house, but he was a given and the whole family knew him and he belonged with them. They loved him.

We hardly spoke, we never touched, and I was sad and awkward about that but relieved because I couldn't see him in him anymore. I kept looking for a space, but all there was was space.

The doors suddenly opened and there were people, many people. All the people crowded into the house, in flowing clothes and sapling bodies in contact with their bones.

A party had begun. My job was water – I knew this but it was so hard. I had to get these people water, but even when I asked only a few said they wanted any. In a bisected kitchen I was unhappy.

I couldn't show my welcome, because I was pleased for Duen, so pleased he felt so at home here, so pleased that he was so free here, so pleased my father was so pleased.

I was so pleased I condescended. I felt so rooted to this place, to open this place to the people I forgot that water was my job. The business of glasses and jugs became parliamentary; the glasses were too small, and the jugs would not pour.

And the trays. The polishing itself took so much attention (I had realised late that the trays would help with delivery, it was so hard to get water to the people).

There was a mango as large as a peach, so I made a salad and placed it on gleaming silver trays, with curlicued spoons and serviettes made from my own dresses. But nothing slaked.

I saw an old man look thirstily around, perhaps at the salad so I asked him ¿quieres agua? I asked again if he wanted water and he nodded yes and then I grimaced that I hadn't used the formal.

Duende was watching this and I read his face. Agua. I had no help. I could not ask for help.

Six of me is ahead, and the other half dozen, is six steps behind

## to be forgiven here

1.

i am waiting  
on a permutation of this city  
where i run into you  
in that time, collect  
blood creeping from nail beds  
in the hem of my sleeve  
like a breath held

into this body of water i enter

my mother enjoys reminding me  
of the fullness of my lips  
& that i must hide them  
tuck them in, she says  
my mouth a pocket for ripened girlhood  
i think ma thinks ripeness  
is just a rot waiting to turn

put lipstick on  
to attend a meal  
broth washing upon  
maroon-shored mouth  
colour undressed  
an unbecoming  
becomes ritual

2.

a boy  
i could be the mother to  
eyes me  
like a ripe peach for the taking  
i see  
the wound on my lower lip growing  
into a rift red as worship

to this body of water i surrender

when i run into you / if  
i told you i loved you / i think  
it is nothing you haven't heard before  
i know you  
across the breadth of the stage  
& you know me  
across the breadth of my gaze

even then  
this is more  
than i would give  
most people  
i don't speak to you after  
slip past you not unnoticed  
leave / i have been strange enough

## Photograph of the Parts of Your Chest That They Removed in the Surgery

In the picture there was some sort of blue medical cloth and on it two round pink handfuls of your body. No longer your body. Looking at them I felt the cleanness you must feel. Looking at them I could feel the weight of one in my hand, heavy. Warm, and sticky and dripping through my fingers. I knew what it would be like to toss it up and catch it. Hear a wet slap. Round like a round challah for the High Holy Days. Pink cracked with yellow like a pan dulce. In high school I was in love with my Spanish teacher and she told me how she had taken a macaroon fresh from the oven to taste, put it in her mouth and heard the inside of her cheek sizzle and cook.

For B, at Plaza Blanca, New Mexico,  
having known each other three days.

*Here, you said, this is a piece of quartz.  
Take it, and close your hand around it.*

The rock was heavy for something so small. Its rough  
edges pressed my outline, changed my shape in a small way.

I turned it over. I closed my hand around it.  
The rock made me think of difficult work

like lowering yourself into a bath. The quartz made me think  
of the enormous past, a vast plateau, on which the present moment holds still—

full and complete. I looked around. We were wrapped in the loose embrace  
of the ground, and the bare trees, and the low-slung clouds. The rock

is ancient. The white formations of *Plaza Blanca* are ancient, as sleep is ancient—  
and our young lives are winks in a deep night, wrinkles

on a long green sea. The sea is more alien than the moon to that white place. You  
smiled. You smiled as if to say *we are two odd birds, aren't we?*

I unclosed my hand  
and the quartz bloomed there—

## On learning a form of devotion

There is a desire to know your own history, to make mass flatter and less obstructive. I push myself to enact, emplace, configure—as a means of finding some kind of ‘lastingness.’

From where neck curves into shoulder, my body enters a mode of speculation. And from this I hope to find a paradisiac way of building dimension, with the freedom to move and where nothing ever happens.

There is a certain kind of catharsis that comes from the collapse of a structure, perhaps within the learning that we may continue to live without it. So, while I have a tendency to mark all my intentions, I also understand that to have the space to chew and uproot is best

—charging through movement, with the function of allowing a course of change to take place out of sight.

## Left of Desire

A bridge and a river running under it,  
a white Ferris wheel turning slowly,  
white clouds, buildings on one side  
holding against the wind, brown flat fields  
on the other, all of this disappearing  
behind me, having sat at the sidewalk  
café beside the sparrows, having had the bread,  
the butter, the *coq au vin* and Italian wine,  
saying *bonne nuit* to the streetcars  
that never idle, the hard white sun  
setting, so bright but never warming  
the ground, the smell of horses in the street  
lined in pairs, plumes bobbing bright  
against black coats, raising then dropping  
their hooves on the road, echoed as stones  
skipped across water, all this receding.

# Digging the Dancing Queen

*After Kaveh Akbar*

Last year Jack took a hammer to my house and with it I  
beat my metal case into two dimpled sheets  
while he ate a peanut butter sandwich.  
I threw my darts into the toilet and flushed them out  
all at once—

I can still remember my last breaths.  
I was with a stranger in front of the Readings in Carlton  
under the tree we hunched our moth limbs  
to shield our bodies from the bratty wind.  
The stranger told me about his ex-wife, how  
his old aches about her returned whenever he passed  
by a MYER. She had worked there the December they met.

*Our first date was sponsored by MYER he said  
If only they'd sponsored the divorce.  
I shut my eyes whenever the tram stops  
at Bourke Street Mall. Today was the first time I forgot why.*

I am here to tell you I was not a good person last year.  
My steely head drove nails into conversations  
careless of the thumbs I bruised.  
I figured that people could handle the swelling  
and I could handle being forgotten in the shed—  
I was less *sorry* and more *who cares about her?*  
He didn't watch my fingers and mouth in desire,  
like some girls did when I was seventeen.  
I was just *blunt*, my hair too long to be charming anymore,  
my paper voice crumpled & tossed to the wind.

But now these ruins are so foreign  
I could believe they were put in me  
by aliens, ancient enough for my old aches to return.  
Now I regret every break I didn't light, every mouth  
I didn't cup. Now the chemicals in my brain sing softly  
for other chemicals, crafting outros of my memories  
so that I don't remember my promises,  
just the sound of a hammer colliding with grass.  
Now I drift towards clay pot plants at parties  
and inhale oxygen from absent leaves,  
trying to coax life stories from exclusive strangers.  
In 2012, my cousin stopped me from climbing  
into my grandfather's coffin  
after I sang *you are the dancing queen*  
*young and sweet only seventeen*  
on the karaoke machine at his wake.  
He died of pneumonia and what else  
was I supposed to do except grow old enough  
to poke holes into my lungs the size of bubble wrap  
and wait to be buried alive by water.

## crisis, spring

expanding trampoline the show  
pruning in a cloud of moths  
i dont believe  
and when i look at the blue, lit, pre-dusk sky  
there are countless double-winged bugs to see  
and when i hear the dam, the frogs that remain  
are weird to me. my tshirt is black and pink  
neighbours shed clinking,  
tim helped me with an email today  
-I

clearly the . bogan i am,  
bogata, banana i am,  
just hunger everywhere deep and rising yess

bit my tip of my tongue  
brother  
my brother gets covered in cement dust daily  
stuff gets picked up constantly  
spiders emerging and spreading  
well, not spreading  
over slopes, walls,  
said territory and fear of it  
cockies going nuts  
everywhere warm getting a chill  
hot wet pain clearing your throat  
yr relationship with one father



## what: after John Clare

i am yet what  
none like memory loss  
consumed self i vanish  
eyes and shadows frenzy  
with love but live  
like loss yet am  
love strange but stranger  
than dream or noise  
the living wake the  
walking wreckwept  
scene long trod  
sleep shod smile sleep  
man never and never  
unsweet unsleep creature child  
haunt the vault and vaultless  
i

## No nations of the dead

There are no nations of the dead  
No parliaments, prime ministers, presidents  
No local councils, state governments, federal departments  
No red tape or bureaucratic mistakes  
There are no minimum jobs a fortnight

There are no age restrictions  
No drinking age, driving age, voting age  
No minors tried as adults  
No juvenile detention  
There are no youth centres

There are no prisoners  
No refugees  
No overcrowded correctional centres  
No mandatory or solitary confinement  
There is no one in detention

There is no market  
No supply and demand, shortages or new season's fashion  
No starvation, famine, disease  
No patents on pharmaceuticals  
There is no copyright on culture

There are no desks  
No desktops, computers, security updates  
No crashed servers, yesterday's story, 24-hour news cycle  
No assembly lines, unpaid overtime, workplace injuries  
There are no business calls at 4am

There are no maps  
No borders or immigration officials  
No chain-link fences  
No razor wire, camps or watchtowers  
There are no separation walls

There are no nations of the dead

## Notes

p 5 ‘ariana grande dreams’ Susie Anderson

Songs mentioned (in order of appearance)

no tears left to cry

the light is coming

god is a woman

break free (feat. zedd)

no tears left to cry

p 6-10 ‘I thank the doors for closing, my physical and small notion of time.’

Frankie Hanman Siegersma

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## Contributors

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**Jake Goetz** grew up in Sydney, but has also spent time in Europe, Asia and the Americas, as well as living in Brisbane. He is the editor of the online journal, *Marrickville Pause*. His first book, *meditations with passing water*, a long poem about the Maiwar (Brisbane River), will be published by *Rabbit* in 2018. He currently lives in Sydney.

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*Note Australian Poetry accepts the biographies supplied by poets in good faith. It is not possible to fact-check to 100 per cent accuracy the information submitted with poems.*

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