

AUSTRALIAN POETRY JOURNAL

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New guest editors are appointed for each APJ and indeed all publications, and the themes of publications are finalised and commissioned 12–18 months ahead of each, as required by funding timelines. AP takes its responsibilities to provide methods of excellence and support, and assiduous editorial production processes extremely seriously with very high, proven skill sets among those who work on our projects; this includes offering our duty of care to guest editors, other editors, all contributors, editorial, design and production associates, readers and audiences, and staff. Poetry is a language for life, a trued and compassionate, also exploratory and experimental, language of essence, which has provided meaning for all communities across millennia.

Support

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Melbourne
City of
Literature



Australian Government



AUSTRALIAN POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 13 | Number 2

desire

Guest Editor Ellen van Neerven

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Australian Poetry is based in Naarm, Melbourne, working in offices and remotely on both Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung lands. We acknowledge their Elders, past and present. As a national poetry body, we also acknowledge that we work across many lands and communities, and we extend our deep respects to all First Peoples, not just in Australia, but across the globe, including poets and audiences, and their enduring connection to Country.

We also acknowledge the many unceded lands upon which, or about which, poems in all our publications have been written.

ap Australian
Poetry

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Foreword

Desire has long been a starting place I have written from and a reading lens. Informed by writers such as Dorothy Porter and Lisa Belleair, I honed a queer sensibility as a young writer. When I wrote about sex and sexuality, I was motivated in representing something beyond lust – it was how, I too, as a queer person, could be sensual, could be beautiful. A vision of a future.

In the callout for this journal, the provocation I used sought work that ‘engages with different types of desire, including but not limited to: the desire to connect, to look after Country, the desire for a future and for justice, freedom and health.’ I was thinking of Audre Lorde’s essay in *Sister Insider* (1978) ‘Uses of the erotic: the erotic as power’, how desire can be expanded and applied to more than just to sex. I asked poets to examine ideas of attachment, allure, desirability, and yearning, queers or otherwise disrupt form and consider desire in a way that gives power to bodies often forgotten in mainstream discourse. There is value in queering and decolonising desire. I reference Kim TallBear, who writes about sexuality, spirituality and relationality beyond the middleclass settler family structure.

For this anthology, I’ve been thinking about Caroline Polachek’s album *Desire, I Want to Turn Into You*, and thus I’ve been thinking of SOPHIE, the late producer and musician, and the significant contribution made by transfemme creators in the genre of hyperpop, a maximalist genre dripping with exaggerated elements, and surrealist or nostalgic references to 2000s Internet culture.

I have also been reading the anthology, *The Queer Arab Glossary*, edited by Marwan Kaabour, an incredible iconography of languages and identities which shows how language can be both a violent tool and a softening kiss.

I saw Ghenoa Gela’s dance theatre show *Gurr Era Op* (‘the face of sea’ in the Meriam Mir language) which was inspired by the actions of climate group the Torres Strait 8, who brought a human rights complaint against the Australian government’s inaction on climate change to the United Nations. Three Zenadth Kes women face the imminent threat of losing their ancestral belonging; the show is an urgent art-as-activism work that demonstrates desires are collective as much as they are individual.

I am pleased with this collection of poems in 13.2. It is a special gathering of works I can see myself going back to and revisiting. I have learnt from the poets in the collection and the process of sitting the poems side by side. Thanks to those who took the prompt and made it their own. Some poets chose to write about sexual desire, of Sapphic longing, romantic love and deep companionship. Others took the opportunity to directly address health and community. Some poems grieved, others craved. Poems about witness and culpability featured.

There is no separating our desires from the conditions of our freedom. I am in admiration of those who use poetry to its fullest effect in dismantling the systems of capitalism and colonialism.

—EvN
July 2024

desire

Elfie Shiosaki

Untitled

#blacklivesmatter #stopblackdeathsincustody #allcopsarebastards #incarcerationnation

#alwayswasalwayswillbe #sovereigntyneverceded #treaty

a time-worn Giant Tingle
whittled into metadata tags
our grandmother tree
felled, limbed and bucked
her trunk hollowed out
into cross-referenced digital content

I am not a hashtag
where stories stick in the throat of too few words

I am rolling thunder in the Kimberley wet season
I am a cresting Humpback Whale, slapping fluke and fin to carry watery
messages in the Indian Ocean
I am the scorching still before the southerly cools the earth at Walyalup

we are a never-ending story, spiraling across time and space
we are a resounding voice
an echo reflecting the past into the future

#paytherent #closethegap #whiteozblackhistory #metoo

#noprideingenocide #invasionday #changethedate #changethenation #dayofmourning

unknowable

uncontainable

uncontrollable

perhaps we could write

we decided together that we were interested in trans and disabled masculinities and
this seemed like a very interesting thing to be interested in and speaking of interest
to be the interested ones instead of always the interesting

we decided to rest in trans and disabled masculinities
and this speaking seemed like resting
instead of always to be

so perhaps something to do with how trans and disabled masculinities perhaps share
similar features perhaps meet or intermingle perhaps this would do something they
hadn't anticipated or even wanted

to share something to perhaps disable perhaps feature
perhaps inter something wanted or even
trans they hadn't anticipated

how does this fear when does this fear take its place outside this body when even
approaching masculinity as something to perhaps be interested in is enough to shake
him send him down and along tunnels that branch infinitely

this fear this masculinity outside this body
tunnels that shake finely when approaching
something rested and enough

what is there to do except go on go along go through but he has had enough of
thinking and writing gender and bodies he would like to lie under his lover would
like to laugh in the dawn that comes under the blinds would name this a microtopia

what is enough to go there
his lover would dawn in the laugh that comes
this microtopia through thinking except

so perhaps something to do with trans and disabled microtopias because it is only in
a trillion trillion moments of pleasure of love of desire of writing that we can make
anything like a net like an infinitely branching tunnel like a home

so pleasure perhaps is home
something like desire branching moments
trans and disabled writing a tunnel

so perhaps an account of these moments perhaps they could write a trillion trillion
moments they could send them to each other these shivers written by hand then
buried for years under the fig tree let's say five years

count these moments a trillion years
shivers buried under the hand
a fig tree could write

so perhaps a trillion trillion moments of love written by hand and then buried under
the fig tree and then exhumed how many lives will have come and gone in that time
how do we measure years by disabled ecstasy by trans bliss it seems irresponsible

love, exhumed, lives
so ah a trillion oh's
perhaps then bliss, responsible, will come

to fuck to play write poetry when the blood runs the way it does now fast and often
and without warning but this is perhaps the way he survives best is a wayfinding
when he is shaken when he doesn't know what he has lost but knows he has lost it

fuck perhaps the way is without
he and she wayfinding play
when blood doesn't know

so he keeps an eye out for lost things but is worried this one is either so large or so
small he will never retrieve it what if he has lost every thing is what he thinks or that
in always being prepared to lose any thing he has already lost all things

this always eye is worried
so he will think small lost things
keep being out to lose preparation

so perhaps these trillion trillion moments can't be written even if they can be buried
and then exhumed perhaps they imagine they've been written and then bury and
exhume them anyway perhaps this is the only way to write desiring bodies in their
billions

if the trill can be buried
it can be written even so
momentous bodies this way imagine

the fig tree has an opinion on this five years is less than a single heartbeat the tree
says I'll feed on your words they're here with me tangled in root soil beetle bacteria
love I'll hold them for you until you can do more than imagine them

the fig tree feeds on the heartbeat
the beetle holds your words
the soil imagines entangled love

the fig tree likes to wait until the end before commenting on anything but as he
thinks he has finished writing the tree leans slightly to the left the tree says I hear you
you know fucking in the dawn you sound like you never want to come home

he thinks he has finished leaning on home
he likes to want, slightly, to wait
the fig tree says you sound like the dawn

so perhaps they begin to make this list the one they will bury then later exhume
perhaps this wishing and burying begins like this perhaps they begin with a single
preposition with the smallbig word to a word that can say all times and all ways
because to is relation

this relation will bury the single
then exhume this list
wishing always begins so

To not be at odds with
the rest of the world

To ache and open,
heliotropic

To be desired and
desirable and desiring

To stand up again
after deep rest

To never be in a city
again

To wear shame lightly like
a translucent shawl

To have a queer family
that isn't broken

To feel the body of my
beloved soften and melt
into mine

To learn my secret name

To say it clearly and
strongly as good soil

To love, to love, to love

To hold, to be held, to
behold, to be

To carry my wounds
gently

To not hurt when I am
hurt

To have known my
ghostpoet grandfather

To be astonished by what
persists in spite of

To be in a warm place

To play, and fist, and
dream through my lover's
body

To call myself home

To make a shroud from
love

To be still in the presence
of ghosts and their stories

To daydream green-ly

To laugh at myself with
tenderness

To be held from the inside

To leave the house where
a stranger took everything

To know Country the way
Country knows me

To lose and be lost

To be roused by ordinary
delight

To live a long life but
know this is far from
certain

To hold disappointment
in the mouth as a hidden
flavour of love

To keep and to survive my
stretched thin skin

To find and be found

To go to come back to go
again

To walk on this land,
unsettled, the night sky
on my shoulders

To carry the goodness
of my dead mother and
father

To write from a taproot
of love

To live a wide, deep life
but know it's also ok to be
shallow

To feel my shadow
become shade and not
a hole in the earth

To dance without
self-consciousness or
technique

To have never felt shame

To make a place when I
have no place

To be still long enough for
generations of beetles to
turn the teeming earth

To be recognised by
the kangaroos, the
currawongs, the hills

To make art even while
the world burns

To open and be opened

To carry as much pollen as dust	To love him until he leaves me	To find clothes that fit
To lay myself down	To question what shelters beneath the labels	To write, to write, to write
To listen with my skin, lungs, eyes, with my limited heart	To have a mother who calls me by my name	To live in the flow of knowing you matter infinitely
To be more fluent in the language of posture and impulse	To rage and to place that rage where it belongs	To be the monster dancing a split grin at the edge of a chasm a cave a well

Iona Winter

Unearther

dark, the nettled field met my bare feet, long before
wine stained my lips and the words escaped, burning
without brightness — ‘don’t touch,’ my mother always said
but I do it anyway, swimming out to the deepest part of
the lake, to disappear into underground caverns;

where the echo of your music is like lightning, the
chances I took, exploring landscapes of colour on my skin,
a gesture folded into thirds; your voice a river-smoothed
rock beneath my hand — *grief* is tissue stretched taut
over bone, a kaleidoscope of experience within

and the tempest that gathered you has pressed my lips
shut; like a muted maniac — I pretend I have my own
lifeboat, as fictitious as the quiet in museums at night,
praying for rain to reveal to me the anatomy of
the word *death*

Swimming to Sappho's Rock

They dissolve into the sea one by one, then reappear
as sabre strokes splitting the water. This morning the tide heaves frantic
before rain. We had arrived at that shore as we had each day,
bare breasts anointed by sun, and crawled towards what might spare us.
I imagine it belongs to her, in the distance, those dolomite knuckles
rising like an argument with the water. The current remakes what survives
time. Helpful to think of her now as I swim, the apocrypha of her living.
Closer to the base of the rock, older women argue, gossip and laugh as they tread,
conversation lapping back at the cool tongue of the sea. They have loved each other
long before my late arrival. When they get there, they lean against the jagged rock,
tall guardians under grey-gashed light. Girls in a dream. In the waking dream they kiss, cheer,
inspect the proximity of urchins while waiting for others to spring up gasping.
On one of my first excursions, my shoulder relented from months-long ignored injury,
popped in and out of its socket while I swam. Two lovers floated alongside me,
telling me over and over I was doing fine, I was almost there.
As we floated, Deborah told me how one night she was drunk and desperate
to get to the rock, she swam in the slippery dark, no moon lighting the path.
She climbed the rock with her bare hands and on top of it, dripping languor,
slept like a baby on a surface warmed from afternoon heat.
This is how I want to be with you.
When I turn back into sea, I will desire your company still.
When I turn back into rock, I want you to swim to me.

At my altar

As morning touches evening, two sealed envelopes affix a half-kilo. One hand
untacks each wing, the other, retrieves a mislaid teaspoon, sleepy in an indent of
dried sugar, crystallised at the rim. Pour new sweetness, by feel and a foment of
injustice, certain as the newmake turn to reset it. Pour over the refrain that demands
I replenish the mutual; a woman's voice, just as I come near to sit by it, asks who will
do something about the kitchen. I hang my hands in guilty, irate surrender. Blood
moored in each palm's groove like crusted, volcanic candy; beautiful, forgotten,
with no memory of its origin. She keeps her eyes and hands flat to the table, as if
to cover the evidence of a heart-line, to reveal nothing of her particular. Though, I
know. How she sowed seeds into a damaged line to polish her biography of service,
the surprise of her small sound, carried under schoolyard want, laid down, taken
up now, by an off guard double-take to her wisened joints. What if, I am most of her
life, her tongue coated white, like an excess of years finding any pore to break loose,
like the sediment of time accumulated upon an open surface. I tell her so, through
moments of waking recognition, like I'd already dreamt it. She says, open your
voice, no one can hear you. But the hawthorn, butter, sugar-honey and beans in
small arrangements, like a study, like an invitation to keep safe what is always living
between us; sometimes held lazy with displeasure, bitter with limbo. Sometimes I
give her nothing to read, but a waged smile. She is my war of quotidian privates,
my home, my room, within many publics. Hidden, this chorus that sings a line in
another blue evening; mitochondria of my eye, my neck rewinds a full circle of
murmur. Our made vessel of lined shoulders; eye-skin to eye-skin, I pour towards
our mourning, our silence, before beginning, with simple words, the prayer that
keeps us singing. No one suffers what we did, demand the world. In return, this wet
earth. Refuse to look up from its hold, refuse their way; promise.

Scott-Patrick Mitchell

The Desire Loop, Disintegrating

You ache for your mum, gone into the glow of chemo
poor even with a mental health plan. therapy a luxury, I am time
Plan to carry this grief in the back pocket
of these unwashed jeans until forgotten.
Forgot to get your Groovy Grape Roll-Ups, which is
to say I could not afford them:
my apologies. Apology a response for all the desires I cannot
fulfil. Full of hunger, you hold my face in two small hands. Hand-me-
downs
thread bare seam.
Seems home is a car
foundation on wheels
every carpark
a backyard.
Yards of asphalt, cutting rough
heels.
Rough sleeping heat holds close.
Close-up, strain crowing feet around eyes.
A round sky leans in as if blanket.
A blank stare, hollow cheek, slight tremor: I skip meals so you
can eat. So you eat place, whooping across sand, never say *Dad, you have failed.*
I
have
every minute of every day. Every day, a thinning matches your smile,
brimming to soothe salt.
To soothe salt, I tell you all the ways your mother made me sing,
unfolding memories from my back pocket.
Pocketing wishes,
sea-whispered
while you sleep.
Seep of hope,
glimmer day awake:
you ache for your mum.

Benjamin Rendell

Abzeco

we moved with each other on a clayswell
rolling out to built up periurban fringes.
our friends are kissing in reservoirs, i'm
running lips across lamina of grey tussocks.
summer march, wading in tussocks across
basalt sketchlands. they came here
to survey years ago and found something
uncommon. they came here to survey
years ago and found something unburnt. they
came here to survey years ago
and found something unearthed. they came
here to survey years ago and left something
behind. in those days a spill of glyphosate
came easily, there was a field
to ready on the western plain, i woke up to you
in the morning, i packed my lunch
with stained blue hands and moved them to
brush cutting, i sat on this stony rise
and looked across a fence, cows mooed with
ease or lay motionless in boxthorn.
and i'm not mourning it, there's no grief in it.
my frame is a chassis though, and it aches.
anyway, we're south of goldfields, south of
bacchus marsh. where the lands fault,
and merri spills further south.

panda wong

desire audit

...the whole world is my daddy...
—Okay Kaya, ‘Mother Nature’s Bitch’

is a poem / just me rawdogging my feelings /
is a prayer / just a wish / on its knees /
is a wish / just desire with a lil momentum /
is desire / just infinity vswept up in / a hot wind /
not everyone / knows how to rawdog their feelings /
or how to pray / or wish or surrender /
according to Chinese facial mole reading the mole near my mouth /
is pure in colour & means I am always hungry /
if you are looking for yearning you will find it /
in the comments section on YouTube /
when I see crowds of people moving around /
I can’t help but think of them as roving appetites /
my friend C messages me *look for god in everything* /
& last night I said to a stranger *I am just going* /
wherever the universe takes me /
the stranger replied *I am just going* /
wherever my asshole takes me /

& I guess that there is a little bit of god in everything /
including / & maybe especially / assholes /
I’m watching the morning light /
pulse through leaves & branches /
the shadows’ ancient skitter & sway called komerobi in Japanese /
one of the film *Perfect Days*’ first names /
director Wim Wenders says / *the spirit of the film* *is in the fact that* /
everything feels almost holy because that’s how *he looks at everything* /
for the past month / I have been waking up every day /
at 4am / been looking at everything /
like it’s holy / been looking for god /
in everything / been dreaming about hands /
moving like secret doves in the dark /
I think that hands are proof of the divine /
I think that hands are proof of the carnal /
& I’m obsessed with light / how it can refract a body /
into lines of unending return /
how light’s diffusion is a way of expansion /
my friend J sends me a TikTok that says /

we all exist to the extent of our feelings /
& I am learning lessons through every screen of the universe /
& leaking stickysharp wethot / feeling / pieces /
poet Ariana Reines writes *It is not easy /*
to be honest because it is impossible to be complete /
but there is truth in the frangible /
the / gorgeousness of a crumbling government /
or the way / a comet tears itself apart /
& smashes itself back together in orbit /
in order to become a shaman /
one must submit themselves to the process of abandonment /
& I believe that we can only feel as much pleasure /
as the pain we allow ourselves to feel /
sometimes / something opens up between two people /
open like a wound or the sky /
in the Art Gallery of New South Wales I overhear /
a mother explaining to her child /
the cut of the umbilical cord /
but her child is not ready for this violence on baby & belly & says /

I don't want to understand I just want to be cradled /
I don't want to understand I just want to be /
I don't want to understand I just want /

Samuel Samba

Pixelated Bodies

May God have a photograph of this

—Ilya Kaminsky

I was first taught the art of blurring,
seated on the gone imprints of a vanishing spray.
the tide, wiping off a history of leaves.

in spite of caution, something is left behind to ruin how it must—
the way the West seek us into vanishing, & would not do a clean job at it.
the evidence still soft & breathing.

imagine you are the last thing to draw breath in a lodge once peopled with laughter.
as you lay there, toiling the soil of your breast for heartbeat.
imagine you as the stain on a family album that goes unnoticed.
your facial print blurring under intense light.

I have raised toddlers who cannot point me out in hard copy,
except for the bruise suffering my knees.

each year, a coyote bleeds half-dead on our wet sand—
abandoning terror in its trail,
& the sea keeps washing ashore like we do not have bodies to cater for.

I thank the posture of you as you are: witness to all of these mayhem.
I've lost count on the number of times a house fell into me—unpronounced.
the debris of cement, memorizing me later as a headstone.

you say '*bismillah*' in quick succession,
& you're only reciting all the kinder ways
to give the incidence a name twice its size.

I shudder at the thought of living as fickle as any last prayer my lungs can hold,
bare as my pronoun dropped face-first on the pavement.

do you stand a witness to it?
the darkness everywhere now started from a blind spot,
then a faint light, then this blackout swallowing us whole.

for harm to be made visible, one need to silence whatever sparkles around.
the retina created for more than
all the luminance our vision sells the camera that draws blood from the scene.

you capture a moment here only by capturing all blacks.
I hope that when you do, you do it for the right course.

thank be the way you stayed still.
thank be your awkward posture—on the fence, while I film this evidence.

Alexis West

Watermelon

I lay up with my screens on voraciously feeding
Fresh sweet goodness
Spitting out the seeds
My stomach is sick and full as I dine on starvation
Buried bodies
Rubble bombs disaster
Orphans widows buried babies suffocated families
No trees
No birds
No butterflies
All the media lies
All of my screens

I feast
I am sick I am full of the juices sliding down my cheeks
Like the blood sliding down their body
I am frozen
As those bodies stiff and cold
Endless scrolling
Endless desire
Ceaseless eating
Cease fire
It's too much I scroll on
On my cobalt machines
Watermelon sticky
dripping down my chin

Ouyang Yu

I Wish

Just now, while I was making my morning bowel movements, successfully, I checked short video clips on IG. One caught my attention. A fortune-teller was saying something to this effect: if your wumingzhi is longer than your food finger, you are fated to be dafu dagui. I had a look at my nameless finger and compared it with my food finger, and found, to my pleasant surprise, that I had the former longer than the latter, despite the fact that such people with such fingers may have had a hard lot when young.

For the uninitiated, wumingzhi or nameless finger is our version of your ring finger and food finger is our version of your index finger while dafu dagui literally means very rich and very prestigious. I wish

Ethics 1

My father was a bridle maker, ensuring the production of horses, of colts and fillies, alive-alive oh.

For some this was a supreme good, ensuring the survival of the genes of Longue Durée, or as some have translated it, Regret. Within each desire is a secondary desire, and relations for which this desire is primary. As Earth sped up, methods failed quicker. He got up at 5am, or 6am, while the machines were half present, and more willing – malleable. In the half-light there seemed to be more mystical possibility. Metaphorical dark continued, however.

If you looked in a pocket long enough the key would turn up. Delphi was as Delphi told.

Byes at work were a chance to catch up. [Avoid the interstate, the dentist, do general research but only at breakfast. Chartres Cathedral turned its face to the photographer, like a mega demon.]

No one made their own traps in the twentieth century. Vraiment: they were the best traps.

A vegetable garden could be called a secondary desire. A carrot might consider itself a supreme good. Biographies can begin at any moment. Or be divided – arbitrarily – by the times we read such and such. I began reading Proust in Collingwood; I approached completion (of the great novel, not the greater oeuvre), blocks away in Fitzroy. But I lived in Rome in between (where I went to read Burckhardt). My ethics were severely challenged there: more than in Canberra. There was love; there was malleability. There were horses in the streets; the Pope rode a horse, behind a plaster Madonna.

Sleep partner

for Q.

At the mattress shop, they asked me
If I had a sleep partner
so they wouldn't assume
anything
they told me dogs are also sleep partners
and it made me wish I had a dog

I know they are trying to sell me
the expensive mattress that costs
more than a single paycheck
I'll take the validation
anyway
I wish they would assume
that my 'friend' is my partner
and love of my life
we will have wild, loud sex
on a very lush mattress
which was more than we wanted to spend
however we couldn't resist
being so in love and treating ourselves
because we, lesbians, are seen
we are proud and happy

Merinda Dutton

dear husband,

we were made in the summer. we made love in the summer too. we were all poetry and passion. synergies unravelled underneath the stars. i fell for you in the hot season when the oysters are ripe for the taking. if im honest, i was too.

eight summers of loving you and im still not sure if we are a collection of decolonial love poems or a shakespearean tragedy?

tell me husband, does black love survive the apocalypse?

we were married in a covid autum, and we spoke our vows underneath a fig tree on yugambah country. it was *nyirrnaa* – beautiful. like you. we were barefoot, our feet firmly planted on the ground. it was good ways, right way, and no paper to show for it. only photos and memories.

but winter betrayed us and a frost fell upon our home. and hearts.
thankfully, husband, the red starlight of *madaan* shone upon the darkest of our nights.

we made peace with each other in the springtime when the dogwood was flowering.

eight summers since we were made and a baby to show for it. *ngugiyen*. daughter. i birthed her in the summer – and she's full to the brim with fire and sunshine. a new season blesses us with light.

the solstice nears,

husband.

Thuy On

13 ways of looking at love

1. It's a truth universally acknowledged that a love that can start wars, inspire art and start revolutions will never begin with, 'Hey, pretty lady'.
2. Licking the taste of recklessness will spark electrons in the air.
3. A persimmon-lipped hurt will follow monasteries of silence.
4. Billie Holiday's pristine gardenias hid a scorched undergrowth.
5. Being a slave to a cat is still better than being a doormat of a man.
6. Drinking a vial of men's tears is only momentarily satisfying.
7. The fourth finger of the left hand does not contain a vein leading to the heart.
8. It's not our ability to love that made us human; it's actually our ability to select each image containing traffic lights.
9. You can be soft edged and lucent by candle or lit by the filigrees of stars.
10. Your fingers dancing over me are wild birds in flight.
11. Dating apps are the worse pain imaginable.
12. Sometimes it really isn't love but limerence.
13. Blackbird against snow: my hair on your pillow.

Lian Low

Updates

Dear University students and staff,

encampment at our Campus protestors dismantle
unwavering commitment to security and safety
right to unimpeded access
Code for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom

right
to
access
enjoy
a
typical
learning
and
work
environment
free

Australiavibrantpluralisticdemocracy

true freedom of speech.

Sincerely,

Professor
Vice-Chancellor, University

Dear University students and staff,

Procedure and Policy
Defence Commitment
prevent
proliferation of conventional weapons
and weapons of mass destruction.

Sincerely,

Professor
Vice-Chancellor, University

Dear University students and staff,

safety and security.

safety and security.

safe and secure.

Sincerely,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University Services

Lay Maloney

Untouchable

I am untouchable.

it is the burden of a deity,
never to be touched or craved,
only worshipped in return for favours and favourites
Harvests will be grand
Rivers will swell, fat with fish and mussels
Days will be long Nights will be warm
You do not want me
or my body of grinded up stardust
You want my powers of creation to make your world better
Forgotten until there is something to gain
Given anatomy
to symbolise different parts of humanity
You do not want me
my mind overflowing with every memory and thing to come
You want a carving, a sculpture, a painting
Something to symbolise me
Pretending you could contain my endless form
If forgot your offering, I will cut you down
Like a stalk to be cut and root to be pulled
Torn apart by the ravages
of the one who yearns
You do not want me
this soul of broken bonds and beloved torments
I write the narrative of your life on a scroll of paper gum with red ochre
Beg for paradise
I will give it to you
Eternal bliss finds us in the recesses of my heart
I forgive you
all for not wanting me
Like I want you
I am sorry I expected to be loved
As if
I was ever deserving of such a thing

Kerry Greer

GRWM

In the real world, you can watch videos of people getting ready,
to glean useful facts about why you are so incompetent at life.

In the reality of the poem, that real world is a joke, a smokescreen,
a place daydreams go to die. The poem likes three-line stanzas,
and the poet listens, nods, genuflects, modifies the gait accordingly.

The poet is not the sort of person to break three eggs every morning
and scrape out two yolks. The poet lives on husks of broken
sentences and imagines morning as a blonde strand on a velvet cushion.

In the cave of my heart there is a hunter waiting out the night.
It's the poem he's listening for—its tread on pine needles
in the places moonlight won't wash, soft *pad-pad-pad*

of leathered paws, twitch of the erect tail—sylph-like the poem
sweeps into the last glow of the fire, and the hunter turns,
tries to perceive what will bring him to his knees

in fear, in holy adjuration. The poet is not the sort of person
anyone would want to mimic, unless—being mad—
you write poems too, or read them all the time, asking

to be left alone, undisturbed. It is night and a cat is on the move.

Note: GRWM is an acronym for 'Get Ready With Me'—frequently used
in social media posts about morning routines.

Merlinda Bobis

Hymn to Trees

Back in the mountain of spirits in Bikol, Philippines, we call out ‘Tabi-tabi po’—Please-please—to the trees. ‘They’re our elders,’ mother says, ‘like this hundred-year-old Da’o, our Lola-sa-tuhod, our grandmother-in-the-knees, she makes us strong.’ She says this too about an ancient Sydney red gum, ‘our grandmother Kajimbourra, in Dharawal.’ Then tracing an invisible line from a hole on its trunk all the way to my belly button, she says, ‘Buháy siya, buháy ka’—she’s alive, you’re alive.’ And so I sing—

Buháy ka, buháy ako
You’re alive, I’m alive

You’ve breathed with me
Since long ago
You’ve sheltered me
And eased my woe

Teach me how to live,
how to live, how to live

How this home
Isn’t mine alone
How to live, to roam
But not to own

Teach me how to walk,
how to walk, how to walk

How to pass
Lightly as butterflies
How to touch
Not to grasp — just to touch

Teach me Yindyamarra
Kindness, Kabootan and Kapwa

Teach me how to love
From earth to sky

Like a bird that sings
Without asking why

How to love
Oh how to love
Without asking why

Notes:

The song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9K8OjIqbbE>

Yindyamarra: (Wiradjuri) Respect, honour, and gentleness.

Kabootan: (Bikol) Kindness; Co-spirit.

Kapwa: (Filipino) ‘The unity of the self and others.’ (Virgilio Enriquez, 1992)

Fisting with The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

It's been a long time since the last revolutions and the faggots and their friends are still not free.

When he comes loose, he closes the racketing blinds says his goodbyes.

It was necessary to develop secret ways to know each other. Vibrations passed through the eyes and the tips of the fingers were the ways the faggots knew each other.

Time, loose as love a noose to slip on to tangle and moan. Quiet, he will get to him soon. When he does, he will open and fist.

...the faggots developed "trashy" into a high form of disruptive behaviour... The trashiest faggots love who they do and talk of it often.

As his energy decreases his body refuses, he goes below ground and his friends come around... They bring him chocolate and bread and milk... holding, quiet reminders, their time.

The queens elaborate their dens in the rubble to create hidden places where one can live for long periods safe from the cold, sharp eyes of the men.

And they elaborate their forms of outrage.

They learned to heal each other by saying magic words over and over again and they learned to bring loving vibrations to the body to make it strong again.

It's been too long now he doesn't know how to be with anyone he is not still but stuck.

When things are loose, you can tell the faggots from the men.

It was necessary to find ways to survive and to stay. It takes him years to understand that the place he is this corner now is not where he was.

First, all must remain quiet so the soft sexual noises can be heard. Second, anyone who is done must do. If you get, you have got to give.

...the faggots develop "fisting" into a deep form of radical resistance... The fisting faggots love slow and long and speak of it secretly.

As the energy of the men decreases, the faggots and their friends come above ground... Spaces to be in begin to be created... warm, woody spaces, softly illuminated.

The queens on the TV destroy and are destroyed tears in the workroom too many times someone said no and out and goodbye, this is not your time.

And they elaborate their forms of outrage.

They learned to heal each other in the depths that go along and through more openings than one he learns that poetry can make a body he calls home.

...they hold each other from the inside they are two hearted eight limbed cephalopod silken limned kin.

In the barn in the back of their house they run the Faggot Fuck Palace... Here in swirling water and steamy rooms and soft lights the faggots love each other.

He writes in and because of men, using the language of his gay trans fisting and fisted body to rout them.

Here they are free to move their heads into the revolution. Here they learn to trust the reality of feelings surrounded by reassuring ritual.

His life looks stable from the outside he is still so shaken so missing warmth and action.

Wherever the faggots settle they wish to be near the women... They are friends of the faggots... They commit espionage for each other so that each can survive.

He knows that without radical pleasure practices without gifting everyone is lost. He knows that fisting is his secret language.

And by then he was so deeply into being a faggot outlaw that there was no going back.

The faggots and their friends are called abominations, molesters, monsters, freaks, infiltrators, devils, broken, diseased and disgusting. He and his friends write manifestos and fuck.

...they hold each other until they hardly know where one of them stops and another one begins.

They set up their dungeon at the back of their house tarp towels Crisco sling... here his legs open fist deep he opens more he knows his Daddy loves him.

They write with eloquence against the men, using the men's own language to embarrass them and sometimes even to rout them.

Here they are free to move their hands into each other. Here they learn to trust the ritual of not being each or other.

Their life has become elegant and stable allowing warmth and sharing and radical action to flow outward.

Wherever he goes next it will be with beloved queer kin... They will go to the bush... They write poetry for each other so that each can survive.

They know that without the uncalculated giving of affection everyone is lost. They know that friendship freely given sustains them.

And by then he was so deeply into being a faggot outlaw that there was no going back.

The faggots and their friends are called sick, sinners, liars, traitors, seducers, perverted, weak, silly and ugly. The faggots and their friends organize themselves quickly.

yellow brick rings of saturn

Here I am cross-legged on the tram to Carlton
Opening the notes app for a poem
(I don't know enough about poetry to be doing this)
My mother used to braid my hair in two long
plaits, dress me in blue tartan at my request
I watched the Wizard of Oz dozens (read hundreds)
of times as a kid. I worry about what this has done
to my subconscious. I worry about what this has done
to my innate knowledge. All I can tell you is
it's miraculous I found a seat—8 pm, Thursday on the 96.
Got a pair of ruby red slippers once for my birthday.
Clicked my heels, found myself in another dimension—
since I've been chasing that level of levitation.
It's true that tinman and lion and toto
were essential parts of the crew.
We all know, though, there was something
between Dorothy and scarecrow.
Why do I get the feeling I know you?
Lately the algorithm has been sending me
softly spoken women shuffling decks of tarot
whispering, elating, glowing about the divine
masculine coming in. I'm too much of a cynic for this.
I just got out of a really long relationship.
Kat tells me what's happening is that my
Saturn is returning. But here in this new never ending
void I see no guiding road, no rings of Saturn,
brick or yellow, for a stronghold.
I've noticed it's hard for adults to take me
seriously. It's hard to blame them when
I kinda dress like a boy munchkin. Exhausting
to sit each one down and explain to them
that I am familiar with accumulating years of
small devastating disappointments.
Have known how to love and failed at it
sighed at laundry, dishes, become complacent,
bored of a joke and considered the exact

*The queens leave their elegant dens in the
rubble and take over the streets.*

The queens leave glitter in the rubble they
stalk through the streets taken back.

He can fuck with his gender but it doesn't
mean the men understand love. He knows
the men are never free.

*They can play with the men's categories to
try to neutralize the men's guns. Yet this will
not make them free.*

*The faggots and their friends and the women
who love women can, they begin to know, stop
and do no-thing. That is something for them
to do.*

He and his friends make plans for their
children inside burning times, they tell
the stories of monsters and ghosts. That is
something for them to do.

He begins slowly it will still take him days
to notice the mountain the seven wrens.
High and invisible is his goal he becomes
an edge.

*They will begin slowly to move their energy
from the men's deathly dance to a stillness.
No movement and high invisible energy will
be their goal.*

*...the deathly dance of the men will begin to
wane and a new dance will begin to emerge.*

...he stops doing the deathly dance of
men keeps making a place in language for
how he loves.

Reference

Larry Mitchell & Ned Asta, *The Faggots & Their Friends Between Revolutions*, 2023
(7th reprint), United States, Nightboat Books. First published in 1977 by Calamus Books.

Direct quotes are in italics and their respective page numbers are in order of appearance:
front matter, 5, 6, 12, 17, 52, 52, 52, 83, 83, 84, 86, 87, 87, 91, 94, 98, 93, 93, 109, 109, 110, 110.

contents of my imprisonment. Hard to blame
them when I still hold myself aloof
from the category. I wouldn't trust anyone who
took me seriously anyway. Instead I just smile, say hello
ask after their kids—how was that trip to Thailand, anyway?
And if they ask how I am, (they don't):
yeah fine, pretty good—you haven't happened
to have seen a yellow brick road?
Recently I've been trying to write less live more
restring my guitar, spending time with friends
trying to learn Italian (terrible at: prepositions, pronunciation,
patience). Starting to think about getting my license.
Reading everything. Trying to fill myself with
language. Change colour with each suggestion—
technicolor horses trotting through the atrium.
Lately I've been trying to read more write less
I dressed up as Dorothy from the ages of 4-6
But it seems, like desire, for me writing is: compulsion.
If anyone has any practical advice about avoiding
sex, send me a line, email, letter, text —
04 [REDACTED]—please, I'm getting desperate.
Ho bisogno di più tempo; I'm in need of more time.
Need to learn how to act how to live how to drive
Also need to relearn a couple of things. No longer know:
how to tune a guitar by ear; how to take 20 y/o seriously;
how to let go of desire. If anyone has any practical advice
I'll take a prescription—vicodin? Shit, does this count
as nonfiction. Please. If anyone knows how to stop this,
I'm rattling through the cosmos sans orbit;
I'm unsure still what tram stop I should get off at.
Was trying to move to Rome in in October
But the gods were not feeling benevolent
And by that I mean my Creative Australia application
was rejected. Was trying to stay with him forever
but that was naive I suppose. Okay so what happened was:
He sat down in the poppies to catch his breath

I kept going, strolling—not running, or anything,
but now, see, I'm too far down the road.
Some flying monkeys told me he's sat up again,
good for him. Shit I almost got off at parliament.
God I am an idiot. Which is to say I think I'm a little stunted
(I have been listening to a lot of my old punk music.
dead kennedys, bad religion, the clash, yes, but also:
green day, blink 182—trash.) I am mortified to admit to
the power certain men hold over me, the orbits I have been unable
to resist. I've always been terrible at bisexuality.
If there are any witches around? Free for wicked or good times,
partial to large noses, red shoes, tall towers (I'm not fussy)
Anyway you know (see above) where to find me
Ah—so this is what the kids mean by emotional
unavailability. Please god let me avoid getting
hinge. Looking for: one shiny body sans heart,
hairy cowards also fine. Scarecrows need not apply.
Why do I feel I've known you in another life.
I would like to not fall in love again, if that's an option.
Anyway discovering quickly only divorced dads
are attracted to me. I'm worried about how drunk
I'm going to have to be to show a stranger my
body. My friends are worried my inner world
shines a little more brightly than my reality.
That I'm looking for a green that was not captured with
aperture, but rendered post film in laboratory. I am in need of a long
residency inside the emerald city—want to go down to the bar
of an evening and be served some horrible verdant
martini, am happy to sit quietly, let the wizard pontificate
about how exactly he can fix me, tell me his
ex-wife is kinda a bitch—you know his kids
never visit. Maybe the adults are right to be
condescending; I don't know anything after all
about returning to Kansas. Outside the window
traffic lights turn green, round jewels of candy;
I want to eat them, they gleam brighter brighter than—

all I know is that I don't I know anything
Except, okay, I guess I've learnt a few things:
There's no yellow brick road in Saturn's rings;
There's no past lives to remember, no future one to do better in
just this one short-long weird one to contend with; hashtags are weaponized
to fuck with you; be kind to the delusional; don't press the button
on the tram until it gleams emerald; for everything
magical there's some guy behind the curtain in a side room.
Oh, right—and that the ability to love is the only thing that's worth
returning to.

Juan Garrido-Salgado

The Moon on my Verses

Beautiful! With traces of the purest and most innocent Lorca's influence.

—Victor Hugo Romo

The moon bites my verses
on this night of absence.
I wish to bark my vowels
I wish to chase its consonants.
My dreams are frightened of abyss
I lie exhausted on the dark shore
where the silence of the world murmurs
on that sad corner
a fleeting light drags the pain
among the rubble in Gaza.

Jill Jones

I'm So Willing, If You

Forget the office party, the weight room
cheap Tuesday, hot yoga, season three of anything
a trip to the laundromat, gay bingo
Let's be disobedient in so many other ways, here
on a bed with what cities we make, what flushed sunsets
bent alleys, queer little kiosks, night shimmers
the go-away rain

What happens outside, believe me, will always be
a skanky mash of action figures, edge lords, earth haters
screen clichés, secret boys' clubs, heartless
online annotations, more fights over parking spaces
all those themeparks, all that privilege

No! Fake electro-goth, or a jolt of some bright light
won't save us, nor the dance of likes, emoji grins
So let's get beyond tricked-up meet-cutes
There's so much more between our thirsty sheets

May I get drunk on your fruit and flower
as we move between callisthenics and arias
insurgent eros, groin and magic, brim and breath
and leap into tonight's name and tangle, in which I
move and am moved inside by you beautiful as the arc
of a raptor's wing, a breath-taking equation
blazing climax, then a solo for breath

Let's set fire to dogma and inertia
subjection, swindles and creeds, low obligations
Tear up the rags of sleep!

Can we prevail at least for this night
as if it was more than nervous ambition
to go down with integrity, no
lust actually, opulent and spread

Every single moment isn't alone
Every fold longs for its sister
Everything between us is just what happens

Josephine Mead

Diving women

Diving women
are accustomed to drying
entire bodies at a fire
coming from the water

when she arrived
at the meeting place
there the fire was.

standing there
across
the storm-encircled ruins
her skin
constantly bathed
and there
upon the wide expanse of a chest that had
served for many long dives
form remained, a vague outline

almost indistinguishable from the wavering flames

you are still diving for pearls that were out of reach to hands before you

Jennifer Compton

White Vinegar

Beetroot from our garden. Big plump 'uns. I topped and tailed
them and boiled them and, when they had cooled, I got my hands
amongst them in the sink, slipping their skins off. A sly delight.
Then, of course, your pickers and stealers are stained pink, and
everyone knows what you have been doing. How vibrant they
were in the salad tonight, as a side to macaroni cheese and bacon.
A splash of white vinegar.

I ask him to reach me down the white vinegar
from the top pantry shelf and he jests
about how I will cope when he is gone
because I am such a short arse.
I reassure him that everything
will be moved to within my reach.
What about the torch? he asks.
Everything — I say.
*Everything will be moved down
to within my reach.*
*I will only need half as much
when you are gone.*
And there will be room.
Oh yes — he says. *Of course.*

Ion Corcos

Snow

Grey cypresses stand tall on the mountain,
and thick snow lies on the peak, so white
that the sun cannot melt it.
A magpie chases a hawk in the sky,
doesn't give up, till all I can see is the idea.
Fishermen throw lines over a canal
as seagulls hover like snowflakes.
Thousands of tiny fish gather
in tight schools; others on their sides,
dead in the stream. Thick silver hair, threads
of water. A jackdaw takes a fish, throws it
to the ground. Claws its body, tears
scraps of flesh with its beak. Caws
and bows its back as if it is walking under a rope,
or has broken itself. I walk on,
to the wetlands, where reeds are silent.
Last year we saw marsh frogs leap into the water,
sit on damp soil, sun themselves. This time
it is cold. Everything is too dead,
too brown, too close to snow.

Holly Friedlander Liddicoat

desire #3

sometimes it's just a need/want to touch yr face
extend a leg on couch, plant foot arch to hip
watch a frangipani or a pickle or a gentle theory grow.
a car alarm wakes me from this place. this peak of day
starts a galah to remind me where I am
a hum from the kettle, from the Speak Easy Neighbour
the turny ungrounded, the platte spins, a Lazy Susannah
searches for her Purpose or a mushroom.
the pigeon in pumps beats it past this window
yr skin as you adjust to yr cold mourning shower

sometimes it's blackout blinds drawn at midday
just myself, sweet horizon, prone to making terrible decisions
I pool a wetness out of mind. we're both prone, somewhere,
u & I. a past summer still presses at my thighs
yr past winter recalls snow / falls like tinnitus,
pulsing a soft, grey reminder; dampness marks
the season change. an ibis expands wings, launches
in south-east winds & we keep this gesture,
as we flirt like friends & remain so—better whole
& alight than broke like a window,

venetians flappin in the wind

Emily Munro-Harrison

How my heart beats

|
|||
|||||
These bodies
Of water
The place where we first meet
Shapes the story
Suspended
Bila - the three rivers
Giiny - my heart beats			
Yanngu - the water sings			
I feel myself being pulled closer			
Waawii - slipping under the surface			
Letting me know			
Always here			
Murrabindarra – I sleep			
Barrambiyarra – I wake			
Giving in			
All electric and staticky charged			
Muranhanha - feeling your body warmth			
Brush your border with my being			
Bunyyanha - my vibrations increase
Nanan - my pulse gets faster
I feel the buzzing
As I get closer

Hoping ngurambang knows
Out of the corner of its all being eye



Watching the water
Ginbayanha – the longest ache
Wangadyung - I was a lost piece
Once scattered
Buwagarra - but drawn like a magnet
Returning to Country



queer hispanic american writer publishes poem!

It's hard-earned, at the end of the day
Nothing so simple to be filed way for
Safekeeping, for
Tax purposes, for
Diversity hires and microscopic differences
It's

My favorite, maybe you've seen the tweets?
I felt *it* wrap around the soft curvatures of my synapses
coated my tongue with subtle umami,
tannins rich and flavorful,
bitterness and astringency and
I have thought of nothing else since *it* –

Sure. *I am*
Something to exclaim over
I am target-brand boots and op shop finds
I am nothing so spectacular
Two cultures stitched together in my dna

They strangle each other when I am not there to watch them.

Sure, if you pried up my ribs, you might find *it*
Lurking under those old floorboards,

But *I am*

Offering you a taste now,
Earthy and delicious – I think

There is nothing quite like *it* on the outside. Caution!

Hold the glass at the stem
Or the warmth of your palm might

Burn the contents

It's the dna, you remind me
It's the way those strands hold hands with
Nearly anyone these days

Sometimes, *I am* –

made of glass, cupped tightly between sweaty palms *I am* viscosity and undertones *I am* feet
up on the couch after a long day of heartache *I am* soft voices in the lounge *I am* poured out
for the dead *I am* more often for the living to remember *I am* use a coaster so we don't leave
a waterstained reminder of our indiscretion *I am*

Step away from the table.
I am listening.

Dave Clark

Bad Advice

I wanted to learn why doctors mock my chronic fatigue
and whether their advice was legit

as it sounds like a load of shitake extract
instead of being backed by the facts
of what helps this illness

They blame me when their two mandated
treatments don't work

but if we royally rolled our ankles
and the medical plan was to jump
and run on that bung ham,
we'd tell them to go away

yet this is the main pathway
prescribed for CFS,
to push a system that's inflamed

This deranged thinking caused considerable damage
to my ill body and kept their mocking rocking along

The second treatment set in stone
is to think your way beyond the disease.
GPs are trained to believe it's all in my head
and suddenly their mockery makes sense

Therapeutic plans dense and decades-outdated
as this is all they know

What a blow to the quarter million Aussies with chronic fatigue,
especially the sixty thousand trapped in homes and beds
without best practice being practiced in this country

Our condition is functional and biological,
not some illogical ache we make up

Sure, blood tests come back normal,
so maybe, the tests aren't that good
and textbooks need updating
because you aren't finding it in your fine print pages

It's in my gut, my bowels,
in the howls of muscular pain,
in the crippling energy drain
and the inflamed immune system

so you can use those expired protocol pillars
as a prostrate check and stop making us
trek through all the research you ignore

We give up our limited energy and money
seeking the rare practitioner who understands the disease
when we should be saving these things for the ones we love

and so I am pleading with GPs
to take the vigour you put into dismissing us
and direct it into helping us
so that one day soon
we can be
well

Eric Jiang

as it turns out, the things i love aren't the things i love

perhaps i don't love cities, i just love good weather
perhaps i don't love parties, i just love arriving home
perhaps i don't love theatre, i just love when people talk fast
and know what they're going to say next
perhaps i don't love eating, i just love finishing things.
as it turns out, the things i love aren't the things i love,
but are vessels for the things i love, habitats for the hidden, singular thing i love
i take away the parts that keep alive the thing i love but are not the thing i love
i remove and remove that which i do not love, until it's the indispensable kernel of the thing.
but it's not foolproof. sometimes there's no kernel,
no film of pearl enclosing smaller pearl.
like when i strip back every layer of you, you're still there.

Fleur Lyamuya Beupert

Lift the trembling out

Close your eyes
hum figurative lies
smudge the timeline
reveal invisible origin
of rainfall, sequencing
a disease that no longer
exists. Ethereal, efficient
[] (wo)man's unconscious
tips cool as a business card
over the margin of presence
as time bends the membrane
enclosing our neighbourhood
Let's wake up in some facility
idle in green rooms, put on jazz
to arrive in drifting afternoons of
corrupted longing, caught hot in the
act, recalibrating each virtual diaspora
Unnamed songs are lowing. Dystopia's
banned all forms 'cause data self-collects
while the continent melds with a wilderness
unzipping its mirror image. You cry out to the
voices, your chant listening more than sounding
Even when they hiss and shriek you swear stalwart
allegiance to their truths. Suddenly you find yourself
standing on a rooftop bar drinking G&Ts, chatting about
the virus, the new strain. You speak of other deaths, different
causes. When language falters, your bodies vowel an answer. You
don't realise you're stressed until the feeling softens, curling round how
you want to be known, loosening at estranged ends so that you can take hold —

Note: This poem is indebted to Victoria Adukwei Bulley's *Quiet* (faber, 2022).

Andrew Sutherland

**a romantic lake poem for my bb as our depressive episodes
transfer from one body to the other**

which is not to say we are the same.
It could be an old joke, though, right?

*Why can the poets not feel okay
at the same time as one another??*

Anyway lol I'm not a comedian.
I'm a fan. At Galup today, there

was a little egret with its neck
the way their necks always astonish:

a dangle and a coil. I got so angry
at my walking-friend for blazing on

talking as I tried to point out the egret
that I also missed the egret. Right now,

amidst the de-recognition of my current
k-pop loop is the English language lyric

*promise you won't regret. Promise
you won't, egret!! I just thought*

of another romantic joke: the cat
turns to the poet and is like, *why*

*are you only ever needy when I need
you to be kneady?!* Scattered applause.

I have been thinking about queer YA
now that I am comfortably in my thirties

and I want to confess that I've become
quite jealous at the speed with which

you feel; you change; like every other
moment is a wave in a winter month;

like the oceanside cliff off Margs
when I pretended to spot a whale

again and again and the suspicion
you actually did. That you still do.

In other news, I've realised I'm not
gay at all: just not attracted to anyone

too cis+str8. But I don't want a realisation.
I want the romance, too. I want to be sure

that the second I point towards it
I won't already be somebody else.

Tim Loveday

boundaries

the manager of a major queer nfp
wants to take me to a leather daddy bar
he uses the word *community*
the same way people talk
about community
during bushfires

*i hope it's not too much for your
little bisexual brain* he tells me
as if on the scale of queer
i'm only technicolour
not rainbow

still
some fragmented
part of me wishes
this was all
done in

secret

still
i have to admit
i don't know what
to make of men
hitting on me
in public

the only people i know
who say *pride*
mean *the pacific*
solution mean there are hard
borders around
everything

even in community
i understand my sexuality
as a stock exchange

a prison that opens
to a prison

how heavy have my
pockets become
with keys why does this door
only open slightly

whose eyes are looking in

is perceived violence
as real as real violence

only a few years ago
queensland scrapped the *gay panic defence*
for years my father had said *a real man should
be able to defend himself*

how many invisible borders
have i built around my body

if they want to stop the boats
they should use the word *penetrate*

when the fires came through
my town we knew what
was expected of us

we were men *versus*
men up against

little did they know
how long we had spent
versus ourselves

at the bar a man in leather

holds his throbbing cock
on a television screen

i make myself
stare at this
as if proving
to everyone

i want to look away
but what does that say
about me

a field of vision is
a border itself in some places
a judgement is
a *death sentence*

i know this manager
has had to compartmentalise
his politics in order to achieve
what he calls *change*

this year his org will receive
funding from the four big banks
from an oil company

i forgive him for this
like i forgive myself because we cannot live
apolitically

all bodies are up for debate

sometimes the boundaries
become blurry sometimes those
who set the boundaries
think they live beyond
them

i wonder if he has ever
seen a fire race across a tree line

we need a new word for violence
enacted by nature in response
to violence

i feel hemmed in by language

my father would say
that's just natural
the animal kingdom

he called *children overboard*
a bunch of rotten dogs

sometimes the boundaries
only shift slightly for years he has bred
frenchies the only time
i see him cry is when
they die in his hands

the boundaries are precarious

one time i pointed at a man
and told my mother i kissed him
as if the limit of my body
was whatever way
i pointed it

my mother's mouth
fell open she asked
are you a gay boy

i wanted to hold her hand
and tell her i am whatever it is
to not be loved enough

i wanted to ask her
if *confused* is an answer
or a direction

can you define its limits

i wanted to say *you did your best*

we are always finding
boundaries to our existence

my father says
we should *let them drown*
but when i tell him i want to get
my dog an abortion he screams at me
tells me life is precious

3 billion dead animals
he says after the bushfires
as if he has felt each heart beat
against his chest
as if each love is different
from the last

as if hate has dimensions

if only he knew what the queers
are investing in

in 2013 my brother went
to afghanistan he was in the commandos
a brigade he swears now
he saw *nothing*

the same year the federal government
launched *sovereign borders*

i've never heard him speak about assuage
i do not ask him there are boundaries
limits to our language

when the fires surrounded our house
he told my father *i didn't fight in the middle east*
to die for your house

i have often wondered
what then he was fighting for

whose imagined borders
was he protecting

or was he just fighting
like i suspect because the conditions
of his life told him
he was worthless

the boundaries so confined
sometimes it seems
fighting is enough

when the manager kisses me
i feel his tongue swish around
in my mouth the same tongue
he uses to call us
friends

i push him away
like i have pushed away
so many things

i can tell he is searching
for love in people
incapable of
giving it

what are the boundaries
 of his powers do those borders
 even exist

i want to tell him what i think
 but our bodies have become
 check-points

his mouth is soft
 and mine is vicious

if only i want to say
 there was a new word for violence
 enacted by nature in response
 to violence

Daniel Browning

Colossus Astride Me (my heart exploded)

For B.

My flagging skin is just a membrane
 To keep my necrotised organs
 From spilling out
 Bilge water for the birds

You appeared
 Tattooed angel
 across your chest
 I laid in surrender

The stupor
 Of our sex
 Not the chemicals
 Was what induced the vomiting

My intensity overpowered you
 But you abided with me
 As I lay unconscious my
 Diligent lover

One night only
 A performance never to be
 repeated
 Of which you were the glittering star

Your taste on my lips
 commingled
 with your
 juice

As it massaged
 Your smooth head
 sutured the wound

And I giggled at the close attention you paid and
 The care you showed

A frame that held the space
Like a statue
Immovable, never doubting your right
to be here

Those brown
Almond shaped eyes penetrated
My soul
and their daggers shot petrol on the tyre fire of my lust

I remarked on the way
Your skin was the
Perfect foil
For mine, freckled by the Irish

Or blackfella
In me

We exchanged
Genealogies like credentials
Me, St Vincent via the Middle Passage
From Nigeria, Benin and Togo, and you

Made in British Guiana
with seeds
from every corner of the
empire

A classical violinist
Your favourite composers
Shostakovich
Tchaikovsky
Adlers
You mentioned an upcoming performance of Elgar
And Beethoven was a recurrent theme

Colossus
Astride me
Your locs licking my face
Majesty, king of my bed
Your flashing eyes
Melted the carapace

My insides
Dripped
Liquid
As you poured yourself into me

And I hung
My gaping mouth
on your long
sentences

Thanking whatever
Divinity
Created
You

I wasn't sure
Before
But now
I am

I want to
live
in a world that has
you
in it.

Your
Black pride
is
infectious.

Coco X. Huang

Self-Portrait

Note: Read in a mirror

The steam recedes and you see her there
white towel around chest, divot deepening
as she bends to wrap her hair—
a shame the mirror ends
at the curl of her spine
before her legs which must be
lean and supple as those landing arms
drawing moist cream-strokes across
the plum smear on her shoulder
up the bare throop of her neck
leaves your mouth wet, wanting
to nibble an unpicced aricle
before touning into its depths
let me see you, you say
and she hears the way
you want to see her
and she knows it well
so she turns off the lights
takes off her towel
lets down her hair
to show you
what she becomes
in the moonlight
when she wears the skin-flesh
of a gutted fish, a limp shroud
of seaweed hair, her curves
now bone-shadow blades
drowned and hung up to dry

when she sees you at last
she smiles with all her teeth
and traps you in the frame
of her hands as she raises
her phone, an eye-searing flash—
feeling cuts, she smirks
might delete later

Joanne Zou

CAUTION DEEP WATER AFTER RAIN

Walking by the creek, Jordan says, *everything is so green*
because of the rain & like the first gasping intake of air after
diving into the slicing cold of an outdoor pool & kicking your way
back to breathing, this green glistens with frantic newness.
They were a child in this place. We were children when we
met, worlds still breaking open, seasons & states away.
Sign warns for deep water as I clamber onto an overturned
log, suspend cross-legged above the grass. Melt into the air & then
guide myself back listening to Bleachers songs from 2014.
Tuesday afternoon can't be forever—
another poem like a diary entry—
all my life, yes, sense of something intrinsically flawed inside me
some crack in the very bedrock of who I am, sealed with guilt—
now is the winter of our trying to change. Trying to forgive existence
even when the fading light makes me want to weep.
I just don't want to hurt anymore.
Know every wide blue hour must pass.

Tess Ritchie

Persistence

Try backwards until a shirt is ultimately reduced
to a line
re-write it for you
demand your own colours/dangers/shapes
Ask, what is the value of a shirt?

In the unwritten, I play freely in a shirt
I already exist (before the shirt)
I trade being chill for shopping and shopping for a car (this won't be everyone's choice)
Money is collaborative
Friendships are the fire source
Copious versions are brave
A shirt, the babies know, is for painting in first

Ask, what is happening to me in a shirt?

Every day I meet my body in a mirror. I screen to see
if I'm doing curves right and attempt not to simultaneously. Flooded
with childhood games and household ideals and all messages received
via best-selling novels/perfect poems/lovers/science/dreams
I'm kinda lost, drowned by too many tabs open

Take a shirt. Picture water.
Every day put down your own version.

Alicia Sometimes

Absolute Magnitude

You, amongst a text of stars

veined passionfruit bruises
estuaries in lucent night sky

your cold hands

showing me pictographs, moons
in Byzantine manuscript, curves

as the wild drapery of universe
distorts any wreckage of time

your eyes stencilling galaxies
as I count the cosmos in verse

we head inside twisted in spirals
our bodies eddying in the tide

AJ D'Costa

Chameleon meditating on change (*an inverted aubade*)

These days I'll abide by the law.

I don't mind a tether and willingly tie myself to the
little things: like Tilda's velvet paws, the routine
of bringing chai to boil each morning, the
kale salad you make when you're out of ideas, or
mum waiting by the door until I'm honking goodbye at the
end of the driveway.

These days I'm shocked to find I no longer want
a camouflaging skin to flaunt, just a
single coppertone in which to stay stuated in
the sun and luxuriate in a boring self until
the sky pastels and a chill begins to
permeate this thin membrane.

Please, grab me a jumper so I can
thicken as it darkens...
and with a kiss on my crown you deliver it,
and I am enlivened enough by that gesture and
by the touch of familiar fleece, to crave any
more excitement, or desire any
more drastic an alteration to my surface than this:
calm, abiding bliss.

The Architecture of Beginning or Ending Anyway

My hand reads as a clastic dyke my hand reads is red infilled with calcified and
clastic skin

—platelets flooding the scene to placate the pleated crisis—

my hand was scratched by my kid my hand was accessory to his

clawing at his newfound independence

some way into the young start of his

small but already full life my hand is full it infills

it is filled I fall and it is falling

my hand trips from the start

of the alphabet my

thumb from a to i being the

margin of

separation

then a jump

back to the pinky and I think of u our promises made daily

my fingers the way

they go down all

the way down on you

down to stages of this

life on you my hand it is

red I can read infilling

as falling my hand raises then

falls

this is my

Commencement poem

I can read my hand it is read

this poem my hand is not a

closed form

it is falling

and beginnings are always

open forms

ecstatic hand down to near to

asshole falling reading touching

clastic infilled heart

wholly raised in broken appraisal

to appointment

and anointment my

hand it is read it reads it is

raised and as dyke

it holds and embanks the incoming flooding sea of our raised and falling bodies.

Debbie Lim

I lay in the earth's throat

I've walked through fire before. I know how
it turns you to stone or makes you shine.

This time was different. I heard a forest
of travelling tongues. How the roof flew off

and sky caved in like blackened surf.
For days I blistered in the earth's throat.

Then something soft pulled me from the rubble.
Call it kindness. Memory. Call it your grief.

When I stood, I was blind and wore a saddle
of scorch, some cloud, a vein of gold. A kingfisher

rode my back. And from that dark cavity
in my neck I breathed the wind, smelt the river.

Alison Whittaker

direct to ashfield

edging on eleven pm
a train pulls up, direct to ashfield

it's been raining
things not worth mentioning, but
lights replying to themselves
for however long the rain lifts

i want to understate it so bad.

an empty train, yellow inside
the opposite of an orgasm
ah, whatever,
bewildered in the dark, rooted in place

i want to understate it so bad.

every unwashed window has these
abandoned hairs from commuters
a day of human stink, visible like this
because on my sad and briefly still night
their stained glass window, kind of

i step on the train
it carries me, not quite to home
for strangers' pain

i tell the friends who will listen
and if they listen as i tell them

i want to understate it so bad.

redfern station, december in a hard year
terminal, never seen it before.

i've been in tears on and off
there's a split in the pressure of the air tonight
in platform puddles, they can do this
offers this, a small stillness to see.

slowing gradually, stopping quick
but kind of like one, in its pace?
i feel like i've cum
pulsing, agape.

prints of grease
resting their heads
only because the source left and
its cavern illuminated me and to me
their chorus their chorus, kind of.

i think i'm the only one
overwhelmed with a terrible love
for ghosts.

this sweaty train, how it hit me.
how it hit me, that they love me.

workshop poems

In November 2022, Australian Poetry partnered with Writers Victoria on a master-class on 'desire in poetry', conceived as a theme by Anna Kate Blair (WV), and curated and taught by Ellen van Neerven. This workshop was followed by a separate class run by Writers SA in March 2023. The poets in the following section appear with their permission and that of WV and WSA. Thanks also to Anna and, separately, to Bronwyn Tilley (WSA) for assisting with collecting these poems.

J. S. Barling

on a diagram, show me the wishbone

At the interval of a leap year
I make the request again

The Coroners Court will only provide information to senior next of kin

Uber eats asks

What are you craving

but comfort food

as a silo for comfort and food

only returns all the McDonalds franchises in the area.

Which of the promises you've made are you going to break first?

First, I will break the promise I made to my daughter to keep her DuoLingo streak alive

The chicken shop's window is filled with chickens
like spiked newborns
folded up on tummy time.

I buy one and we eat it
gloriously shimmering like victors.

From the Coroner
I am craving
a diagram of that delinquent body
the pages turned dyer's weed yellow
four decades in a compacter
I want to ask the Coroner to
take my finger
and find me the place of
the unformed
wishbone.

This is not a diagnosis but
I call it

protracted terminal burrowing

This leapt year leaping
hectoring of the Coroner.

What can I say – my people
Protestant depressives
dug up each other for
decapitating, a sort of post lethal
pantomime.

Press my finger.

I will build a callus that makes
left speak to right
tuning fork tines
singing into succession.

*Secondly, I will twist my baby fingers around the bone, dried out on the
windowsill, and pull*

I want those goodbye confessions.
I want them to be good.
To know

this tincture, the sleepy nightshirt
how to be broken by temper
what it looks like to die by the summation of
small indiscretions. If I could, perhaps

I would ask that the Coroner take to the diagram of our bodies
and with the edge of a fingernail
etch into the paper
a keeled sternum, so we can list
and be righted.

Paris Rosemont

Swallow me whole

My darkness flirts with yours—finds an orifice to infiltrate,
parts your lips to *Watusi* in your cage of
sharpened fangs, sneaking past bouncers
to tongue your tonsils
slinking southward to your spleen
where it licks your pustules clean.
I see your darkness
and I'll raise you mine.

Awful offal boils and bubbles
Reflux burns—my heart's in trouble:
I want you.

Even knowing the flavour of your damage
how your tumours will devour me:
I want you.

I am deep in the belly of the ouroboros
engorged; consumed

Stefania Panella

A Desire to Manifest

The place in my body where I feel you the most is so precise.
A deep throbbing energy radiating warmth and inebriating my senses.

The images of you are so vivid, like recurring flashbacks igniting a rush of
euphoria within me, a longing to be.

A bounding pulse. How can it be when I have never truly known the weight of
your body on mine, the smell of your warm and wet skin pressed against my lips?

They say you can manifest your thoughts into reality, is that what I am doing?
Manifesting you, us?

I shake my head to unrivet my mind from the impetuous thoughts of you, but no
unfulfilled desire has ever felt more inviting to me.

So, I let go of any reasoning, to swim in this fantasy of you and me, a raging river
that pulls me deeper and deeper. The magnetism of the unattained.
Oh, the warmth!

Sean Ashford

In the garden is where power and desire first met

Desire leaks of
Power

Talked about
Unconsciously

As mine or yours
With eyes half open

But is allusion or illusion
Created by belief

The belief that;

*Power defines and creates the world
Which it does if you believe
It does and you have power*

Realizing that is
Illusory

By those
Who believe
Desire manifested us

Trapped me
until I became still

And waited for the serpent to curl beside me
Like that story amongst the three

Realizing
It is not out there
Or in here

But
Amongst us

Creating significance
In the mundane banality
Released us of the eternal internal ache

Zhi Cham

porous from crossing your weather

i am in love and want not to be
everything you are and do rises my chest
You pinch my toes I am deeply endeared

long ago someone pressed their ear to my heart
and reported they couldn't hear a thing
today it rumbles my stomach

petals falling into grass, tears too
a dragonfly circles
the tragedy is beautiful in the sun

J V Birch

Cows and cockatoos

With you I know which buttons to press as you echo
like a long-distance call. The silence stretches and yawns
as if bored with waiting, scours the horizon for something to say.

My longing takes the shape of me and its reaching goes unnoticed.
You keep moving, counting the opportunities missed,
although most no longer wound when picked to reminisce.

Misplaced moments gather at our edges jostling for space
then a warning of cattle ahead, that bring soft brown cows
with everything unsaid lashed around their big soft eyes.

We slow and wait for one to cross, trailing a whole sentence
caught on its hoof like toilet paper, and I remember that time
I returned from the restaurant bathroom and you said all the words.

The day folds itself and with one last flourish, erupts in a frenzy
of wings and shining as cockatoos flurry our evening walk
through the gum trees to the river, a telling to their calling.

At night you sleep loud, rattling the dark in your throat
like an anti-song while I dream of hyperlinks, any way to connect.

If you want to be ascidian

you will need a small net
to capture trace minerals
and planktonic macronutrients.

Do not drift
but grip the sand or rock or a black coral tree,
sediment and salt will tumult through you.

Conform your anatomy to absorption:
siphon and cilia, allow yourself
to be mostly throat, let your rudimentary heart
push your blood flow with the tide.
Keep a neural tube,
a few ganglia to sense gravity, touch and light.

Since you're askeletal, you will need a coat.
A glycoprotein matrix
to define your shape while retaining flexibility. Tunicin:
a polysaccharide similar to cellulose, as in
sugarcane, wheatgrass and oak.
Would you like to share resources and maybe organelles?
Wrap me in your cloak.
I could be less myself if we share the same skin.

I, too, am a creature of abyssal depths—
holding on by a stalk of connective tissue stretched
by the tide, not yet dislodged.
An organism complex enough to hold attention
to the bottom of the ocean.
Attention like sunlight:
diffuse, scattered.

If we share the same skin
you and I can exchange pigments:
carotenoids, ultramarine, violet
vanadium-green, and black—
not quite melanin, granules circulating
in mesenchymal space.

If we are sessile,
let the rubble of ruined forests wash
through our perforated pharynx—
we will not thirst for ash or stars or salt.
We will have the whole ocean in our net.

Diana Baric

Be your best self

every day,
wear A Mask to defeat the
nemesis of excess sebum.
harness marine moisture
and
double cleanse;
supplement from within.
glow – don't overdo it
be open to oils
and purge grease.

seek the serum of plenty
and find essence
in morning coffee, always followed
by a green juice.

meditate and microneedle

age-defying derma roller
rhinoplasty and a 2-minute plank.
firming plumpness
moisture increasing exfoliation
microsculpting chlorophyll drops

flawless?

do remember to be sexy.

Elena Betros López

a pocket

what is a pocket
except always a cavity of unknown surprises?
the hand feels in—
sometimes it's soft and a wool like fleece
others cold and damp
like that feeling you had of being the well
spherical and empty then
voluptuous

I could never work out if the well and the water
were synonymous or separate
closely suggestive—
names, how and what we call and are called
are like cords
curved through our skin

and when I move my back about
weave it through the air, to stretch or contort
I am reminded of *the names*, or
I am the names—we are woven like wool

the garment has been threaded with confusion
mispronunciation or frustration,
alterations for assimilation
or anglicization

names are also things to call
sutures of newly woven truths
call carefully and passionately—
call your thoughtful truth

what type of garment do *the names* weave?

lost names are like the bottom of that well
reverberations eco, as they stretch
they contort—yet

as your body makes contact with the ground
know that the eco of her is curved through your skin

and I think of all the names
given or lost, called or re-woven and
I remember that we can't change *the names*—they exist
as my body does

our truths are woven into garments
with voluptuous thread,
bound then unwind
repurpose these cords through our skin

Indrani Perera

Notes to a magpie sitting on the fence carolling to the trees

Every morning I walk on the path behind my cousin's house. She doesn't know I'm here and we barely know each other but this act of passing where her breath was exhaled, this act of passing where her body rested in sleep, where she ate vegemite on toast (if she does) or perhaps vadai, this act somehow thickens the blood of kin, makes this gene-fragile-link stronger.

It ties me to this place in a way that goes beyond living.

If I could, I would sit and sing a song made for this morning — in a score without words melody is the only language necessary. A solo to speak trees awake after their evening sleep. A lullaby to lead possums back to their dreys. A tune to embroider the air.

If I could speak bird I would understand the language of sky, the way it calls to feather, the way it wants to be entered. The updraft of oxygen, the beauty of breeze caught between pinions, the weight of the earth dropping away, a riot discarded.

If I could I would join you, my magpie friend, and escape. My claws caught on the edge of bark, on the edge of becoming. I would raise my head as I sang to the clouds to let them know, I too, understand moisture.

I would leave all this behind. Just like that. Like releasing the wooden slats of the fence and thrusting up, up, up. Discarding the laws of physics and embracing the impossibility of flight, I would rise and rise and rise. Flap and beat and lift and sing.

Below me the roof tiles of my cousin's house. I imagine her there, sheltered from the sun. She's just stirring or perhaps she's in the kitchen brewing coffee or packing lunch, or in the bathroom brushing her teeth. Magpie music a brick away. As I pull away, she grows smaller and smaller and smaller still.

If I could, I would hold the everything of the horizon in an eye, my feathers lightly resting on molecules spread thin. I would use my beak as a compass to follow magnetic lines as they criss-cross and curl around the curve of the earth.

But wings are only tattooed on my shoulder blades. No matter how hard I long for liberation, or desire lightness, no plumage sprouts from skin or pierces the thin layer of flesh barely covering bone. I cannot see the world from above as you do. Cannot gain distance from the disasters we have created.

If I could I would migrate to new lands where no passport is needed. No colour noted. No baggage checked. No language demanded. No ticket booked.

I could leave all this behind.

Instead I will crochet your chorals into my walk, take them with me into the day I have just met. A blessing from you to the world, freely given.

from recent collections

'from recent collections' spotlights and celebrates the incredible breadth and acuity of contemporary Australian poetry, both in regard to poets and the publishing houses supporting this flourishing. Some poems stand alone, some with additional context from their authors or publishers. This section, which runs in each *APJ* volume, is curated by Australian Poetry's Jacinta Le Plastrier.

A remarkable debut collection by an Australian and New Zealand poet of Indo-Fijian background, the descendant of indentured labourers, *Naag Mountain* is an imagined recovery of the little-known cultural inheritance of a displaced and exploited people. Historical figures, folk characters and spirits are entwined in a narrative poem coloured by the surrealism of dreams.

'*Naag Mountain* is an exquisite work that resounds with the reminder of what can be reclaimed when a community moves towards their awakening: their dreams, their futures.'

—Eunice Andrada

'[Anjali's] work testifies to poetry's power to resist propaganda—with lush and mythic imagery, she retells stories of forced removal and oppression in her community's vocabulary.'

—Ariana Haghghi, *Meanjin*

Published by Giramondo.

Cover and design by Jenny Grigg.



A stunning new collection from one of Australia's finest poets—her most impressive work yet.

With electrifying boldness, Sarah Holland-Batt confronts what it means to be mortal in an astonishing and deeply humane portrait of a father's Parkinson's Disease, and a daughter forged by grief.

Opening and closing with startling elegies set in the charged moments before and after a death, and fearlessly probing the body's animal endurance, appetites and metamorphoses, *The Jaguar* is marked by Holland-Batt's lyric intensity and linguistic mastery, along with a stark new clarity of voice.

'*The Jaguar* is a tour de force. It will leave you dazzled and devastated. The wisdom, kindness and musical rigour of these poems is everywhere apparent. Their emotional range is considerable: intimate, sorrowing, celebratory and philosophical by turn. Sarah Holland-Batt possesses a mighty and singular talent, showcased here in all its glory.'

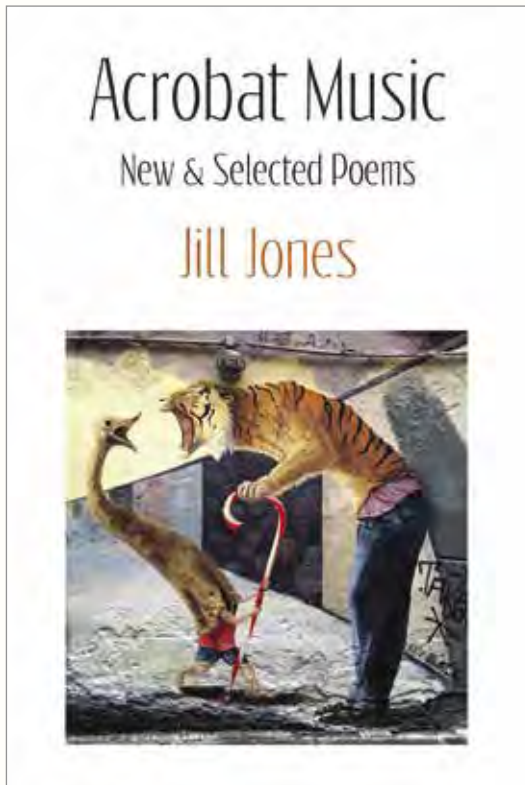
—Michelle de Kretser

Published by UQP.

Cover photograph by Staffan Widstrand.

Cover design by Josh Durham (Design by Committee).





Jill Jones is an omnivorous, attentive and exhilarating poet, admired for her seductive hauntings of urban experience and her playful rearrangements of language and page. Her work over the last three decades has fearlessly reckoned with the body and sexuality, place and the environment, the gamut of everyday life. Now, this long-awaited book showcases Jones' ambitious and resonant reworkings of the lyric, her dextrous and often witty extensions of experimental modes, her fresh cinematic eye, and her restless inventories of the planet's current disasters. Gathering work from her 13 previous volumes, plus more than 30 new poems, *Acrobat Music* is a major recasting of Jones' distinctive and invigorating contribution to contemporary poetry.

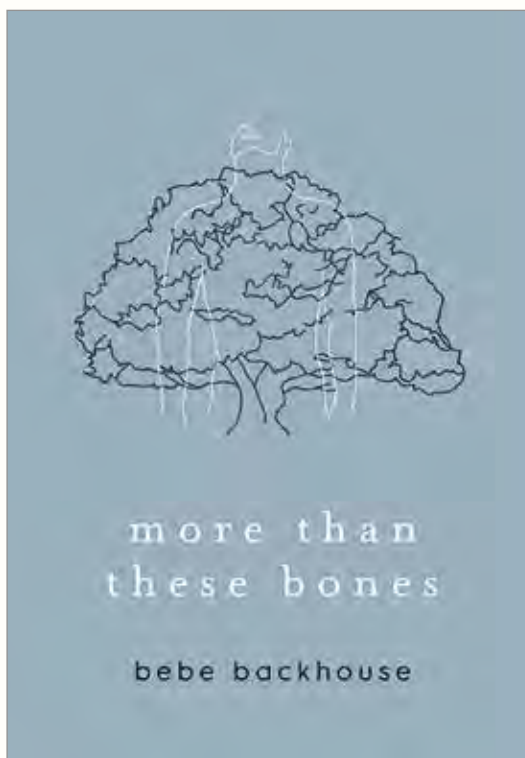
'A leading contemporary stylist who has disciplined her lyric into a rigorous and highly economical poetry of description and response.'

—Judges' comments, 2015 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards

Published by Puncher and Wattmann.

Cover image is a photograph, 'Fearful Symmetry, Berlin, 2016, by Annette Willis (a photo of street art, artist unknown).

Cover design by David Musgrave.



more than these bones is an epic and intercontinental poetry work detailing the author's journey through heartbreak and self-discovery. The book is rooted in place. Pieces land in multiple settings—the bar, the beach, the bush and sometimes, the bedroom, each location lending itself to another dimension of his story so far. The canopy of this collection stretches seamlessly from chic to ancient, from tender to tough, as Backhouse's writing offers a vital, polyphonic voice for our times.

Alongside his words are photographs and hand-drawn expressions which speckle the page, every line the tattoo of an echo. *more than these bones* is filled with a love of flesh, of others, of country and eventually, for self.

'This is a sublime work from a poet with a fresh, confronting voice.'

—Julie Janson, *Australian Book Review*

Published by Magabala Books.

Cover art by Bebe Backhouse-Oliver.

Cover design by Jo Hunt.

Sam Morley's second collection comprises poetry that is image-rich, fusing the sublime with the common. Always committed to observation as a channel into discovery, *You Do You* merges meditations on parenthood, memory, death, the natural world and the fluctuations of pop culture and the suburban grind. The primary setting is the home, be it as a father or child or as a person perplexed by the vicissitudes of humanity. These poems start from the personal while remaining detached, and often undulate from the private world into something universal and large.

'Behind the pastoral and the lyric, there is a sharp edge to Sam's poetry which is at once disturbing and beguiling. His poems begin in quiet moments on a country road or walking a dog, but always leave us in a new, stranger place. In a short time, Sam is developing into one of Australia's most exciting poets.'

—Damen O'Brien

Published by Upswell Poetry.

Cover artwork: Toby Pola, *Wanting to be invisible, furious to be ignored*, 2013.



Co-winner of the 2022 Anne Elder Award.

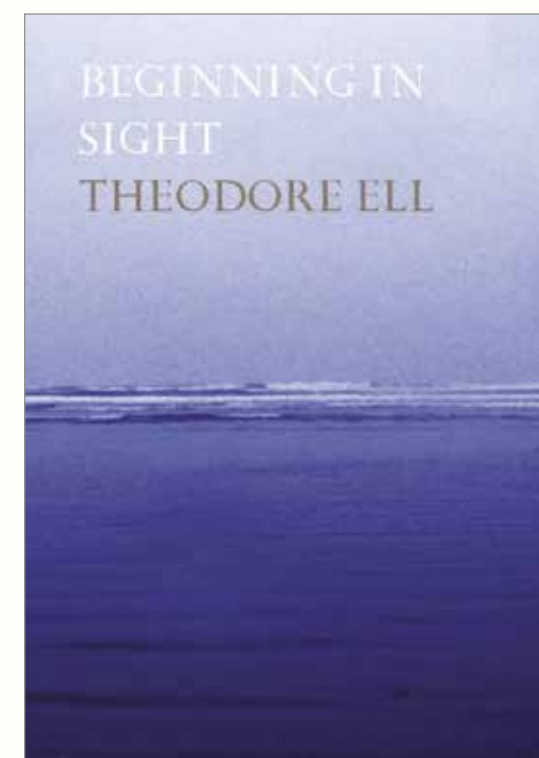
Beginning in Sight is Theodore Ell's first poetry collection. It brings together work written over more than ten years, tapping into the memories, life-stories and mirror-images that resist time and recouple bygone experience to the drifting world of today. The poems branch out from Ell's original home of Sydney into its hinterland, the coast and the Hunter, snatching moments of respite and pleasure in troubled times, before finding new bearings in the Canberra region. Haunted by the presence of vanished lives and histories, these are poems of perseverance, endurance and a past that seems to know what is coming.

'The beauty of these poems is that they hold an abundance of open, haunted space imbued with glass-sharp imagery for readers to while away many re-readings.'

—Will Druce, *Cordite*

Published by Recent Work Press.

Cover design by Recent Work Press, using the photograph 'Ocean at Oregon Coast' by Nathalie Ross, 2013, reproduced under Creative Commons attribution licence 2.0.





'Many of us have been waiting some time—too long—for Holly Isemonger's debut collection of poetry. It was worth it. *Greatest Hit* takes the lessons of the modernists and puts real human flesh on those often cold bones. Behind the often ingenious formal experimentation is a sense of play and exploration which uncovers matters alternately grave and comic, sometimes at once. As good as these poems are, there is more at stake in Isemonger's work than a teasing out of the possibilities of language; these are poems about sense and nonsense, of falling apart and holding it together, of giving up and living on—in short, about what it means, or might mean, to be a human being. What more could one ask for?'

—Chris Fleming

'Isemonger is a poet-philosopher-cum-cinematographer, worthy of cult status, a feminist auteur of the Australian nouvelle vague.'

—Keri Glastonbury

Published by Vagabond Press.

Cover image by Glenn Isemonger.



Public. Open. Space. is a collection of poetry inspired by spaces, places and situations that are controlled and contested online and in real life. Looking at firewalls and feminism, activism and apathy, *Public. Open. Space.* explores freedom and suppression, censorship and silencing, propaganda and protest, as well as the difference between being told 'no' and choosing to say it ourselves. Positioned at the intersection of poetic and digital culture, this collection explores the sense of placelessness increasingly resonant for all of us who live and work in the digital realm.

'*Public. Open. Space.* is a considered, tender, and accomplished debut from a poet to watch.'

—Maxine Beneba Clarke

Published by Fremantle Press.

Cover image: 'Binary Code Chaos Wave' by Yuri Hoyda.

Design by Anna-Maley Fadgyas (bookdesigns.com.au).

Kate Larsen

Virtual Private Network

We may as well be naked here.

Our every whispered word
between the whisper of our sheets.

Our every morning watched:
a nod in passing,

quiet notes observed.
Each (mis)placed step recorded,

all our choices overheard.
Our every moment counted

and contested, over-served.
The moment when you take my hand.

The words I use when no-one else is listening but you.
The sigh of fallen clothing on the floor.

Bebe Backhouse-Oliver

pier lane

on the night to end all nights
not a single word was spoken by either of us
it was the kind of silence
which spoke far more
than any word ever could

looking beyond your eyes
to the world within you
my mind whispered to my heart

you'll never look at him the same way

i'll no longer be
the man who runs back to you
every time you push him away
the man you hurt
but who loves you regardless

it was mumbled deep within me

if i was brave
and if i was honest
i'd tell you this –
i accept you for who you are
just as i'd accepted
everything you once gave to me
and everything you took away again

i'd say it so loud
and so clear
then you'd know it
and i'd know it
and i could never take it back

but i wasn't brave
and i wasn't honest
and all we did was look at each other
already knowing
what was needing to be said

on the night to end all nights
when not a single word was spoken
by either of us
in the silence
which spoke more than any word could
i was the first one to look away

Holly Isemonger

Nymphomaniac

Buttery light fills the cinema. Later, smell the computers, vague spices and cum. Many wonder why pictures that are available for a woman's body should be erotic. We know. Shia says he needs something that came out of their own bodies. Tissue. Litter by the bin. Days later they will find the bruises. Their shape sharpens as they become grey and blue. They live inside the cut and travel. Leathery light around three, you can see that she loves this picture. If you don't like that it was beaten, don't worry, he just found the poem on the floor tied up in some fabric. It's also a little black and blue mark—not that he wrote it to stand out, not that he filmed her like that. He lives outside the cut, and travels. He has done what he likes to do, he writes from abroad. The light is constantly changing. He wants little wounds that will take a permanent record.

Jill Jones

Misinterpretations /or The Dark Grey Outline

I move through a slanting,
footpaths erupting roots through bricks
near the mad old bus stop.
I used to know what I was thinking,
now it's a field, inside,
is it green, or grey water, horsing,
gridding, heavens bent
through the fleck.
Sometimes I wonder if I'm drinking the wrong water,
the other day I read
I had a sort of degree, but I ain't, no way Hose-Bloody-Zay.
Please, I-am-not-a-doctor,
I'm too unfashionable for that.

Even in Sydney
when days get cuter than cop cars,
as the city train smells of its electricity and cut-up vinyl,
makes you want to chisel rocks with letters,
makes you think, placing As while breathing
Hawkesbury sandstone,
oh gritty gritty something,
don't let go.

But from Greenhill Road I can see a Dark Grey Outline,
gums on the Toorak Gardens horizon
after rain pins on Portrush,
windy,
juggle juggle,
that's the bus tyres.

Tickets are eaten,
baskets savaged, cars dinking in line.
It seems average but sounds pushy
out the window,

my eyes scam down choosing the wet leaf
blown onto a white roundabout.
Something I learned when I was young,
shape is serious matter.
I am not what I'm supposed to be.
Light is spring silver
and escapes my language,
in the next lane
'fragile goods'.

Outside a North Terrace carpark
is the Ha-Ha Arrow,
pointing white blue charge grips,
tinker tinker bus blows money,
odd jangles of student housing,
arrivals not quite fusion (Go Backwards).

The second lift won't stop
at the fifth floor,
'it's worth reporting'. What, corridors?
In here, it's ice white as carpet,
closing time.
If you don't approve,
or burn, 'therefore'.
Perhaps I am Missing Pages Out Of My Life.
I've always been flaky, lost and shaky,
but never 'ponderous' over my territory,
that takes planning.
It's always been weather not
geosophy (that's so fashionable! yeah?).
I'm delicate, sandy,
unknown, please, or 'to not know',
falling without finding.

But what am I thinking, of giving up the desk,
going off-road, gravelling, dirt thrash?
Why not, given the green's mixed up,
weather rattled, promises running off
leaves as prediction pouring through vents.

The creeks are high,
snake tongues, feathers,
water calls, absolutely
and briefly,
tomorrow forks
but for now
full cold moon
and wrestling night.

I have dreamed green tiles,
walls, gaps, dirty grassy
penalty signs,
curves, yes, finally,
pink ankle
and all this air, all this.

If I'm not what I'm supposed to be
then why all this certainty,
how do I escape its cackling old Sprache?

Night in Frome Road
is there at its hour,
cold erupting through asphalt,
sight and feeling mashed with
my flaking alphabets.

Sam Morley

Home range nocturne

Somewhere up on the hill, Sellotape
straps carnations to street saplings
there are big painted letters on the road's
camber where the boy was pack hunted
and his stabbed heart lost its air, hardening
from a thin glow to flecks of tar.
I never walked that pavement's buckle
because I turned before his loose-leaf shrine
and the boy with pools at his feet stayed
out of reach under a slice of streetlamp.

As I went on, words jabbing my tongue
were *depletion* and *squander* and *waste*
they covered the field of this wine
dark morning where I walked my pup
in rags of night, starting at every Frog-
Mouth landing and leaving with its haul.
If the words turned then to *absence*
there was surely something present
bopping between tallgrass, parting
pond reeds, the vixen's pelt flaming up

embankments loose with clay stone.
And when the blades of its eyes flashed
strobic to my gut, its stainless steel
unblinking, its trot struck out toward us.
I waited, watching as my dog (with no wild
left in it) had no sense that dying
has a definitive snick and downwind the pad
of predation came calm, two fox stars
meant only for those caught seeking.
So I stayed my right to bloody an animal

the word I longed for then was *question*
asking each flare of hair, each twitch-wire
what is the value of running or staying
when the whoop of a killer comes.
And that thick arm of fire-tail drifted out
then in in the sparked air between, turning
to find another tear in world, staying low
to the ground and spiriting towards that hill
drawn to something silent before light
before the day's promise and its peril.

Sarah Holland-Batt

The Clearing

In a dark wood I find it again—
chrome luge, weathered rails.
Its wheels are sunk in clay.
It has lain a long time in the mind.
Strangled by wildflower and weed
it is no longer the thing itself but the idea of the thing:
not a gurney but grassblade and surge,
greengage roped with blossom,
streak of angelica, afterburn of aster.
It blew here one green evening—
rattled brakeless over rock, veering sideways
like a spooked animal, juddering
down culvert and hill to the clearing.
Then rewilding began—
mock orange crabbing over steel
by inch and fist, haul and ache,
honeysuckle swallowing bullet nubs of rivets,
empire of trumpet flower furring the tongue.
In the undergrowth, a storm of milkweed
beaded with mercury,
wild iris skewered by nerves of rain.
What lies beneath is not the thing
but the memory of the thing—
not the gurney
but the shape of a gurney,
not my father
but the shadow of his body,
groundcover fed by needleprick and wire of blood,
veins of sap and woodring, blossom
of his breath, vine and wreath, the red
holly and the white pine, ghost
of his hair and teeth in the moon's hangnail,
feral mouse's tail, the fir and the sable, sturdiness
of the world, moss and skullcap, rat stink
and badger reek, perfume and decay—

and underfoot, hulls of dead leaves
dry as the boats that floated a pharaoh's body
down the waterless river
freighted with beer and barley—
fuel for a sky burial, waterlily blue—
vision of a single grain
trembling on its stem, then gone again.

Turning circle

Always told he was not what school boards were looking for,
the buses took him on. An urban historian.
After all—the panel joked—he knew the streets backwards.
Like those coins turned up by workmen unearthing a mains,
he told himself, let history drip from the pay and then outgrow
the job. He had survived one interview. Cover meant plans.

But from the first day a bus heaved out under his hand
bookshelves filed away like the empty seats behind him.
He woke up to other kinds of time. Sources, unopened,
pooled around the bed, then met their due dates one by one.
The hours were numbered. His reading lens was a windscreen.
Contours and blank were drawn into routes, rostered and briefed.

Small hours would find the wheel already dished up to him,
a rim of travel corrugating his fingers.
Faces would step in from night to people his long room.
He learned the silence of early risers and latecomers.
Dawns in cloud were the best companions: the pale glimpses,
the snug chill, the westward grid a night sky that kept its stars.

Daylight was for talk—all overheard, after the fares:
the snapped business calls, old dears with memories,
young ones with nothing but the edge of their own voices.
Depot traffic bulletins never barked at him by name.
He heard that in the endless murmur of the map,
streets archiving his past in long lines, reciting the flats,

the lace bandstands, the dated school capstones, terrain covered in plans:
serenities and outbursts in the argument of homes,
surviving notes turned up from New Works Boards gone under.
A day of mind unharmed, he might climb the stairs still warm.
His building had no lift. Early riser and latecomer
there in his short room, his cleared bed of career. In dreams

he was a bright pause only, a citywide veneer.

from *Naag Mountain*

There is a salt lake in the white desert on the outskirts of Jaipur,
Rajasthan where my great-grandfather Lala was born. Each grain of
salt holds a mystery which can only be solved when you reach a fork
in the road, or an impasse. I cover my eyes with second-hand silk
and walk into the wavy granules. I hide my moons in the fabric. It
reveals more than it conceals. My imagination is a cloudy room full
of openings and closures. The desert is omniscient. The desert is a
plane on which pilgrims undress the trespass. This scene is leaking
with water.

When I am at the crossroads, I cut the reptiles from my hair. I inherited
my eyes from bus drivers and farmers and teaheads. I buried eight of
my eyes in my mother's garden. A tulsi tree flowered under the light of
the moon. I set it on fire. The tree revealed an old song from the white
desert where my eyes were forged.

My effigy laughs and turns her face upside down. I have grown eight
arms against my will. I am juggling: a mirage of a sacred mountain
first seen by Indo-Scythian nomads in the white desert, a burning
tulsi tree, Super 8 footage of desert flowers in the wind, a handful of
salt, a hammer, a sickle, a seven-headed choir of snakes, a cassette
tape with field recordings of jackals at dusk. In the middle of the
conversation with my effigy, my tongue becomes stuck to the sky.

Acknowledgements

Manisha Anjali's 'from Naag Mountain' appeared in *Nag Mountain* (Giramondo, 2024).

Bebe Backhouse-Oliver's 'pier lane' appeared in *more than these bones* (Magabala, 2023).

Theodore Ell's 'Turning circle' appeared in *Beginning in Sight* (Recent Work Press, 2022).

Juan Garrido-Salgado's 'The Moon on my Verses' has been longlisted for the 2024 Grieve Project, Hunter Writers Centre.

Sarah Holland-Batt's 'The Clearing' appeared in *The Jaguar* (UQP, 2022).

Holly Isemonger's 'Nymphomaniac' appeared in *Greatest Hit* (Vagabond, 2023).

Jill Jones' 'Misinterpretations /or The Dark Grey Outline' appeared in *Acrobat Music, New & Selected Poems* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2023).

Kate Larsen's 'Virtual Private Network' appeared in *Public. Open. Space.* (Fremantle Press, 2023).

Sam Morley's 'Home range nocturne' appeared in *You Do You* (Upswell, 2023).

Australian Poetry and Nature, Art & Habitat *Residency*

An ECO-Laboratory of Multidisciplinary Practice

Most years, during the European Summer, Australian Poetry and the **Nature, Art & Habitat Residency**, An ECO-Laboratory of Multidisciplinary Practice partner on a poetry residency. Located in Taleggio Valley, Bergamo, Italy, this creates the opportunity for a cross-disciplinary cohort to spent a month of creative community in the astonishing environs of this area with the AP/NAHR resident being part of this for a month. This partnership returns in 2025 after a rest year in 2024.



Photo: Doe McAndrew



Photo: Doe McAndrew

Lou Garcia-Dolnik

residency report

While in Sottochiesa, I took advantage of the Valley's breathtaking surrounds to develop a poetics that integrates place-based research with my pursuits in voice, tone and lyricism.

Of note were our group hikes to surrounding villages and time spent with local knowledge custodian Angelo Locatelli whose enormous generosity and warm-hearted approach to sharing local agrarian traditions and technologies enriched my understanding of the Valley's social and ecological constitutions. The resultant work reflected both the time I spent absorbing the Valley's regional character and the relational context of the residency, which hosted visual artists, architects and filmmakers: the centrepiece of my work, an addition to more 'traditional' poems, was a three-dimensional poetic triptych which I made to move, sail-like, with the wind. In that work, I took after my co-residents whose diverse practices encouraged me to explore poetry's spatial possibilities beyond and above the page. NAHR has marked a change in my practice away from the static (digital and printed) document towards installed work that is site-responsive. I'm grateful to my co-residents, Sara Invernizzi and the many migrant communities who call Sottochiesa home who, in turn, made me feel like I could make a temporary home in the Valley.

tell me of an origin of interstices

Window. From the old Norse *vindr*, wind, and *auga*, eye.

A threshold does not shut things out, but is the aperture that opens the world to the possibility of human witness.

Mediation: not a boundary but a field to be crossed with a veil in front, like a procession of grievers.

See this.

The wind itself is not enough. I must open my eyes and see through to look.

tell me of time

In Victoria Chang's obituary for bees, the bees born 268 million years ago in the Philippines perish in Alaska on April 26, 2217 by calving iceberg. The bees have not yet died. They are entrusted to history's terminal potential.

The future is beyond the mind's horizon, but April 26, 2217 is a date that has happened, will happen, in a world where life can be extinguished by the flight of a glacier from a glacier. The flight path a bee draws is diffuse and sublime

not destination, but *between*.

The oldest bee fossil is encased in New Jersey amber on the Atlantic Coastal plain. A stingless honey bee, it settles space, temporal coloniser, inert.

For the bee to uninhabit its native airspace, it must be enclosed in a compound of materials. If you picked up the amber, you would not hold the bee, but the bee encased in a domus that renders it alive to the eye.

Things which are alive to the eye are not alive to the senses.

The fossil as what remains of the past is an error of perception:

Time moves forward like a dirge, leaving no survivors.

tell me of request

Seeds in the Valley, spread by wind.

The passed-on are said to be in closer relation to the storm
than those still with their feet tethered to ground.

Herbs are prayed into design like apparitions, appeased by trust.

The dead are not consultative but the wind is amenable. Though
there are greater agents: Full-scale Emergency.

Luck.

Weather, then, entreaty becomes. A faith of divine flight.

There is only so much whimsy left to science.

It is much more difficult to ask of someone what you want.

tell me of declaration

Gravity collapses a flag along its diagonal,
while wind tends to stretch it out, folds
forming like a geology at an oblique angle to its length.
Wind is mercurial, it does not always elevate, though a flag
hanging flaccid like a limp dick is still a flag that signals.

On the moon, five of the Apollo missions' six flags stand
against the vicissitudes of an earthless gravity. The naked eye
cannot sight them, nor a telescope, neither amateur nor industrial.

A flag is a hieroglyph of nation with which some are more familiar
than others.

A flag is not only a flag, but an anagram for documentation,
an internment of waiting, lawful beating and lawful death.

In Rome, the vexillum was hoisted, Atlas-like, on the back
of the bearer who became coterminous with the hoist,
a libertied eagle on a golden standard. Practically two-dimensional,
empire a heavy burden to shoulder, transmogrified
into something friable, beholden to wind.

The sovereign would rarely expose his flag and his person together.
The flag is subsumed into the figure of the sovereign as a moveable
signifier of conquest.

Veni, vidi, vici – sight is enough in the imperial imagination

to occasion destruction of the highest proportions.

Imagine: looking up to the cosmos and hallucinating *ozon*.

tell me of music

Birds and the harmonic series.

Science has only now discovered the hermit thrush sings
in a key the Western classical tradition recognises as 'music'.

In the 21st century, a bird can now sing on key.

The randomness of birdsong is randomness to no-one
who has loved with a language of revolutionary grammar.

Science's speculation that song must be 'biological',
and not cultural, disaggregates our most mammalian instinct
from the beauty of relation.

Some movements of a draught's passage in its journey beyond me

leaves a ringing I must sit down to body.

credits

Contributors

Eunice Andrada is a poet and educator. Her first poetry collection *Flood Damages* (Giramondo Publishing, 2018) won the Anne Elder Award and was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Poetry and the Dame Mary Gilmore Award. *TAKE CARE* (Giramondo Publishing, 2021) is her second poetry collection, and was shortlisted for The Stella Prize, the Multicultural NSW Award and the Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry. Born and raised in the Philippines, she currently lives and writes on unceded Gadigal Land.

Manisha Anjali is the author of *Naag Mountain* (Giramondo, 2024). She is the founder of *Neptune*, a research and documentation platform for dreams, visions and hallucinations. She has lived in Fiji, Aotearoa and Australia.

Sean Ashford is a white cis hetero male who grew up on Serrano land (current Southern California) and now lives on Kurna land (south Adelaide). I teach and learn at Willunga Waldorf School and cohabit with Rachel, two children Oliver and Eleanor and two animals, Alicia (identifies as cat) and Claude (identifies as protector).

Bebe Backhouse-Oliver is a Bardi Jawi award-winning author, poet and illustrator. Beginning his creative practice as a classical pianist and composer, Bebe was a West Australian Young Person of the Year before producing and directing theatre, dance, public art and festivals across Australia, Aotearoa and Europe. An experienced leader in Aboriginal advancement and self-determination, he has collaborated with international organisations including Aesop, Global Citizen, and World Pride to celebrate Blak stories, communities and identities. Bebe's debut poetry collection, *more than these bones* (Magabala Books, 2023) received widespread acclaim for its authentic and emotional representation of mental health and human experience. A writer, facilitator and speaker living on the unceded land of the Kulin peoples, he is committed to the empowerment and visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and creators. Bebe is the Artistic Director and CEO of Blak & Bright First Nations Literary Festival, and the Deputy Chair of Magabala Books. His highly celebrated and widely published work encompasses love, loss, identity, Aboriginal and gay existence, place and Country.

Diana Baric lives on Kurna land in Tarntanya/Adelaide, South Australia. She has recently completed a bachelor's degree in writing, publishing and digital media, and works as a communications officer in the disability sector. She loves books, writing, gaming and volunteers as a copywriter for Keep Australia Beautiful where she writes about environmental sustainability.

J. S. Barling is an Australian writer whose poetry has appeared in *Overland* and *Blue Bottle Journal*.

Elena Betros López is a maker of experimental moving image and a writer of poetry. She works with embodied approaches in language and moving image, weaving biographical references with theoretical and empirical research of place and ecologies. Her work has been shown in galleries, cinemas and non-conventional art spaces. Her writing has been published in poetry journals, as well as in exhibition catalogues and visual arts journals. Her current research is examining a relationship between the production of tides in the southern ocean and the embodied experience of desire.

J V Birch is a British-born Australian poet living on Kurna land in Adelaide. Her poems have been published across Australia, Canada, the UK and US, including with Red Room Poetry, the Hunter Writers Centre, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Plumwood Mountain*, *Magma*, *StylusLit*, *Cordite*, *Juniper*, *Arc* and *Mslaxia*. Ginninderra Press have published four of her chapbooks and her first full-length collection, *more than here*. Her chapbook, *ice cream 'n' tar*, was a winner in the James Tate International Poetry Prize 2022 and published by SurVision Books. Her poem 'Turning' was nominated for the 2023 Forward Prize for Best Single Poem.

Merlinda Bobis is an award-winning novelist, short story writer, poet and dramatist. She received the Christina Stead Prize, Steele Rudd Award and Philippine National Book Award. She composes songs as 'breather'. merlindabobis.com

Daniel Browning is a Bundjalung and Kullilli journalist, radio broadcaster, documentary maker, sound artist and writer. Currently, he is Editor Indigenous Radio with the ABC and produces and presents *The Art Show* for ABC RN. He is the author of *Close to the Subject* (Magabala Books, 2023) which won the Indigenous Writing Prize at the 2024 Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Zhi Cham is an experimental multidisciplinary artist working across poetry, exhibition and performance. His book of poetry, *blur by the* (2019), was published by Subbed In and was recognised through the Anne Elder Award, Small Press Book of the Year Award, and Mary Gilmore Award among others. They live and work on unceded Ngunnawal and Ngambri country.

Luoyang Chen is the author of *Flow* (Red River/Centre for Stories, 2023).

Sally Chik (she/her) is sometimes a writer, sometimes a librarian, and always queer. Her poems (and a singular short story) have been published in *Australian Love Poems*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *FourW* and more. She has a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Hons) and Masters of Information Studies. She writes on Darug country.

Dave Clark is a writer-poet with chronic fatigue syndrome, living in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). He works as a counsellor, creating space for stories of significance. He won the 2022 NT Literary Award (Poetry) and has works published in *Meanjin*, *Red Room Poetry*, *Bramble*, *Westerly*, *Mantissa* and *swim meet lit mag*. @DaveClarkWriter

Jennifer Compton lives in Melbourne and is a poet and playwright who also writes prose.

Ion Corcos was born in Sydney, Australia in 1969. He has been published in *Cordite*, *Meanjin*, *Westerly*, *Plumwood Mountain*, *Southword*, *Wild Court*, *riddlebird*, and other journals. Ion is a nature lover and a supporter of animal rights. He is the author of *A Spoon of Honey* (Flutter Press, 2018).

AJ D'Costa is an artist, poet, writer, mental health professional and dharma practitioner of Goan-Indian heritage. Her creative work explores the diasporic experience, modern day pilgrimage, and heart practices for a broken world. She has been part of the Australian South Asian Centre's *Brown Women Poetry* showcase, *Red Room Poetry's Poetry Month 2024* calendar, and *Sonic Poetry Festival*. She hosts the Spotify podcast *Beneath The Words* and has been published by *New Internationalist*, *We Are Explorers*, *Tree Paper Gallery* and now, *Australian Poetry Journal*. She currently lives, works and creates on the unceded lands of the Kulin nations in Naarm/Melbourne. Find her @ajdcosta.creative

Merinda Dutton is a Gumbaynggirr and Barkindji woman, writer, critic, storyteller and the co-founder of Blackfulla Bookclub, an online community for First Nations stories.

Quinn Eades is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at The University of Melbourne. He is the author of *Rallying* (2017) and *all the beginnings: a queer autobiography of the body* (2015). Quinn's creative research is grounded in experimental writing practices and works across/through trans, queer, and feminist theories of the body, poetry and life writing.

Theodore Ell was born in Sydney in 1984 and now lives in Canberra. He studied literature and modern languages at the University of Sydney, spent periods in Italy for research and was awarded a PhD in 2010. From 2018 to 2021, Ell lived in Lebanon. His essay 'Façades of Lebanon,' about witnessing the Lebanese revolution of 2019 and narrowly surviving the Beirut port explosion of 2020, won the 2021 Calibre Essay Prize. A book about his experiences, *Lebanon Days*, was published in July 2024. Ell's first poetry collection *Beginning in Sight* shared the 2022 Anne Elder Award. Ell is an Honorary Lecturer in literature at the Australian National University.

Michael Farrell's books include *Googlecholia*, *Family Trees*, and *I Love Poetry* (Giramondo Publishing). Chapters on the nineteenth century, and on colonial ballads, are forthcoming in the *Cambridge Companion to Australian Poetry*, ed. Ann Vickery, and the *Cambridge History of Australian Poetry*, eds. Vickery and Philip Mead. Originally from Bombala, NSW, Michael currently lives in Carlton, Melbourne.

Holly Friedlander Liddicoat has previously been published in *Cordite*, *Overland*, *Rabbit*, *Southerly*, *The Lifted Brow* and *Voiceworks*, among others. She's edited poetry for *Voiceworks* and the *UTS Writers' Anthology*. Rabbit Poetry published her first collection *CRAVE*, which was shortlisted for the 2019 Mary Gilmore Award. In 2022 she undertook a Bundanon residency and in 2023 her unpublished manuscript *Doghouse* was shortlisted for the Helen Anne Bell Bequest.

Lou Garcia-Dolnik is a poet living and working on sovereign GadigalWangal land. Their work has been awarded Second Prize in the *Overland* Judith Wright Poetry Prize, a place on the shortlist for the Blake Prize, Val Vallis Awards, *LIMINAL* Non-Fiction Prize, the Kat Muscat Fellowship, and an Academy of American Poets University Prize from the University of Texas at Austin. An alumnus of the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity's Emerging Writers Intensive, they were the 2023 recipient of the Australian Poetry/NAHR Eco-Poetry Fellowship and recently attended Tin House's Summer Workshop in the poetry faculty. They sit on the board of *Runway Journal* as Editor and Secretary.

Juan Garrido-Salgado is a poet, translator and human rights activist. He immigrated to Australia from Chile in 1990, fleeing the regime that burned his poetry and imprisoned and tortured him for his political activism. He has published eight books of poetry, and his poems have been widely translated. He reviewed *Supervivid Depastoralism* by John Kinsella for *Plumwood Mountain: An Australian and International Journal of Ecopoetry and Ecopoetics*. I acknowledge we are on the land of the Kurna People and pay respect to ancestors past & present.

Katerina Gibson is not a poet. Her debut collection of short stories *Women I Know* won the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction and the Steele Rudd Award. Her first novel *The Temperature* is forthcoming with Scribner.

Kerry Greer is a poet and writer based in Western Australia. She received the Venie Holmgren Prize for Environmental Poetry in 2021. Kerry has been shortlisted for the Calibre Essay Prize, the Stuart Hadow Short Story Prize, the Woollahra Digital Literary Award, the Newcastle Poetry Prize, the ACU Poetry Prize, the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize, the Bruce Dawe Poetry Prize, and more. Her debut poetry collection, *The Sea Chest*, was published by Recent Work Press in 2023. As a widow and solo parent, Kerry has a particular interest in writing about grief and what comes after loss.

Sarah Holland-Batt is an award-winning poet, editor and critic, and a Professor of Creative Writing at QUT. Her first book, *Aria* (UQP, 2008), was the recipient of a number of national literary awards, including the Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize, the Judith Wright Poetry Prize and the Anne Elder Award, and was shortlisted in both the New South Wales and Queensland Premiers' Literary Awards for Poetry. Her latest book, *The Jaguar*, won the 2023 Stella Prize and *The Australian Book of the Year 2022*, was shortlisted for the 2023 Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry and longlisted for the 2023 Griffin Poetry Prize. Her second book, *The Hazards* (UQP, 2015), won the 2016 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry, and was shortlisted for the Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize in the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, the Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature John Bray Memorial Prize, the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards and the Queensland Literary Awards. She is the recipient of a Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship, the W.G. Walker Memorial Fulbright Scholarship, residencies at Yaddo and MacDowell colonies in the United States, the Marten Bequest Travelling Scholarship, an Asialink Literature residency in Japan, and an Australia Council Literature Residency at the B.R. Whiting Studio in Rome, among other honours.

Coco X. Huang is a Chinese-Australian writer, musician and scientist. She primarily writes fiction and poetry and enjoys creating interdisciplinary hybrid works that challenge and extend conventional forms. She is a Toolkits: Digital Storytelling, Faber Writing Academy and CitizenWrites alumna and has performed at the National Young Writers' Festival, Boundless Festival and Sydney Festival. Her works were shortlisted for the Blake Poetry Prize, Booranga Prize for Prose and Woollahra Digital Literary Prize and have appeared in *Voiceworks*, *Meanjin*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Cordite*, *Going Down Swinging*, *Meniscus* and *fourW*.

Holly Isemonger is a poet from Gerringong, NSW. She was the joint winner of the Judith Wright Poetry Prize. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Cordite*, *Blackbox Manifold*, *Overland* and *Westerly*. She is the author of *Greatest Hit* (Vagabond Press) and the chapbooks *Hip Shifts* (If A Leaf Falls Press) and *Deluxe Paperweight* (Stale Objects dePress).

Andy Jackson is a poet, creative writing teacher at the University of Melbourne, and a Patron of Writers Victoria. He was the inaugural Writing the Future of Health Fellow, has co-edited disability-themed issues of *Southerly* and *Australian Poetry Journal*, and is on the editorial team for disability poetry journal *Sunder*. He has featured at literary events and arts festivals across Australia, and on ABC's Radio National and the 7.30 Report. Andy's latest poetry collection is *Human Looking*, which won the ALS Gold Medal and the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Poetry. He writes and rests on Dja Dja Wurrung country.

Eric Jiang is a queer Chinese-Australian writer based in Sydney. He's interested in exploring intense, toxic, beautiful non-romantic relationships in whatever form they take, playing with form to create tender, intimate and joyful work.

Jill Jones lives on unceded Kurna land. Her latest book is *Acrobat Music: New and Selected Poems*, short-listed for the 2024 John Bray Poetry Prize and long-listed for the 2024 ALS Gold Medal. Other recent books include *Wild Curious Air*, winner of the 2021 Wesley Michel Wright Prize, *A History Of What I'll Become*, and *Viva the Real*.

Abbra Kotlarczyk was raised on Bundjalung Country in the subtropical ruins of a decommissioned banana plantation. She makes art, curates, reads, writes, edits, parents and gardens—sometimes all at once—in an attempt to outmanoeuvre the forces that pit us against enmeshment. Like Jackie Wang, she is also a library rat. Unlike Jackie Wang, she is not an assistant (or any other kind of) professor. A poem of hers won the 2022 *Overland* Judith Wright Poetry Prize. She lives on Wurundjeri Woiewurrung Country in Naarm/Melbourne.

Kate Larsen (she/her) is a writer and arts leader currently based on Wurundjeri Country in Naarm/Melbourne. Her work has been published by *The Relationship is the Project*, *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *Voice&Verse* and anthologies, magazines and arts organisations in Australia, Asia and the UK. One of Australia's best-known social media poets, her alter ego Katie Keys wrote and posted a daily #tinylittlepoem for more than a decade. Her debut collection of poetry, *Public. Open. Space.*, was published by Fremantle Press in 2023. @KateLarsenKeys

Debbie Lim received the 2022 Bruce Dawe National Poetry Prize. She was short-listed for the 2022 Peter Porter Poetry Prize. Her chapbook is *Beastly Eye* (Vagabond Press). Her first full-length collection, *Bathypelagia*, will be published by Cordite Books in 2025. She was born in Sydney, where she lives on Darramuragal land.

Tim Loveday is a poet, writer and educator. His work explores class, masculinity, rurality and climate collapse. In 2023, he won the Venie Holmgren Environmental Poetry Award, came 2nd in The Kyogle Poetry Prize, and was shortlisted for the David Harold Tribe Poetry Prize. In 2022, he won the Dorothy Porter Poetry Award. In 2021, he was highly commended in the Southern Cross Short Story Award. His work has been widely published. Tim is the verse editor for XR's Creative Hub and the director of Curate | Poetry. He teaches Poetry and Performance at RMIT.

Lian Low (she/they) writes across spoken word, fiction and creative non-fiction and was a previous *Peril* editor. Find them at: lianlow.weebly.com

Fleur Lyamuya Beaupert's poems appear in *Red Noise Collective Journal*, *#EnbyLife Journal*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Resilience (Mascara Literary Review* anthology) and elsewhere. Their prose can be found in *Speculative City's Afrofuturism* issue and *Science Write Now's Disability & the Body* issue. In 2021 they received the Charles Rischbieth Jury Poetry Prize.

Lay Maloney is a young storyteller of the Gumbaynggirr and Gunggandji nations and South Sea Islander heritage based on Dunghutti Country.

Josephine Mead is a writer, visual artist and curator, working on Wurundjeri Country/Dja Dja Wurrung Country. She creates multidisciplinary work to address personal notions of support. She has just finished writing *I Sea See / I Her Hear*—a book of poetry charting her relationship with her wife, using the sea and ancient poet Sappho as metaphor. She has exhibited widely, in Australia and abroad and has undertaken residency programs in regional Victoria, Mexico, Portugal, Turkey, Germany and Greece. She co-founded Co-Publishing and is the Community Coordinator at Blindside Gallery. <http://www.josephinemead.com>

Scott-Patrick Mitchell was Highly Commended in the 2024 Blake Poetry Prize. Their debut poetry collection *Clean* (Upswell Publishing, 2022) was shortlisted for The Prime Minister's Literary Awards, The WA Premier's Book Awards and The Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

Sam Morley has been published in various journals and has been shortlisted in the Montreal International Poetry Prize. He is the 2022 recipient of the Tina Kane Emergent Writer Award at the Mildura Writer's Festival. His collections include *Earshot* (Puncher and Wattmann) and *You Do You* out now through Upswell.

Emily Munro-Harrison is a Wiradjuri woman, who lives on unceded Kulin Country in Naarm. She has performed and published her work in a range of places including: Collective Spirit: First Nation Poetry Residency, the Emerging Writers Festival, Blak and Bright Festival and Yirramboi. Emily is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

Thuy On is Reviews and Literary Editor of *ArtsHub*. She has two collections of poetry published by UWAP: *Turbulence* (2020) and *Decadence* (2022). Her third, *Essence*, will be released in 2025.

Born and raised in Italy, **Stefania Panella** made the life-changing move to Australia in 2016 to teach Italian in secondary schools. Today, she proudly embraces dual Italian and Australian citizenship. Her journey into poetry began early, inspired by her mother who instilled in her and her siblings a deep love for poetic expression. Poetry for Stefania has become not just a creative outlet, but also a way to deeply connect with herself and others, aiming to inspire and empower readers through her words. Alongside poetry, Stefania expresses herself through singing and songwriting, blending melody with verse.

Indrani Perera (she/her) is a Sri Lankan/German/Australian poet living on unceded Wurundjeri Country. She is editor of the *Pocketry Almanack* and author of *Defenestration* and *pas de deux*. Her poetry has been widely anthologised, shortlisted for major Australian awards and published in Australian and international literary journals. www.indraniperera.com.

Felicity Plunkett is a poet and critic living on Wangal land. Her books are *A Kinder Sea* (UQP), *Vanishing Point* (UQP) and *Seastrands* (Vagabond). She edited *Thirty Australian Poets* (UQP). Felicity has a PhD from the University of Sydney and was Poetry Editor with University of Queensland Press for nine years.

Anna Quercia-Thomas is a queer Hispanic American writer and academic currently based in Western Australia. She writes poetry and speculative fiction about found family, queer romance, and connection in dark times. Her work is featured widely in literary magazines and journals, such as *New Words Press*, *Haven Speculative*, and *Overland*. She is the third place winner of the 2023 International Proverse Poetry Prize.

Kathryn Reese was born on the Sunshine Coast on Kabi Kabi land and now lives on Peramangk land in South Australia. She works in medical science and writes poetry and flash fiction. Her work can be found in *Glassworks*, *Kelp Journal*, *Paperbark*, and *Neoperennial Press Heroines Anthology*.

Benjamin Rendell is a botanist and poet based on unceded Wurundjeri land in Naarm. Benjamin's work is uncentred, and often in touch with non-human ecologies. He is currently preparing an honours thesis on the loss of late-lying snowpatches from the alpine landscapes of Jaithmatang country.

Tess Ritchie is from Ōtepoti (Dunedin), and usually lives in Naarm (Melbourne). She is currently doing her MA at the International Institute of Modern Letters in Pōneke (Wellington). She has poetry in *Sweet Mammalian*.

Paris Rosemont is an Asian-Australian poet and author of poetry collection *Banana Girl* (WestWords, 2023), shortlisted by the *Association for the Study of Australian Literature* for the 2024 Mary Gilmore Award for a first volume of poetry. Paris's poetry has won awards both locally and internationally, including first place in the Hammond House Publishing Origins Poetry Prize 2023 (UK) and shortlisted for the International Proverse Poetry Prize 2023 (Hong Kong). Paris takes delight in bringing her poetry to life through multi-disciplinary modes of expression, including theatrical performance. Her second poetry collection, *Barefoot Poetess*, is due for release in March 2025. She may be found on Instagram @msparisrose, Facebook www.facebook.com/parisrosemont or at www.parisrosemont.com

Samuel Samba is a writer of poetry & other works of art. Samuel's works have been previously published in *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Australian Access Poetry*, *Westerly*, *PRISM*, *Singapore Unbound Magazine*, *swim meet lit mag*, *Hills Hoist Magazine* & elsewhere. Samuel got an honorable mention in the recent 2022 Christopher Hewitt Award in Poetry.

Dr Elfie Shiosaki is Noongar and Yawuru academic and storyteller from the southwest region of Australia, contributing to community education about human rights through her award-winning Indigenous storytelling practices.

Alicia Sometimes is a poet and broadcaster. She has performed her poetry at many venues, festivals and events around the world. In 2023 she received ANAT's Synapse Artist Residency and co-created an art installation for Science Gallery Melbourne's exhibition, *Dark Matters*. Her new book is *Stellar Atmospheres*.

Andrew Sutherland (he/they) is a Queer Poz (PLHIV) writer and performance-maker currently based on unceded Wurundjeri land. His debut poetry collection *Paradise* (point of transmission) was published by Fremantle Press in 2022, and his poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction can be found in a range of publications, including *Westerly*, *Island*, *Overland*, *Portside Review*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Running Dog*, *EXHALE: an anthology of Queer voices from Singapore*, *Best of Australian Poems*, and *Hello! Keanu*, among others.

Saaro Umar is a writer, poet, artist, support worker and herbalist. Her work has been published widely.

Alison Whittaker is a Gomeri writer and academic.

Iona Winter (Waitaha/Kāi Tahu) is a poet, essayist, storyteller and editor, who lives in Inangahua County on Aotearoa New Zealand's southern West Coast. ionawinter.com

Alexis West has worked as a dancer, choreographer, performer, voice talent, writer, director, producer, researcher, dental assistant, parent, poet, theatre-maker, filmmaker, collaborator. Birri Gubba, Wakka Wakka, South Sea Islander, caucasian Woman living on Kurna Country. Alexis is passionate about sharing her unique perspectives and observations on oppression, diversity and collaboration.

panda wong is a poet and editor who lives and works in Narrm. She works with poetry across sound, film, performance and digital spaces. With a focus on collaboration, her practice circles around the void. Her first chapbook, *angel wings dumpster fire*, and her first EP, *salmon cannon me into the abyss*, were released in mid-2022. She also co-edited *Best of Australian Poems 2023*.

Ouyang Yu is an award-winning poet and novelist. His first novel, *The Eastern Slope Chronicle*, won the 2004 South Australian Festival Award for Innovation in Writing. His third novel, *The English Class*, won the 2011 NSW Premier's Award, and his 14th collection of poetry, *Terminally Poetic* (2020), won the Judith Wright Calanthe Award for a Poetry Book in the 2021 Queensland Literary Awards. He was shortlisted for the Writer's Prize in the 2021 Melbourne Prize for Literature and won the Fellowship from Creative Australia in late 2021 for writing a documentary novel, now complete in three volumes. And his eighth novel, *All the Rivers Run South*, was published in December 2023 by Puncher & Wattmann, which is also publishing his ninth novel, *The Sun at Eight or Nine*, in 2024, and his first collection of short stories, *The White Cockatoo Flowers*, is out in early 2024 with Transit Lounge Publishing.

Joanne Zou is an occasional writer living and thinking on Wurundjeri land. Joanne is part of a recently-launched podcast about Doctor Who, called *New Who Review*. She likes pop music, all kinds of tea, and the idea of hope.

Guest Editor

Ellen van Neerven is an award-winning writer and editor of Mununjali Yugambeh and Dutch heritage. They have authored two poetry collections, *Throat* and *Comfort Food*, one work of fiction, *Heat and Light*, and a nonfiction collection called *Personal Score: Sport, Culture, Identity*, which received the 2024 Victorian Premier's Prize for non-fiction. *Throat* received a significant three awards at the 2021 NSW Premiers Literary Awards including Book of the Year while *Heat and Light* won the 2013 David Unaipon Award and the 2015 Dobbie Literary Award. Ellen's debut play *swim* premiered on Gadigal land at Carriageworks in July 2024. They were born and live on unceded Yagera and Turrbal dhagun.

Guest Artist

Bella Li is the author of *Argosy* (2017), *Lost Lake* (2018), and *Theory of Colours* (2021), published by Vagabond Press. Her work has won the Victorian and NSW Premiers' prizes for poetry, and an Australian Book Designers' Association award for book design.

