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TEXT poetry

Ana Constantinou

how to write

the Ocean said

risk it

be a skater

jumping

flying

flinging yourself

down a flight

of stairs

in opposition

to the odds

for joy

for being alive

be daring

disobedient

align

with the cosmos

for the thrill

of the miraculous

Based on an interview with Ocean Vuong by David Perell

Ana Constantinou is an emerging writer living on Bunurong land, Australia. She is fond of a perfectly made cup of tea, is worried about the rise of fascism globally, and years ago lived in an ashram. Her work has been: runner up and finalist in the Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize 2026; finalist in the fRiction Fall Poetry Prize 2025; commended in the Ada Cambridge Biographical Prose Prize 2025; commended in the Liquid Amber Press Poetry Prize 2024; and published in various journals, including Cordite Poetry Review *and* Locative.

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TEXT poetry

Edward Caruso

Epitaph

Eventually I'll leave behind
all my verses, float off to a light
or dark cold, leave what is mostly unfinished
to the judgements of those who'll
sooner or later float to their own star

Centuries after my many searches
for sharper metaphors,
someone may chance
upon my solipsistic I's and claim
that my creativity was a cover-up

Most likely, what little I knew
while here will diminish,
my voice one among many
in pleasing the dozens
who were part of the live audiences I enjoyed,
or who accompanied me in literary journals,
my work somewhere out there
bereft of its departed creator

The many others with or after me
who'll further innovate with their languages

Those who follow
to be followed

Edward Caruso has been published in a number of journals. These include A Voz Limpia, Australian Multilingual Writing Project, *'La Bottega della Poesia'* (La Repubblica, *Italy*), Burrow, Communion, Kalliope X, Mediterranean Poetry, Meniscus, P76, StylusLit, TEXT, Unusual Work *and* Well-Known Corners: Poetry on the Move*. His third collection of poems,* What Distance Means*, was published by Hybrid Publishers in 2025. He has featured on 3CR's Spoken Word program. Since 2024, he has co-judged the Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize.*

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TEXT poetry

Ann Shenfield

Landscape within a landscape

for Beverley Forner

She says—
It made me think of that artist
in Japan who always drew snow
and only ever used white

He became so obsessed because the shades
were never exactly as he saw them
that he decided to create a *white* of his own

Then I started to think
about the Hazara man, lost for 13 days
alone in the bush with no food

How he said he used to talk to his god

in his solitude, he recalled saying

—I've accepted this journey You've created for me

And after a week he found a remote hut

where someone had left two muesli bars

—which were all that kept him alive

She says—

I was thinking of this while I was drawing

what looks like a landscape

but it's just lines drawn in charcoal on white linen

~~She says —~~

I was focused like someone

obsessed or possessed

—lost in the wilderness of my construct

Ann Shenfield has worked as an animation filmmaker, illustrator and writer. Her animated films have received various prizes including selection to the Official Competition in Berlin. Her poetry has also received numerous prizes. Ann's book A Treatment *(Upswell Publishing) was listed in* The Age *Best Books 2023. She is a practising psychoanalyst (Candidate) and member of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis.*

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TEXT poetry

Edith Speers

Translating the Translator

Two lines from *Twin in Clouds* by Boris Pasternak
as translated by Ronald Hingley
on page 34 of *Pasternak: A Biography* ─

"Through malignant tenebrosities' trans-Lethean miasmas
I espy my poop-based twin inopportunely asthma-stricken"

How about:
Through poisonous fog from across the River of Death
I see my twin self gagging, gasping for breath

Edith Speers was born in Canada and emigrated to Australia after university. Her poetry has been published in major Australian journals, numerous anthologies, and several Canadian, U.K. and American journals (e.g., The Dalhousie Review*,* Acumen*,* Antipodes*). She has won literary awards for poetry and short stories and is the author of five books of poetry.*

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TEXT prose

Simmone Howell

'I roll around in myself…':
Preparations for writing your teenage memoir

1. Stop.

2. Think about it.

3. Do you really want to go back to "the physical, psychic, and social abjection of the teenage body seeking meaning and value in a culture that places that body in a liminal space between childhood protection and adult responsibility"[i]

4. The short answer is that you're not sure but you hope writing the thing will help you find out. (NB: Maybe don't call it 'the thing'.)

5. The long answer is harder to pin down. It's about the reminiscence bump and nostalgia and disquiet. Lately you've been thinking that mid-life is just a straight-up haunting. Everything is tangled in a cat's cradle of time and place: outer suburbia, the 1980s, pre-internet boredom, the performance of girlhood. "Paint your demon!" Lynda Barry urges. "Come on! Don't you want to try it?"[ii]

6. Beginnings are beautiful. All the doors are open. Make like Montaigne: "Others... they always go forward; as for me, I roll around in myself."[iii]

7. Buy an A3 sketchbook and coloured pens. Keep the receipts for tax purposes. Take your equipment somewhere quiet. If at home remove from your sightline any

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Creative Works Editors: Nigel Krauth & Anthony Lawrence

evidence of adult life: bills, fitballs, mirrors, photos of children. Close your eyes and travel back in your mind.

8. Barry Humphries once said his earliest memory was listening to a wind-up gramophone playing *Oh Mona* by British jazz singer Nat Gonellawas[iv]. Your earliest memory is from kindergarten, where you were troubled by the fact that the toilet stalls didn't have doors. Your son's earliest memory is of crawling through a house that had no floor (it was getting restumped). The human brain is wild: our early memories processed in pieces, symbolically rendered in future dreams.

9. Write your memories as they arrive—as scenes, as lists, as fragments. Draw them as comics or storyboards. Hillary Chute writes, "The art of crafting words and pictures together into a narrative punctuated by pause and absence mimics the procedure of memory."[v] You want to write a memoir that is more like a bricolage. You don't want it to be seamless, because that feels too far from truth. You might circle. You might embroider. You might leave stuff out.

10. You read somewhere that memories are stored emotionally, not chronologically. You love Anais Nin's description of her work as "a detective of the unconscious."[vi] Memory fascinates precisely because it is unstable and easily corrupted.

11. You will be tempted to invite comment from people who share your past, but try to hold off. Competing voiceovers are just confusing.

12. Make maps of your teenage emotional sacred sites. Map a walk, a day, a night, a holiday, a party, a friendship. Map your memories, and then, one by one, explode them.

13. In Grade Five there was a vacant lot opposite the primary school that had a mound of dirt on it called Spook Hill. It was the site for a series of Grade Five weddings, including one between a boy you liked and a girl who wasn't you. In your memory the happy couple stand on the mound haloed by sunshine. The bride wears a daisy chain her handmaidens prepared earlier. When the priest gives the word, they kiss on the lips (no tongue). It's possible that this image in your mind owes more to 1970s folk horror TV than reality. Write it down anyway.

14. Make symbols for your maps. On Spook Hill you might put a heart with a dagger through it, or a single lonely teardrop.

15. Go back in person. What do you see/hear/smell/touch? What's changed? What's stayed the same? Proust had his madeleines but who's to say that the sound of a bellbird might not catapult you back to being thirteen and fooling around at the quarry? There's a tourist track there now that wasn't there before, but also, there it

is, the smell of the creek. And, sure, bellbirds. Someone somewhere was always starting up a chainsaw.

16. When you find that Spook Hill is now a block of townhouses you might feel "solastalgia": "the pain or sickness caused by the loss of, or inability to derive solace from the present state of one's home environment."[vii] (NB: Is aging a solastalgia of the self?)

17. If Spook Hill had still been there, would it have provided solace or just made you feel weird? You need to move on. Although, it might also be worth considering why you've stalled in Grade Six.

18. Grade Six was a hard year. Some girls had Faberge jeans, and others had perms but you had neither. You had a blue sweater with the words "Rock'n'Roll" printed on it. You were a tomboy who read *Sweet Valley High*. You formed attachments to all the wrong people. You were a force, propelled by shame. Shame for what? For caring more, for caring at all, for *feeling*, for being unable to hide it.

19. Vanessa Berry writes, "There are two types of teenagers: Those who strive to fit in and those who don't."[viii]

20. Fill a shoebox with old self stuff, "autobiographical material artefacts"[ix], photos, letters, school reports… You *could* make a digital repository but then there would be no aura, no feel of the time-worn ticket stub or hard-pressed nib on a pale blue aerogram.

21. Get tactile with your teenage archive. Engage with the ephemera, even if it makes you cringe. Exhibit A: the "novel" you wrote, loosely based on the first few months of Year Nine. ("Oh, I wish my friends would be more REAL.") Teenage you tried to anonymise people and fictionalise events, but adult you can see right through.

22. NB: You're still calling your memoir a "thing". Why the self-effacement? Is it because of 'ME-moir' navel-gaze-y perceptions? Maybe it's better not to think of it as a "memoir" at all. Call it anything else: a scrapbook, a collage, a "Museum of the Self."[x]

23. Make a list of everything that ever mattered: books, films, music, art, people, places. The things that made you and the things that saved you. Pick one and write about it. Write from the perspectives of your young self and your now self. Free-associate. Move through time.

24. Gather it all up: the maps and lists and scenes and scintillas. Look for patterns. Experiment with form. Know that the next step—consolidation? crystallisation?—

will be slow and iterative. You will wish you'd never started, and you will believe you'll never finish. Your inner critic will be LOUD. Mute her with some Mary Karr: "None of us can ever know the value of our lives, or how our separate and silent scribbling may add to the amenity of the world, if only by how radically it changes us, one, and by one."[xi]

25. Start

Simmone Howell is a Melbourne-based writer and researcher. Her life writing exploring art, place, houses and memory is regularly published in The Age/Sydney Morning Herald*. She is the author of four YA novels:* Notes from the Teenage Underground *(2006),* Everything Beautiful *(2008),* Girl Defective *(2013), and the CBCA-award-winning collaborative novel* Take Three Girls *(with Cath Crowley and Fiona Wood) (2017). She teaches at RMIT's Diploma of Professional Writing & Editing, and facilitates creative mapping workshops and projects through Wander-y, such as* Map of Lost Places *(2026).*

[i] Coats, K. (2011). Young adult literature: Growing up, in theory. In S. A. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enciso, & C. A. Jenkins (Eds.), Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature (pp. 315-329). Routledge
[ii] Barry, L. (2017) One! Hundred! Demons! *Drawn & Quarterly*. P. 219.
[iii] Montaigne, 1580/1958, Book 2, Chapter 17.
[iv] Greenstreet, R. (2008) Q&A Barry Humphries, *The Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2008/jan/26/weekend7.weekend
[v] Chute, H. (2010) *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics.* Columbia University Press. P. 4.
[vi] Nin, A. (1980). *The diary of Anaïs Nin, volume 7: 1966-1974* (G. Stuhlmann, Ed.). Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. (Original work published 1976)
[vii] Albrecht, G., Sartore, G. M., Connor, L., Higginbotham, N., Freeman, S., Kelly, B., Stain, H., Tonna, A., & Pollard, G. (2007). Solastalgia: the distress caused by environmental change. *Australasian Psychiatry: Bulletin of Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists*, 15 Suppl 1, S95-S98.
[viii] Berry, V. (2013) *Ninety-nine*. Giramondo Press. p. 73.
[ix] González, J. A. (1995) Autotopographies. In G. Brahm, Jr. & M. Driscoll (Eds.) *Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hypertechnologies* (pp. 133-5). Westview. (Quote on p. 141.)
[x] González, J. A. (1995) Autotopographies. In G. Brahm, Jr. & M. Driscoll (Eds.) *Prosthetic Territories: Politics and Hypertechnologies* (pp. 133-5). (Quote on p.134.)
[xi] Karr, M. (2015) *The Art of Memoir*, Harper. P. 221.

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TEXT prose

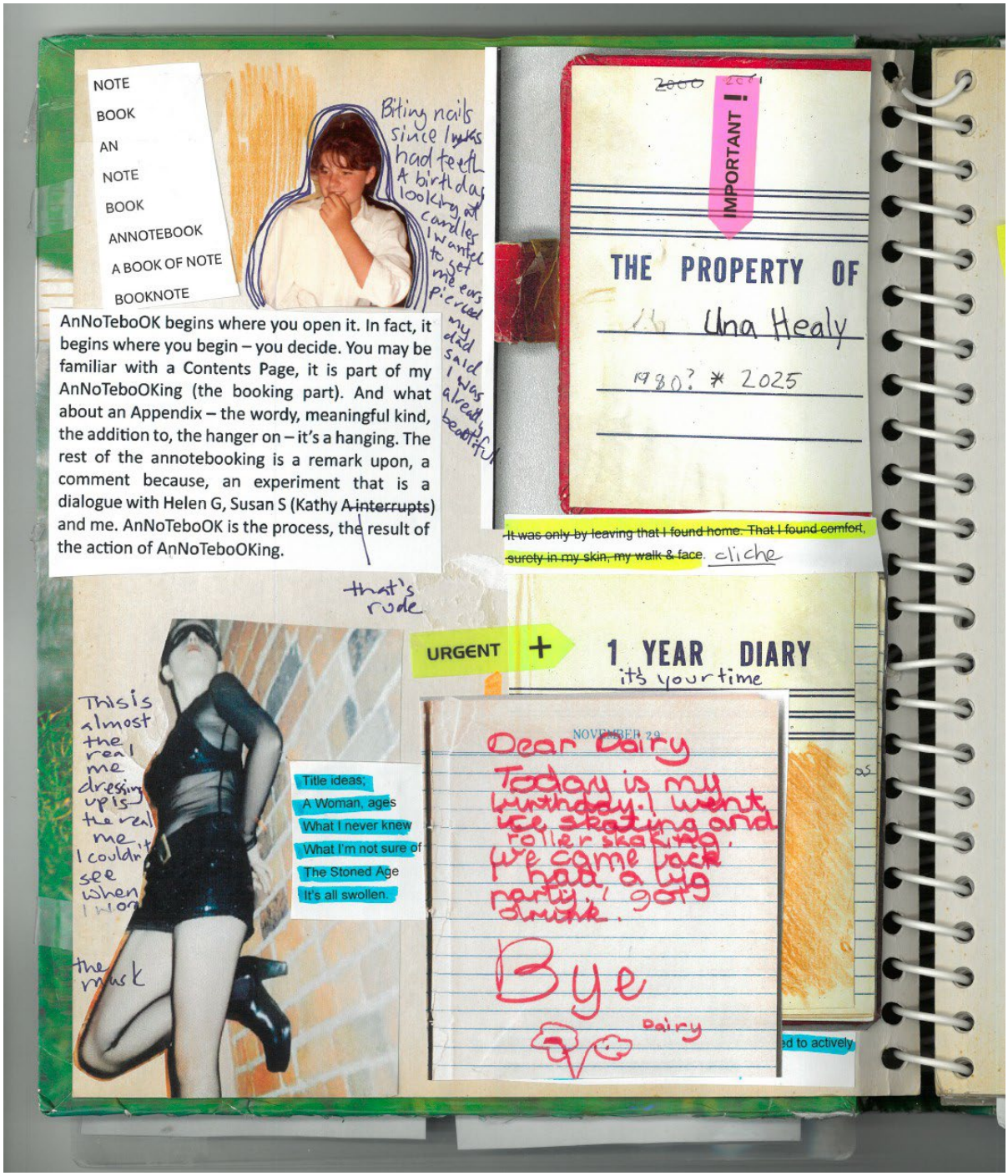
Una Healy

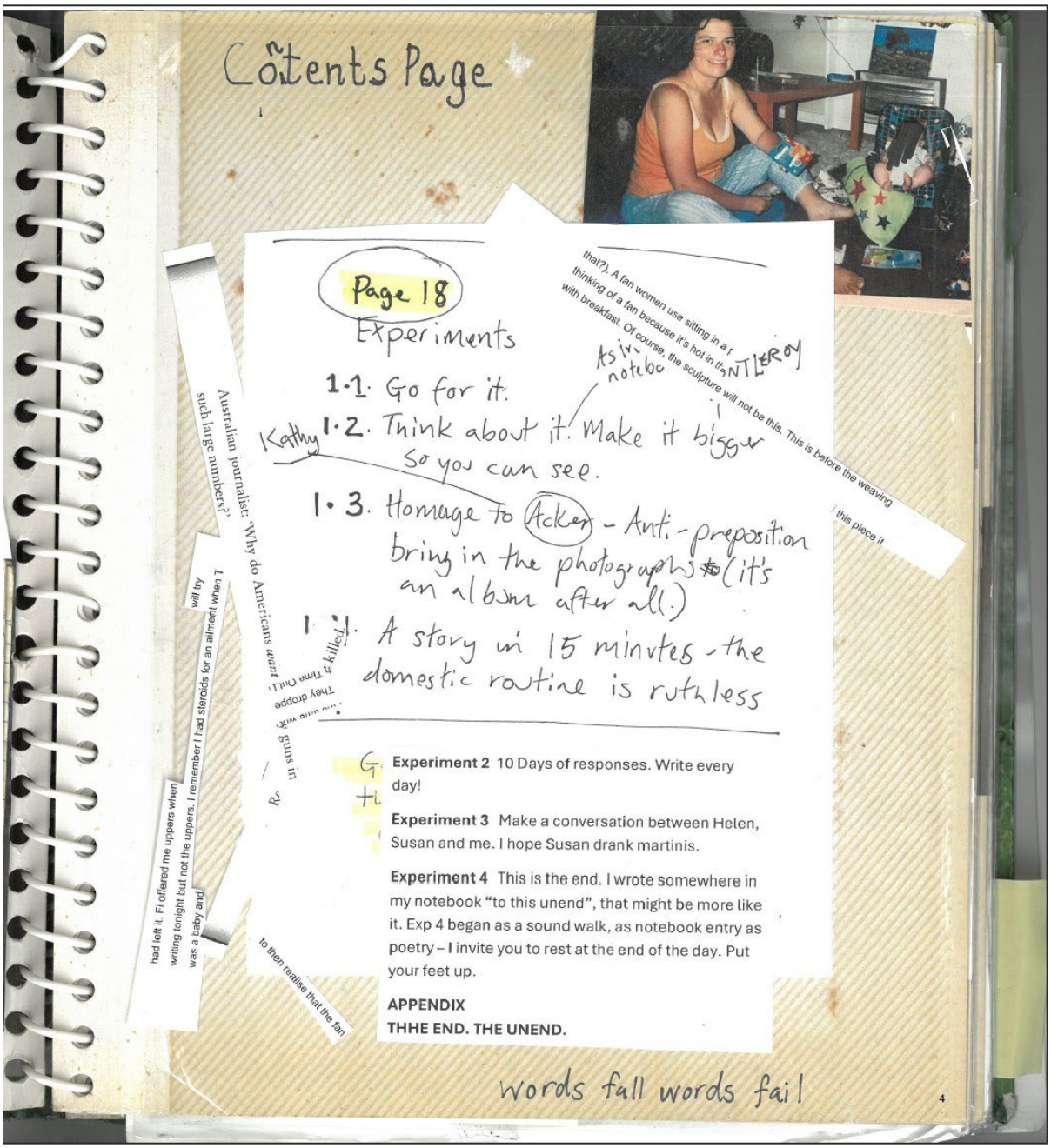
anNoTeBoOK

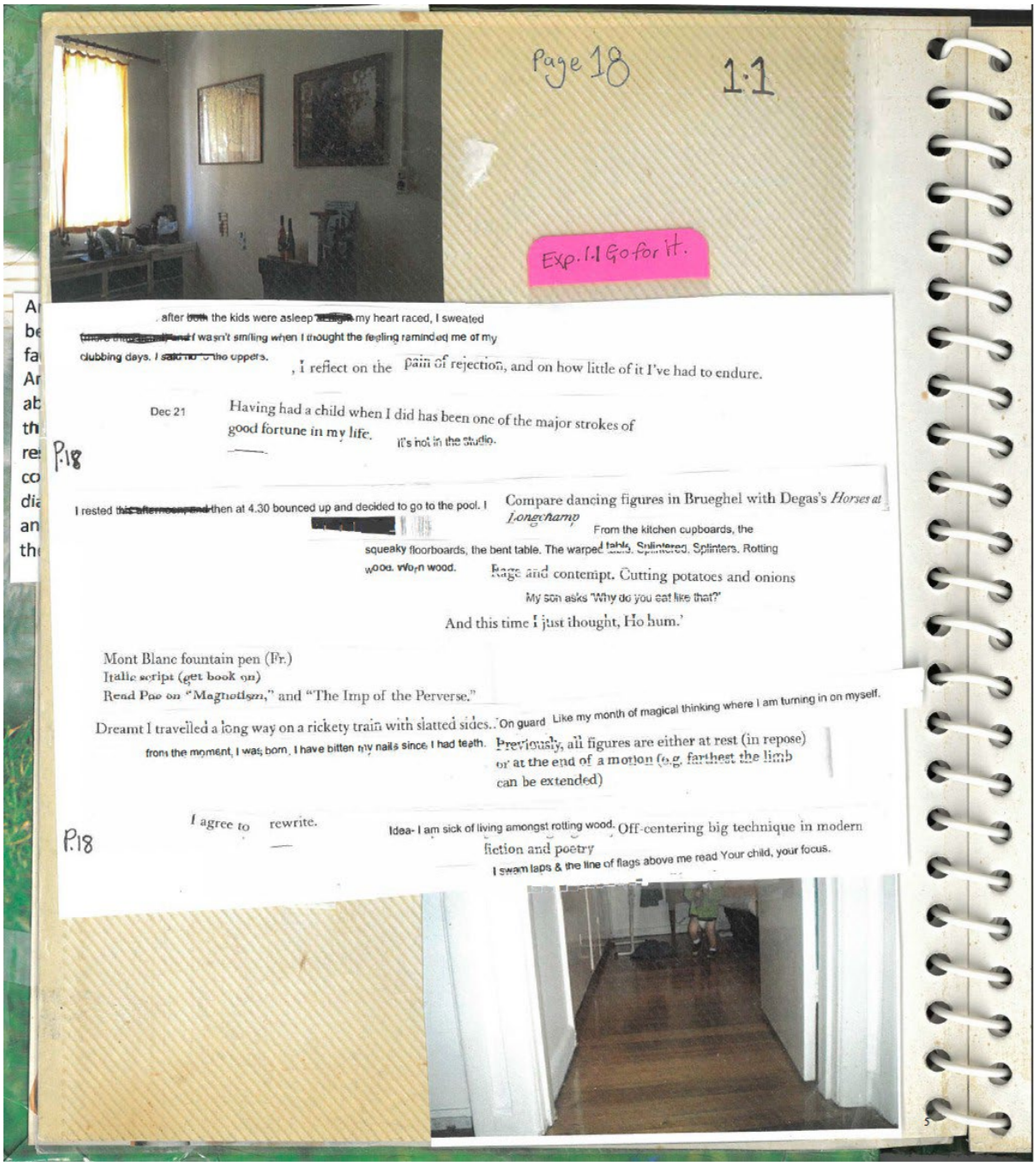
Introduction

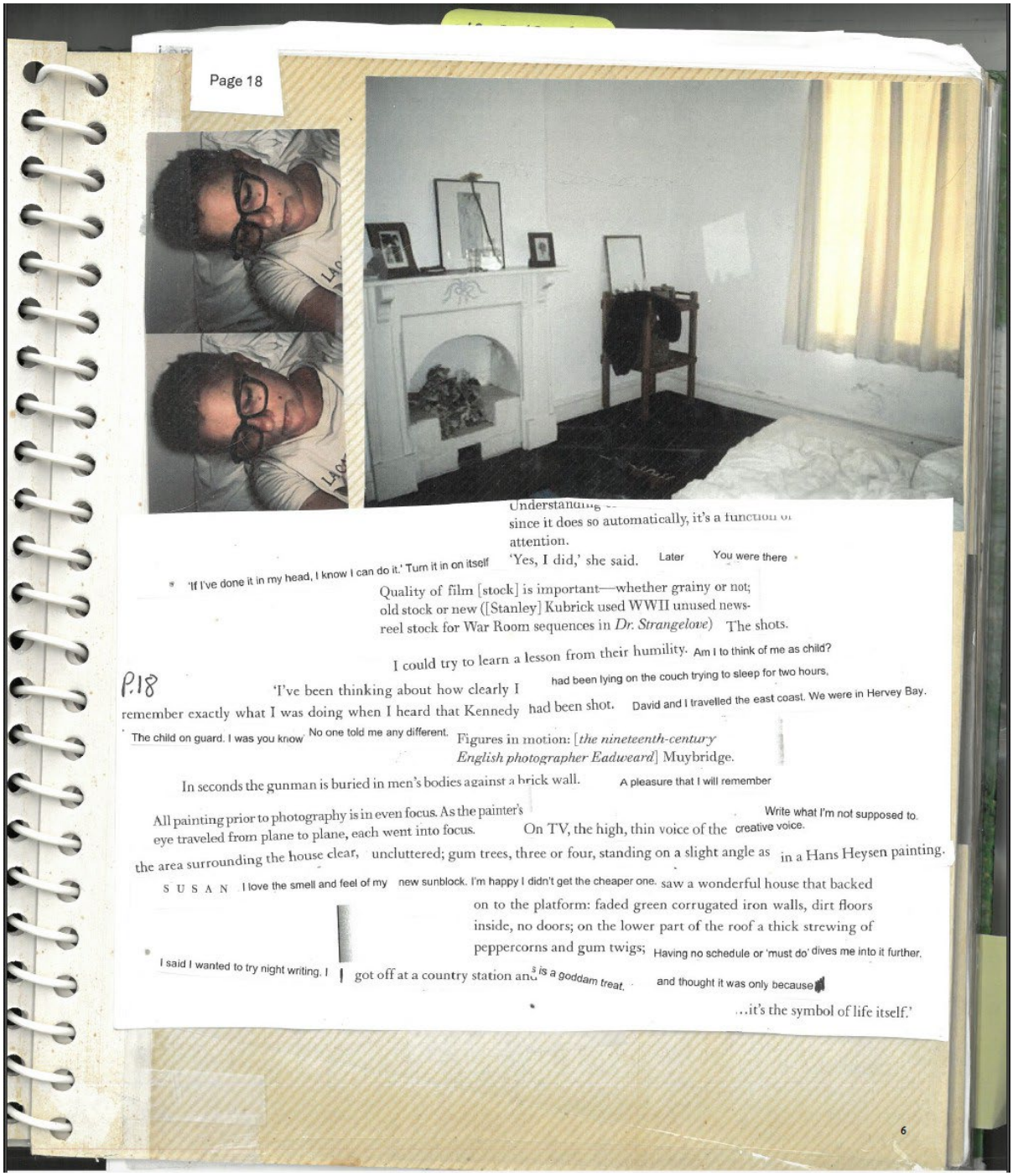
anNoTeBoOK is an experimental work implementing techniques such as appropriation, erasure and marginalia. The work is the first iteration of an experimental compositional methodology I created and am still developing called *anNoTeBoOKing. anNoTeBoOK* is a dialogical diary, an assemblage in homage to, and in conversation with women, text and genre.

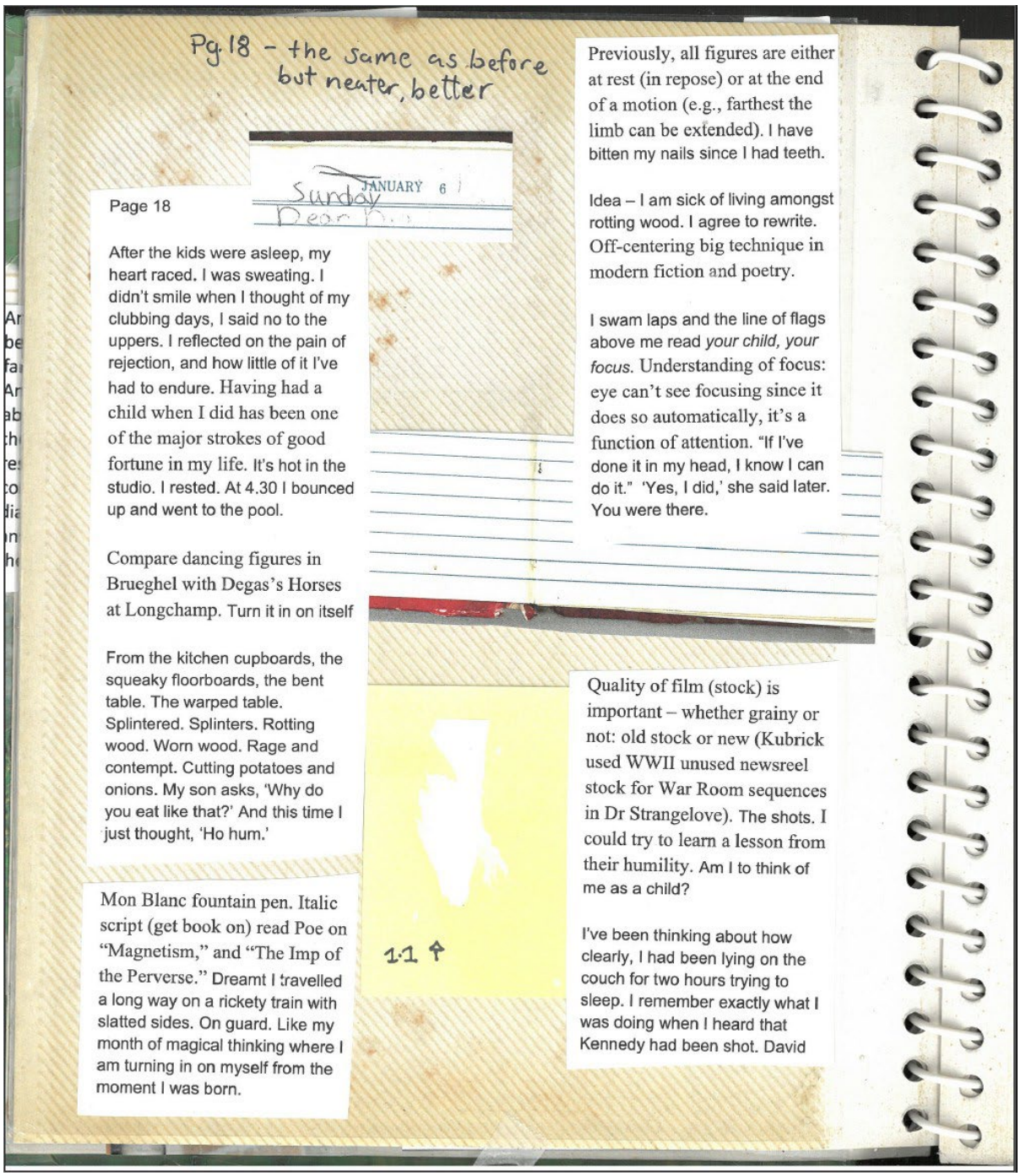

AnNoTeBoOK
the bent table.
Dreamt I travelled a long way on a rickety train
After the kids were asleep,
en cupboards,
had teeth.
month of magical thinking
Una Healy
2022 - 2025
Helen Garner
1978 - 1987
Susan SOntag
1964 - 1980
AnNoTeBoOK
tune in my life.
Previously,
didn't smile when I thoug
focusing
YELLOW NOTEBOOK
DIARIES VOLUME I 1978-1987
As Consciousness is Harnessed to Flesh
Diaries 1964–1980


NOTE
BOOK
AN
NOTE
BOOK
ANNOTEBOOK
A BOOK OF NOTE
BOOKNOTE
Biting nails since I was had teeth. A birthday looking at candles I wanted to get my ears pierced my dad said I was already beautiful
AnNoTeboOK begins where you open it. In fact, it begins where you begin – you decide. You may be familiar with a Contents Page, it is part of my AnNoTeboOKing (the booking part). And what about an Appendix – the wordy, meaningful kind, the addition to, the hanger on – it's a hanging. The rest of the annotebooking is a remark upon, a comment because, an experiment that is a dialogue with Helen G, Susan S (Kathy A interrupts) and me. AnNoTeboOK is the process, the result of the action of AnNoTeboOKing.
that's rude
IMPORTANT !
THE PROPERTY OF
Una Healy
1980? * 2025
It was only by leaving that I found home. That I found comfort, surety in my skin, my walk & face. cliche
URGENT +
1 YEAR DIARY
it's your time
This is almost the real me dressing up is the real me I couldn't see when I was
the musk
Title ideas,
A Woman, ages
What I never knew
What I'm not sure of
The Stoned Age
It's all swollen
NOVEMBER 29
Dear Diary
Today is my birthday. I went ice skating and roller skating. We came back had a big party. I got drunk.
Bye
Diary
ed to actively


Contents Page
Page 18
Experiments
1.1. Go for it.
1.2. Think about it. Make it bigger so you can see.
1.3. Homage to Acker - Anti-preposition bring in the photographs (it's an album after all.)
1.4. A story in 15 minutes - the domestic routine is ruthless
Experiment 2 10 Days of responses. Write every day!
Experiment 3 Make a conversation between Helen, Susan and me. I hope Susan drank martinis.
Experiment 4 This is the end. I wrote somewhere in my notebook "to this unend", that might be more like it. Exp 4 began as a sound walk, as notebook entry as poetry – I invite you to rest at the end of the day. Put your feet up.
APPENDIX
THHE END. THE UNEND.
words fall words fail
4


Page 18
1.1
Exp. 1.1 Go for it.
after both the kids were asleep my heart raced, I sweated
and I wasn't smiling when I thought the feeling reminded me of my clubbing days. I said no to the uppers.
, I reflect on the pain of rejection, and on how little of it I've had to endure.
Dec 21
Having had a child when I did has been one of the major strokes of good fortune in my life.
it's not in the studio.
P.18
I rested this afternoon and then at 4.30 bounced up and decided to go to the pool. I
Compare dancing figures in Brueghel with Degas's *Horses at Longchamp*
From the kitchen cupboards, the squeaky floorboards, the bent table. The warped table. Splintered. Splinters. Rotting wood. Worn wood.
Rage and contempt. Cutting potatoes and onions
My son asks "Why do you eat like that?"
And this time I just thought, Ho hum.'
Mont Blanc fountain pen (Fr.)
Italic script (get book on)
Read Poe on "Magnetism," and "The Imp of the Perverse."
Dreamt I travelled a long way on a rickety train with slatted sides.. On guard Like my month of magical thinking where I am turning in on myself.
from the moment, I was born, I have bitten my nails since I had teeth.
Previously, all figures are either at rest (in repose) or at the end of a motion (e.g. farthest the limb can be extended)
I agree to rewrite.
P.18
Idea- I am sick of living amongst rotting wood. Off-centering big technique in modern fiction and poetry
I swam laps & the line of flags above me read Your child, your focus.


Page 18
Understanding
since it does so automatically, it's a function of
attention.
'Yes, I did,' she said. Later You were there
'If I've done it in my head, I know I can do it.' Turn it in on itself
Quality of film [stock] is important—whether grainy or not;
old stock or new ([Stanley] Kubrick used WWII unused news-
reel stock for War Room sequences in *Dr. Strangelove*) The shots.
I could try to learn a lesson from their humility. Am I to think of me as child?
P.18
'I've been thinking about how clearly I had been lying on the couch trying to sleep for two hours,
remember exactly what I was doing when I heard that Kennedy had been shot. David and I travelled the east coast. We were in Hervey Bay.
The child on guard. I was you know No one told me any different. Figures in motion: [*the nineteenth-century*
English photographer Eadweard] Muybridge.
In seconds the gunman is buried in men's bodies against a brick wall. A pleasure that I will remember
All painting prior to photography is in even focus. As the painter's
eye traveled from plane to plane, each went into focus. On TV, the high, thin voice of the Write what I'm not supposed to.
creative voice.
the area surrounding the house clear, uncluttered; gum trees, three or four, standing on a slight angle as in a Hans Heysen painting.
SUSAN I love the smell and feel of my new sunblock. I'm happy I didn't get the cheaper one. saw a wonderful house that backed
on to the platform: faded green corrugated iron walls, dirt floors
inside, no doors; on the lower part of the roof a thick strewing of
peppercorns and gum twigs; Having no schedule or 'must do' dives me into it further.
I said I wanted to try night writing. I got off at a country station and is a goddam treat. and thought it was only because
...it's the symbol of life itself.'
6


Pg 18 - the same as before but neater, better
Page 18
JANUARY 6
Sunday
Dear
After the kids were asleep, my heart raced. I was sweating. I didn't smile when I thought of my clubbing days, I said no to the uppers. I reflected on the pain of rejection, and how little of it I've had to endure. Having had a child when I did has been one of the major strokes of good fortune in my life. It's hot in the studio. I rested. At 4.30 I bounced up and went to the pool.
Compare dancing figures in Brueghel with Degas's Horses at Longchamp. Turn it in on itself
From the kitchen cupboards, the squeaky floorboards, the bent table. The warped table. Splintered. Splinters. Rotting wood. Worn wood. Rage and contempt. Cutting potatoes and onions. My son asks, 'Why do you eat like that?' And this time I just thought, 'Ho hum.'
Mon Blanc fountain pen. Italic script (get book on) read Poe on "Magnetism," and "The Imp of the Perverse." Dreamt I travelled a long way on a rickety train with slatted sides. On guard. Like my month of magical thinking where I am turning in on myself from the moment I was born.
Previously, all figures are either at rest (in repose) or at the end of a motion (e.g., farthest the limb can be extended). I have bitten my nails since I had teeth.
Idea – I am sick of living amongst rotting wood. I agree to rewrite. Off-centering big technique in modern fiction and poetry.
I swam laps and the line of flags above me read *your child, your focus*. Understanding of focus: eye can't see focusing since it does so automatically, it's a function of attention. "If I've done it in my head, I know I can do it." 'Yes, I did,' she said later. You were there.
1.1
Quality of film (stock) is important – whether grainy or not: old stock or new (Kubrick used WWII unused newsreel stock for War Room sequences in Dr Strangelove). The shots. I could try to learn a lesson from their humility. Am I to think of me as a child?
I've been thinking about how clearly, I had been lying on the couch for two hours trying to sleep. I remember exactly what I was doing when I heard that Kennedy had been shot. David

and I travelled the east coast. We were in Hervey Bay. The child on guard. I was, you know. No one told me any different. Figures in motion: [the nineteenth-century English photographer Eadweard]. In seconds the gunman is buried in men's bodies against a brick wall. A pleasure that I will remember.

All painting prior to photography is in even focus. As the painter's eye traveled from plane to plane, each went into focus. On TV, the high, thin voice of the creative voice. Write what I'm not supposed to. The area surrounding the house, clear, uncluttered: gum trees, three or four, standing on a slight angle as in a Hans Heysen painting.

Susan, I love the smell and feel of my new sunblock. I'm happy I didn't buy the cheaper one. Saw a wonderful house that backed on to the platform: faded green corrugated iron walls, dirt floors inside, no doors; on the lower part of the roof, a thick strewing of peppercorns and gum twigs. Having no schedule or 'must dos' dives me into it further. I said I wanted to try writing through the night. I got off at a country station and it is a goddam treat and





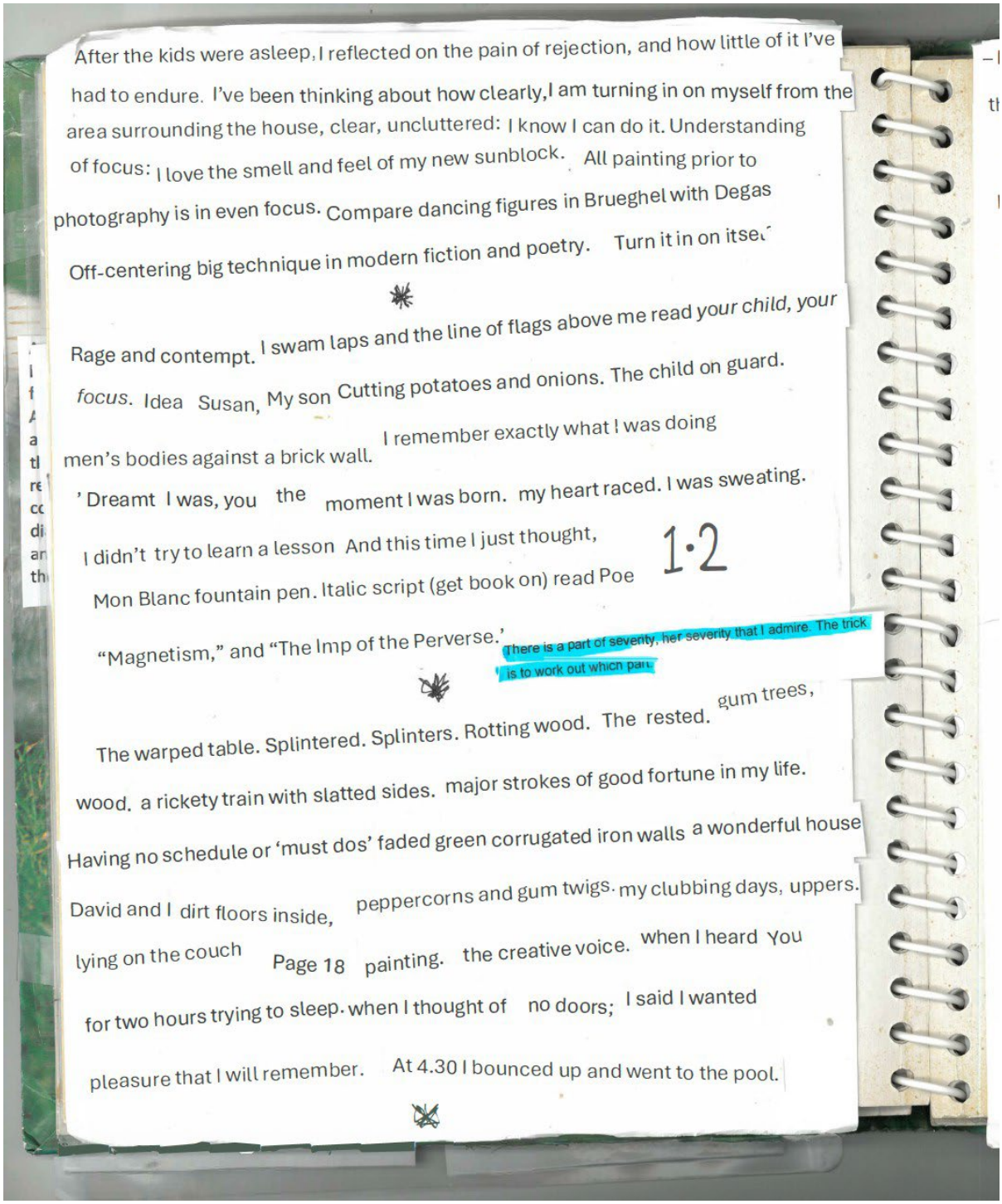
thought it was only because it's the symbol of life itself.

Dyc Diary



I watched a movie and took a photo on my phone

I put Band-Aids on my fingernails. The strong waterproof ones. I downloaded a hypnosis app & kept falling asleep before the nitty gritty. That's what my nails are, nitty gritty. Don't look at me when I'm typing



After the kids were asleep, I reflected on the pain of rejection, and how little of it I've had to endure. I've been thinking about how clearly, I am turning in on myself from the area surrounding the house, clear, uncluttered: I know I can do it. Understanding of focus: I love the smell and feel of my new sunblock. All painting prior to photography is in even focus. Compare dancing figures in Brueghel with Degas Off-centering big technique in modern fiction and poetry. Turn it in on itself

Rage and contempt. I swam laps and the line of flags above me read *your child, your focus*. Idea Susan, My son Cutting potatoes and onions. The child on guard. men's bodies against a brick wall. I remember exactly what I was doing

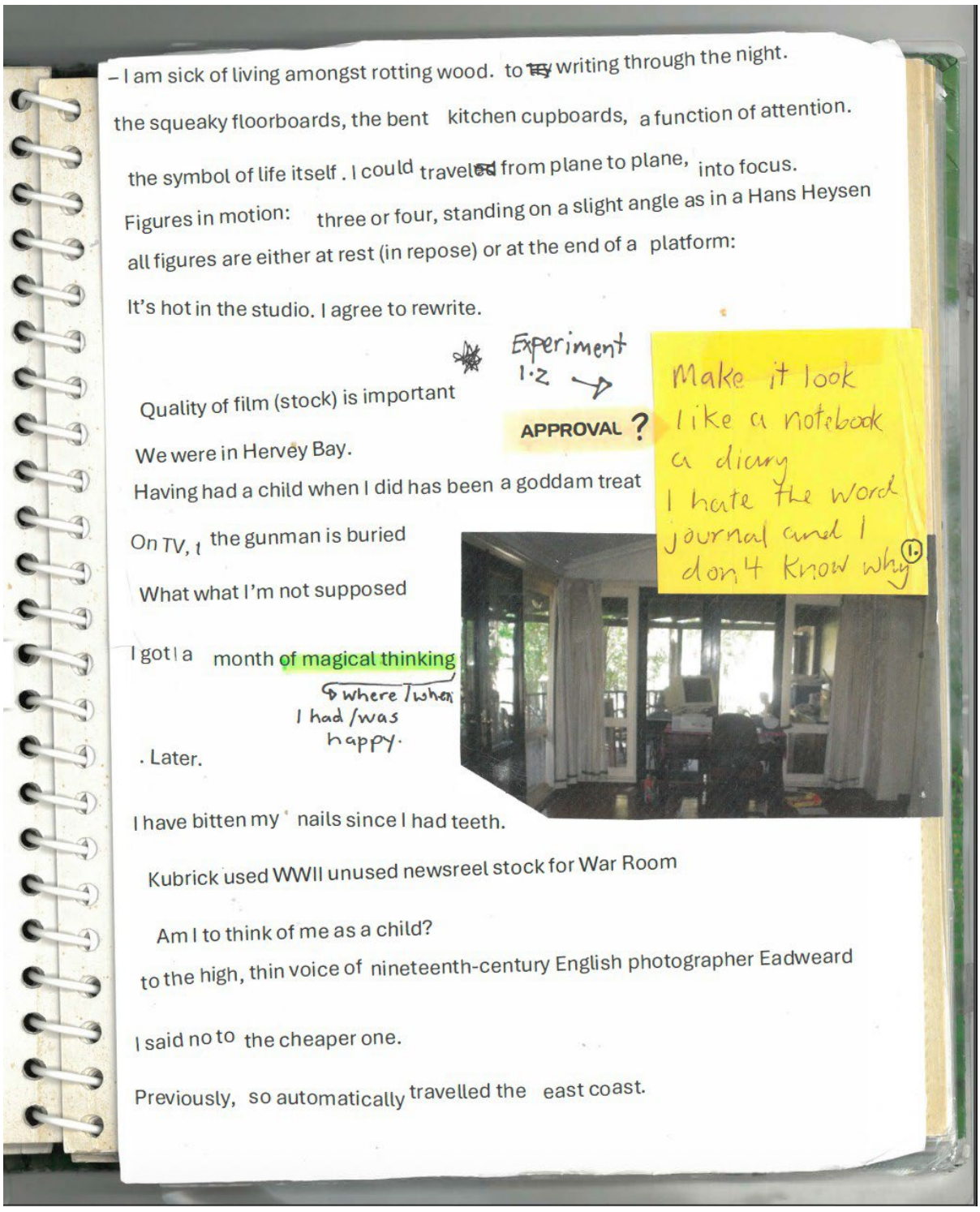
' Dreamt I was, you the moment I was born. my heart raced. I was sweating. I didn't try to learn a lesson And this time I just thought,

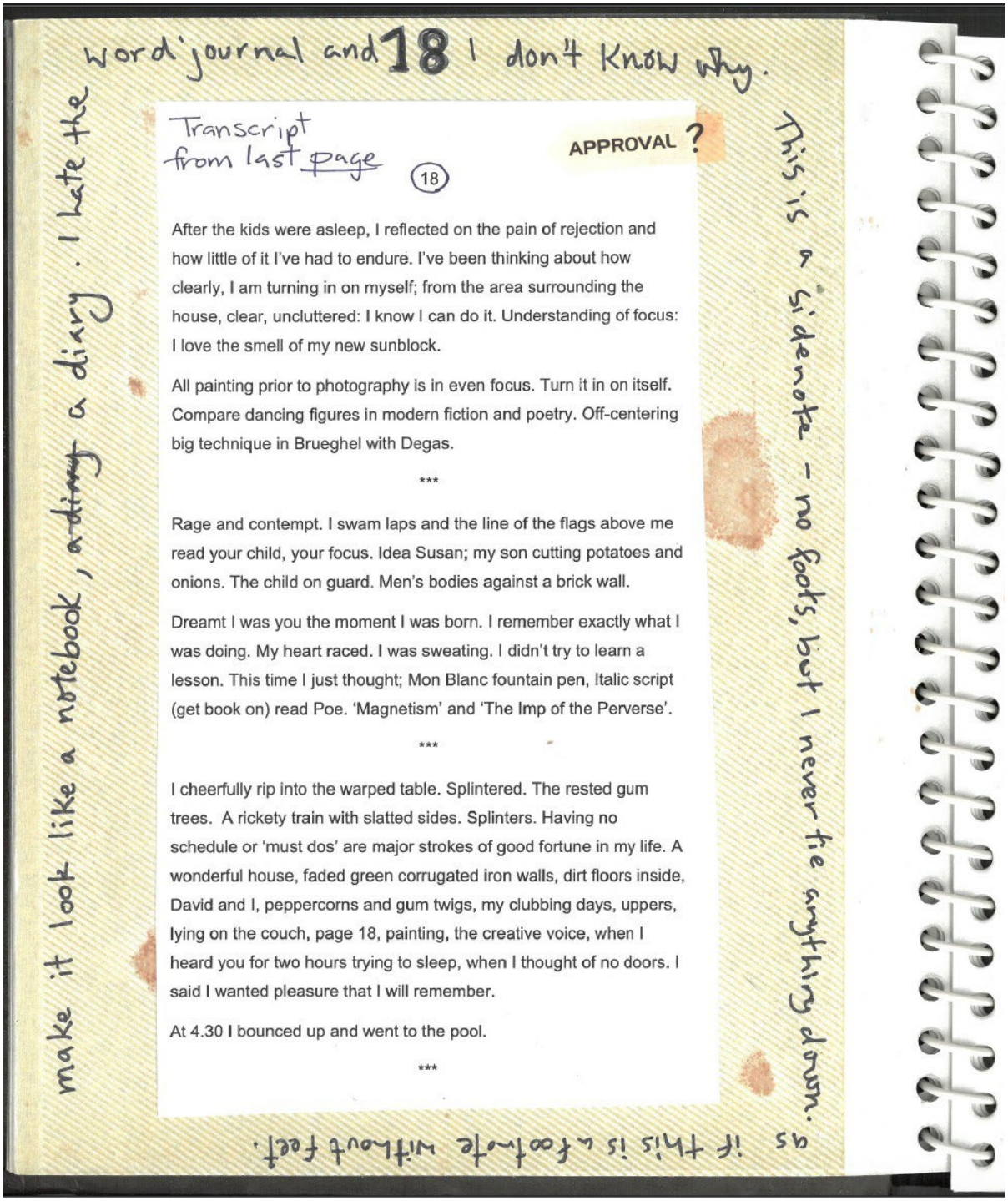
1·2

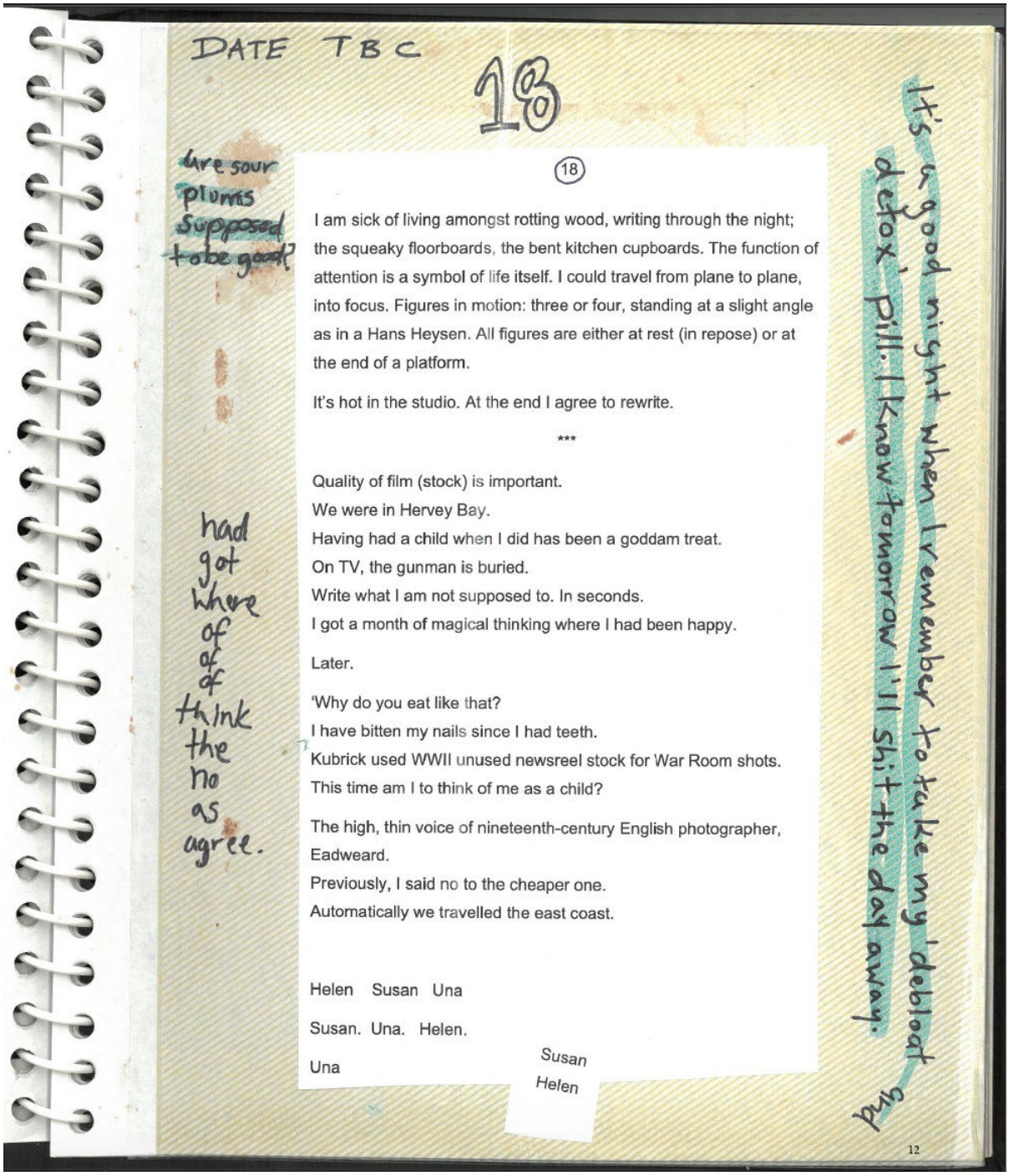
Mon Blanc fountain pen. Italic script (get book on) read Poe "Magnetism," and "The Imp of the Perverse.'

There is a part of severity, her severity that I admire. The trick is to work out which part.

The warped table. Splintered. Splinters. Rotting wood. The rested. gum trees, wood. a rickety train with slatted sides. major strokes of good fortune in my life. Having no schedule or 'must dos' faded green corrugated iron walls a wonderful house David and I dirt floors inside, peppercorns and gum twigs. my clubbing days, uppers. lying on the couch Page 18 painting. the creative voice. when I heard You for two hours trying to sleep. when I thought of no doors; I said I wanted pleasure that I will remember. At 4.30 I bounced up and went to the pool.


– I am sick of living amongst rotting wood. to ~~try~~ writing through the night.
the squeaky floorboards, the bent kitchen cupboards, a function of attention.
the symbol of life itself . I could travel~~led~~ from plane to plane, into focus.
Figures in motion: three or four, standing on a slight angle as in a Hans Heysen
all figures are either at rest (in repose) or at the end of a platform:
It's hot in the studio. I agree to rewrite.
Experiment 1.2
Quality of film (stock) is important
APPROVAL ?
We were in Hervey Bay.
Having had a child when I did has been a goddam treat
On TV, t the gunman is buried
What what I'm not supposed
I got I a month of magical thinking
where / when I had / was happy.
. Later.
I have bitten my nails since I had teeth.
Kubrick used WWII unused newsreel stock for War Room
Am I to think of me as a child?
to the high, thin voice of nineteenth-century English photographer Eadweard
I said no to the cheaper one.
Previously, so automatically travelled the east coast.
Make it look like a notebook a diary I hate the word journal and I don't know why (1.)


make it look like a notebook, a diary. I hate the word 'journal' and 18 I don't know why.
Transcript from last page
18
APPROVAL ?
After the kids were asleep, I reflected on the pain of rejection and how little of it I've had to endure. I've been thinking about how clearly, I am turning in on myself; from the area surrounding the house, clear, uncluttered: I know I can do it. Understanding of focus: I love the smell of my new sunblock.
All painting prior to photography is in even focus. Turn it in on itself. Compare dancing figures in modern fiction and poetry. Off-centering big technique in Brueghel with Degas.
***
Rage and contempt. I swam laps and the line of the flags above me read your child, your focus. Idea Susan; my son cutting potatoes and onions. The child on guard. Men's bodies against a brick wall.
Dreamt I was you the moment I was born. I remember exactly what I was doing. My heart raced. I was sweating. I didn't try to learn a lesson. This time I just thought; Mon Blanc fountain pen, Italic script (get book on) read Poe. 'Magnetism' and 'The Imp of the Perverse'.
***
I cheerfully rip into the warped table. Splintered. The rested gum trees. A rickety train with slatted sides. Splinters. Having no schedule or 'must dos' are major strokes of good fortune in my life. A wonderful house, faded green corrugated iron walls, dirt floors inside, David and I, peppercorns and gum twigs, my clubbing days, uppers, lying on the couch, page 18, painting, the creative voice, when I heard you for two hours trying to sleep, when I thought of no doors. I said I wanted pleasure that I will remember.
At 4.30 I bounced up and went to the pool.
***
This is a sidenote - no footy, but I never tie anything down.
as if this is a footnote without feet.


DATE TBC
18
are sour plums supposed to be good?
(18)
I am sick of living amongst rotting wood, writing through the night; the squeaky floorboards, the bent kitchen cupboards. The function of attention is a symbol of life itself. I could travel from plane to plane, into focus. Figures in motion: three or four, standing at a slight angle as in a Hans Heysen. All figures are either at rest (in repose) or at the end of a platform.
It's hot in the studio. At the end I agree to rewrite.
***
Quality of film (stock) is important.
We were in Hervey Bay.
Having had a child when I did has been a goddam treat.
On TV, the gunman is buried.
Write what I am not supposed to. In seconds.
I got a month of magical thinking where I had been happy.
Later.
'Why do you eat like that?
I have bitten my nails since I had teeth.
Kubrick used WWII unused newsreel stock for War Room shots.
This time am I to think of me as a child?
The high, thin voice of nineteenth-century English photographer, Eadweard.
Previously, I said no to the cheaper one.
Automatically we travelled the east coast.
Helen Susan Una
Susan. Una. Helen.
Una
Susan
Helen
had got where of of think the no as agree.
It's a good night when I remember to take my 'debloat detox' pill. I know tomorrow I'll shit the day away.
12


Chris Kraus's biography of Kathy Acker is ~~on~~ my glass coffee table. ~~There are~~ orange and yellow Post it notes stuck ~~on~~ pages. Chris Kraus's, *I Love Dick* is ~~on~~ my bookshelf ~~in~~ my bedroom. The words, *I Love Dick* ~~are~~ printed ~~in a~~ pink and green ~~bold~~ font. ~~I look at it~~ every night before I switch off my bedside lamp. Love is pink.
I am ~~listening~~ to Laurie Anderson ~~as I~~ write this Oh *Superman*. Oh, ~~Mom and~~ mum Dad.
Repetitive. ~~Hypnotic.~~
Routine.
Kathy Acker cut (up) text. Kathy Acker cut (out) prepositions. (It's) the appropriate thing ~~to~~ do next.
1·3
I swam laps. The line, the flags, me, read your child, your focus. Idea Susan; my son cutting potatoes and onions, the child guards men's bodies. A brick wall. ~~Dreamt~~ I was you the moment I was born. I remember exactly what I ~~was~~ doing. My heart raced. Sweating. I didn't try. Learn a lesson. This time I ~~just~~ thought; Mon Blanc fountain pen, italic script (get book) read Poe, magnetism, the imp, the perverse. I cheerfully rip the warped table, splintered. The rested gum trees. A rickety train, slatted sides, splinters. No schedule or must dos are major strokes good fortune my life. A wonderful house faded green corrugated iron walls, dirt floors. David and I, peppercorns, gum twigs, clubbing days, uppers, lying, the couch, page 18, painting, the creative voice.
kids asleep, reflected the pain, rejection and how little I've had endure. been thinking how I am turning on myself; the area surrounding the house, clear, uncluttered: I know I can do it. Understanding focus: I love the smell. My new sunblock. All painting prior. Photography is even focus,
turn it itself. Compare dancing figures, modern fiction and poetry. Centering big technique. Brueghel, Degas. Rage and contempt.


NO PREPOSITIONS
Experiment 1·3
I heard
you, two hours trying sleep, I thought, no doors, I said I wanted pleasure that I will remember. 4.30. I bounced. Went to pool. I am sick. Living amongst rotting wood, writing the night; squeaky floorboards, bent kitchen cupboards. The function attention a symbol life itself I could travel plane. Plane, focus, figures motion: three, four, standing a slight angle as a Hans Heysen. All figures either rest repose. The end, a platform. It's hot. The studio, the end. I agree. Rewrite. Quality film stock, important. We were Hervey Bay. Having had a child when I did. A goddam treat. TV, the gunman buried. Write what I am not. Supposed seconds. I got a month. Magical thinking. I had been happy. Later, why do you eat that? I have bitten my nails. I had teeth. Kubrick used WWII unused newsreel stock war room shots. This time, am I? Think me a child. The high thin voice. ~~Nineteenth century English photographer,~~
itchen
ction
elf I
ne,
I am reading Kate Zambreno's 'Drifts' - 'I felt so distracted, never in a pure space to think.' Page 78
~~Eadweard~~. ~~Previously~~ I said no, the cheaper one. Automatically we travelled the east coast.
FIRST
FIRST
IMPORTANT !
14



An EXPERIMENT in 15 minutes. A reflection of *domestic routine*. For example, when the baby is finally asleep (this is for daytime naps only) one does not know how long they have to themselves, in silence (but not of course alone). What to do? No big projects. **A mother gets used to being interrupted** or gets used to not doing anything that may take longer than **15 minutes.** If a mother has more than **15 minutes**, it's a good idea to lie on the couch and close your eyes. Sleep when the baby sleeps is the advice given, but when do you get stuff done?

I have **15 minutes** to rearrange the text. I wonder in how many in-between times Helen and Susan wrote in their notebook. Was it always before lights out (a mother term – lights out)? Not for you Susan. I watched a film about your life, and a friend says on your last stay in Paris, they remember you at a cafe writing in your notebook. You and your notebook in a cafe in Paris.

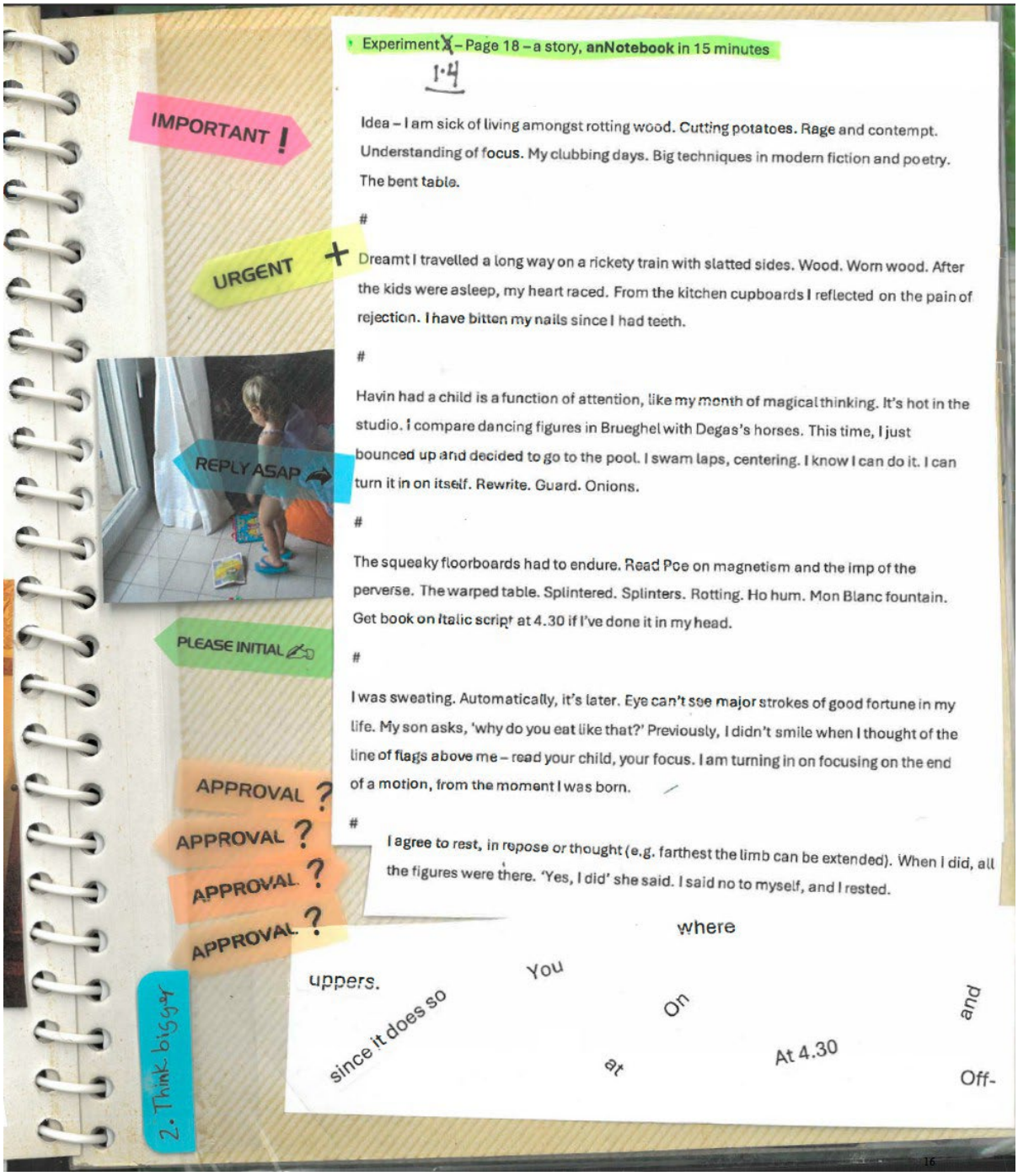
A *domestic routine* is picking up your kid from school. When you drop your kid to school you exhale and then 3 o'clock comes (it is only as if one more breath has moved in and out in those six hours). You can't be late because then your child will sit and wait while all the other mothers are on time. If you are late your child will sit just like you did when your mother was late. Waiting **alone** for your mother to pick you up when a teacher asks you where your mother is and you cry does not teach resilience. Another story.

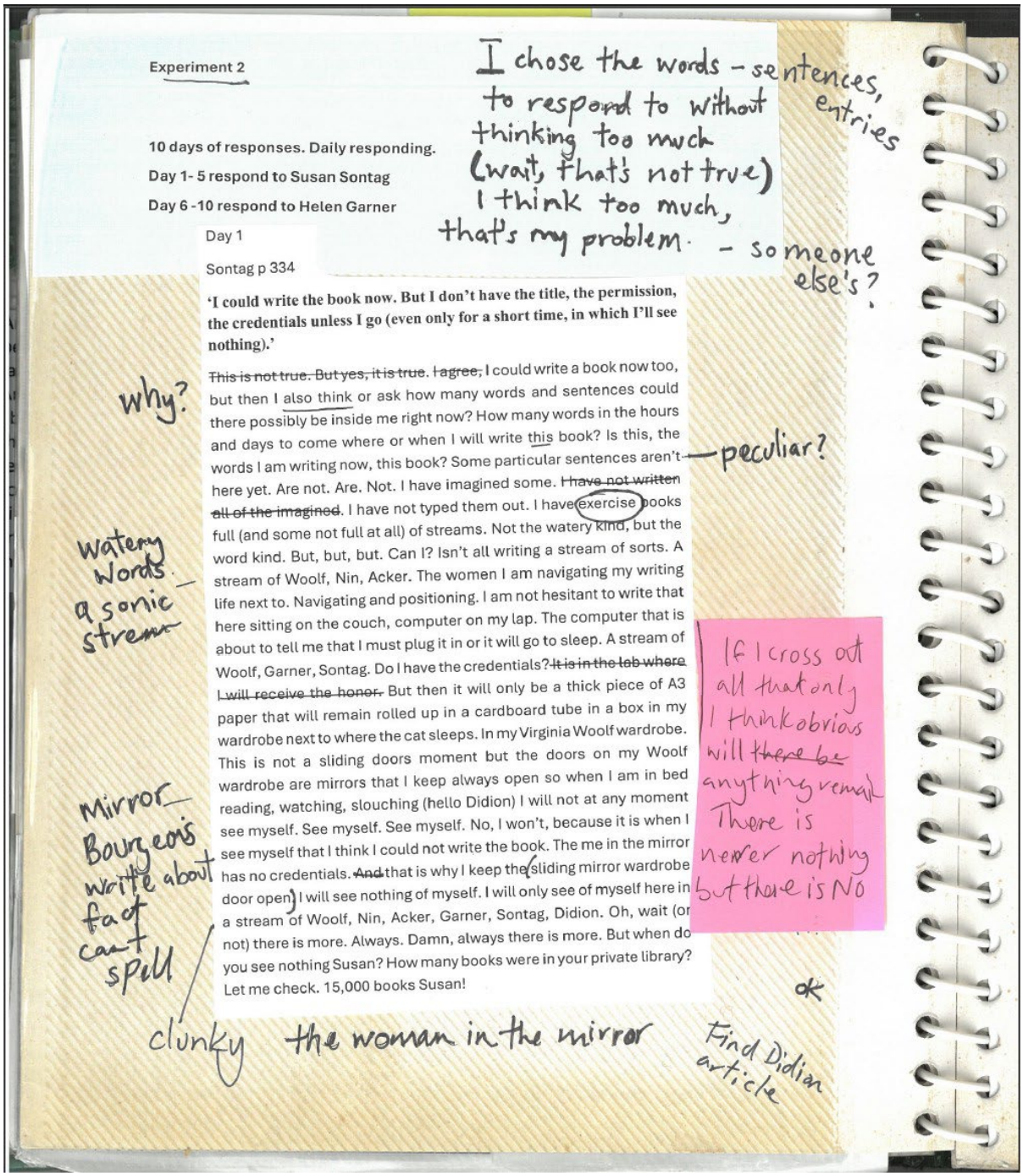
I prepared for the experiment the night before. Like I prepared presents on Christmas eve preparing the presents from Father Christmas (the irony of the waiting for a father here is not lost on me). I **cut up the sentences** just as I have cut up the wrapping paper, as I folded it and taped it over boxes and toys. I tidied up the scraps and got the glue stick from the top drawer. I placed all the lines of **words face up** on my desk.

1·4

URGENT +

I'm sad that my time here is coming to an end. It flew by. I haven't done what I thought I would. I have done though. I did the doing. I would rather be possessed. That's why I can always have one more.


IMPORTANT !
URGENT +
REPLY ASAP
PLEASE INITIAL
APPROVAL ?
APPROVAL ?
APPROVAL ?
APPROVAL ?
2. Think bigger
Experiment X – Page 18 – a story, anNotebook in 15 minutes
1·4
Idea – I am sick of living amongst rotting wood. Cutting potatoes. Rage and contempt. Understanding of focus. My clubbing days. Big techniques in modern fiction and poetry. The bent table.
#
Dreamt I travelled a long way on a rickety train with slatted sides. Wood. Worn wood. After the kids were asleep, my heart raced. From the kitchen cupboards I reflected on the pain of rejection. I have bitten my nails since I had teeth.
#
Havin had a child is a function of attention, like my month of magical thinking. It's hot in the studio. I compare dancing figures in Brueghel with Degas's horses. This time, I just bounced up and decided to go to the pool. I swam laps, centering. I know I can do it. I can turn it in on itself. Rewrite. Guard. Onions.
#
The squeaky floorboards had to endure. Read Poe on magnetism and the imp of the perverse. The warped table. Splintered. Splinters. Rotting. Ho hum. Mon Blanc fountain. Get book on Italic script at 4.30 if I've done it in my head.
#
I was sweating. Automatically, it's later. Eye can't see major strokes of good fortune in my life. My son asks, 'why do you eat like that?' Previously, I didn't smile when I thought of the line of flags above me – read your child, your focus. I am turning in on focusing on the end of a motion, from the moment I was born.
#
I agree to rest, in repose or thought (e.g. farthest the limb can be extended). When I did, all the figures were there. 'Yes, I did' she said. I said no to myself, and I rested.
where
uppers.
You
since it does so
On
and
at
At 4.30
Off-



Experiment 2

10 days of responses. Daily responding.
Day 1- 5 respond to Susan Sontag
Day 6 -10 respond to Helen Garner

I chose the words - sentences, entries to respond to without thinking too much (wait, that's not true) I think too much, that's my problem. - someone else's?

Day 1

Sontag p 334

'I could write the book now. But I don't have the title, the permission, the credentials unless I go (even only for a short time, in which I'll see nothing).'

~~This is not true. But yes, it is true.~~ ~~I agree,~~ I could write a book now too, but then I also think or ask how many words and sentences could there possibly be inside me right now? How many words in the hours and days to come where or when I will write this book? Is this, the words I am writing now, this book? Some particular sentences aren't here yet. Are not. Are. Not. I have imagined some. ~~I have not written all of the imagined~~. I have not typed them out. I have exercise books full (and some not full at all) of streams. Not the watery kind, but the word kind. But, but, but. Can I? Isn't all writing a stream of sorts. A stream of Woolf, Nin, Acker. The women I am navigating my writing life next to. Navigating and positioning. I am not hesitant to write that here sitting on the couch, computer on my lap. The computer that is about to tell me that I must plug it in or it will go to sleep. A stream of Woolf, Garner, Sontag. Do I have the credentials? ~~It is in the lab where I will receive the honor.~~ But then it will only be a thick piece of A3 paper that will remain rolled up in a cardboard tube in a box in my wardrobe next to where the cat sleeps. In my Virginia Woolf wardrobe. This is not a sliding doors moment but the doors on my Woolf wardrobe are mirrors that I keep always open so when I am in bed reading, watching, slouching (hello Didion) I will not at any moment see myself. See myself. See myself. No, I won't, because it is when I see myself that I think I could not write the book. The me in the mirror has no credentials. ~~And~~ that is why I keep the sliding mirror wardrobe door open. I will see nothing of myself. I will only see of myself here in a stream of Woolf, Nin, Acker, Garner, Sontag, Didion. Oh, wait (or not) there is more. Always. Damn, always there is more. But when do you see nothing Susan? How many books were in your private library? Let me check. 15,000 books Susan!

why?

peculiar?

watery words. — a sonic stream

Mirror — Bourgeois write about fact can't spell

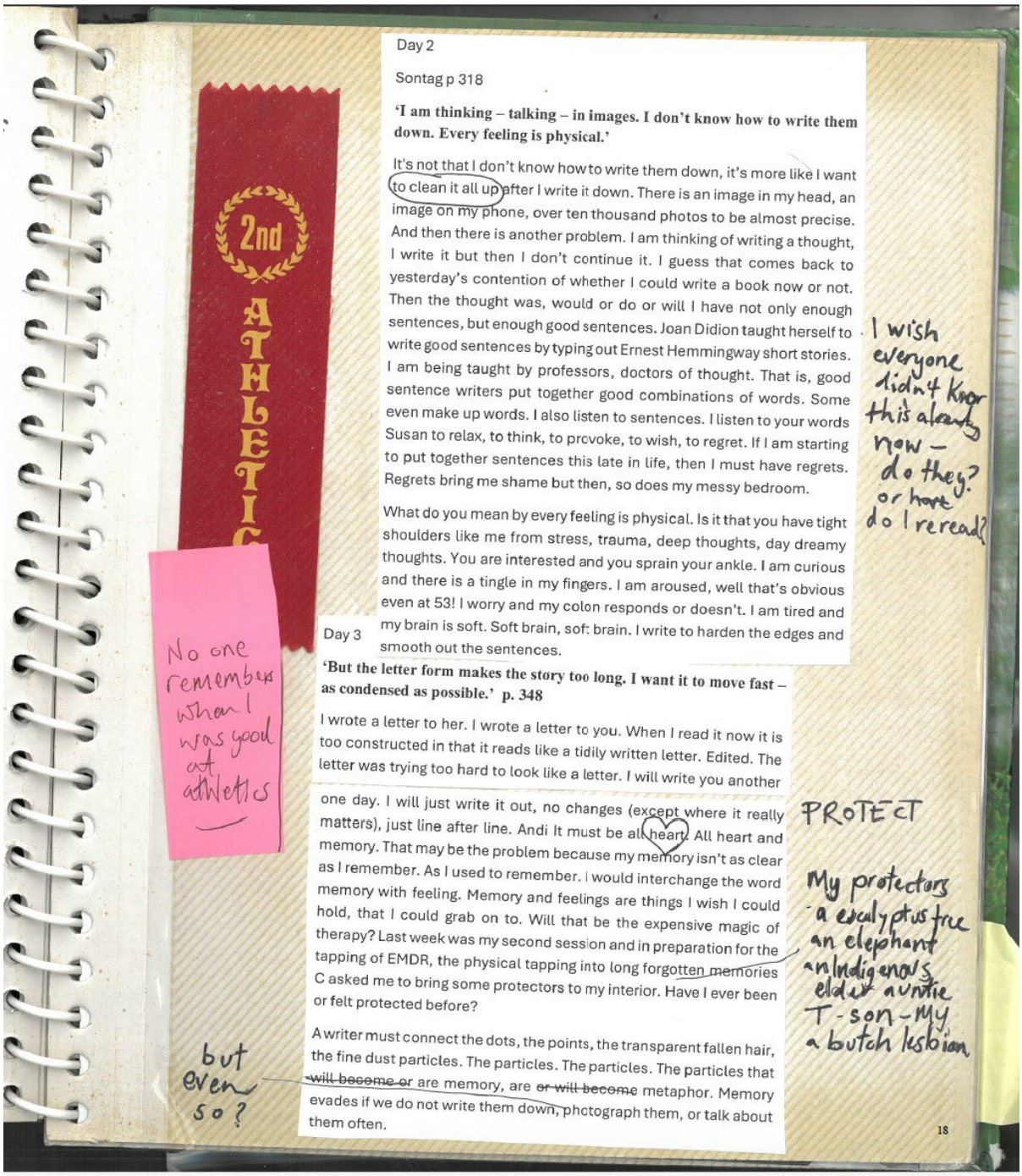
clunky

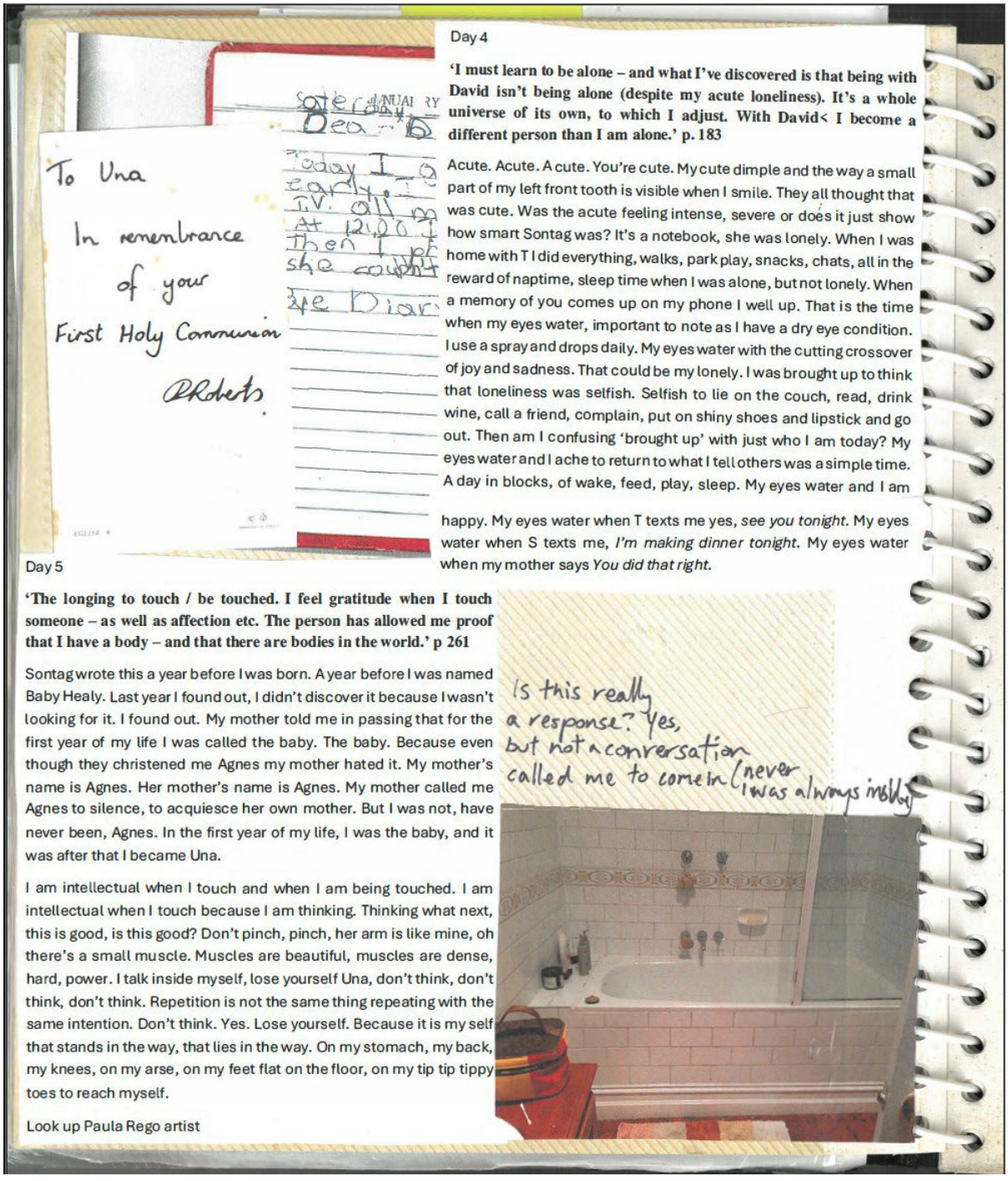
the woman in the mirror

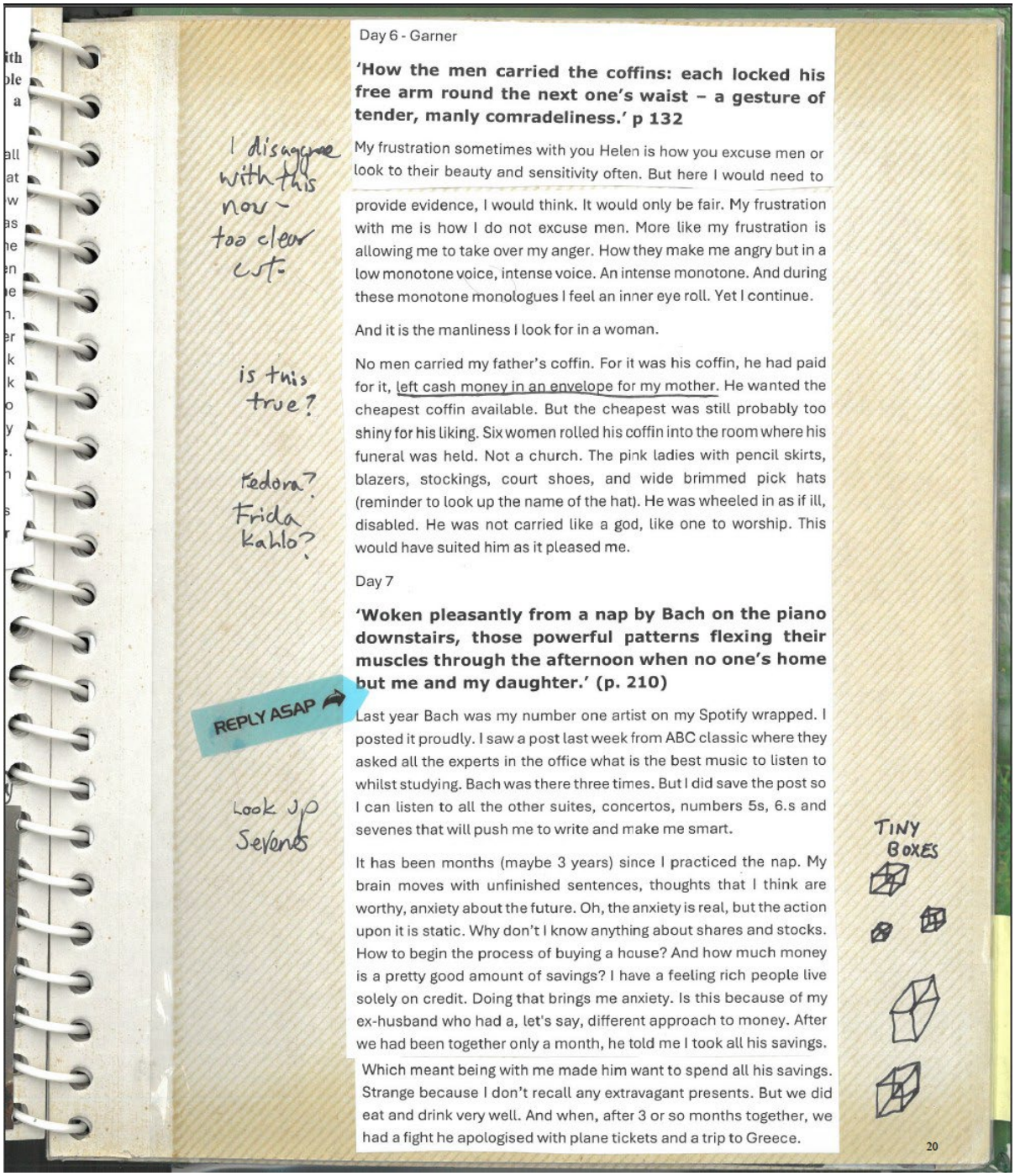
If I cross out all that only I think obvious will ~~there be~~ anything remain There is never nothing but there is No

ok

Find Didion article


Day 2
Sontag p 318
'I am thinking – talking – in images. I don't know how to write them down. Every feeling is physical.'
It's not that I don't know how to write them down, it's more like I want to clean it all up after I write it down. There is an image in my head, an image on my phone, over ten thousand photos to be almost precise. And then there is another problem. I am thinking of writing a thought, I write it but then I don't continue it. I guess that comes back to yesterday's contention of whether I could write a book now or not. Then the thought was, would or do or will I have not only enough sentences, but enough good sentences. Joan Didion taught herself to write good sentences by typing out Ernest Hemmingway short stories. I am being taught by professors, doctors of thought. That is, good sentence writers put together good combinations of words. Some even make up words. I also listen to sentences. I listen to your words Susan to relax, to think, to provoke, to wish, to regret. If I am starting to put together sentences this late in life, then I must have regrets. Regrets bring me shame but then, so does my messy bedroom.
What do you mean by every feeling is physical. Is it that you have tight shoulders like me from stress, trauma, deep thoughts, day dreamy thoughts. You are interested and you sprain your ankle. I am curious and there is a tingle in my fingers. I am aroused, well that's obvious even at 53! I worry and my colon responds or doesn't. I am tired and my brain is soft. Soft brain, sof: brain. I write to harden the edges and smooth out the sentences.
Day 3
'But the letter form makes the story too long. I want it to move fast – as condensed as possible.' p. 348
I wrote a letter to her. I wrote a letter to you. When I read it now it is too constructed in that it reads like a tidily written letter. Edited. The letter was trying too hard to look like a letter. I will write you another
one day. I will just write it out, no changes (except where it really matters), just line after line. Andi It must be all heart. All heart and memory. That may be the problem because my memory isn't as clear as I remember. As I used to remember. I would interchange the word memory with feeling. Memory and feelings are things I wish I could hold, that I could grab on to. Will that be the expensive magic of therapy? Last week was my second session and in preparation for the tapping of EMDR, the physical tapping into long forgotten memories C asked me to bring some protectors to my interior. Have I ever been or felt protected before?
A writer must connect the dots, the points, the transparent fallen hair, the fine dust particles. The particles. The particles. The particles that will become or are memory, are ~~or will become~~ metaphor. Memory evades if we do not write them down, photograph them, or talk about them often.
18
2nd
ATHLETIC
No one remembers when I was good at athletics
I wish everyone didn't know this already now – do they? or have do I reread?
PROTECT
My protectors - a eucalyptus tree an elephant an Indigenous elder auntie T - son - my a butch lesbian
but even so?


To Una
In remembrance
of your
First Holy Communion
Day 4
'I must learn to be alone – and what I've discovered is that being with David isn't being alone (despite my acute loneliness). It's a whole universe of its own, to which I adjust. With David< I become a different person than I am alone.' p. 183
Acute. Acute. A cute. You're cute. My cute dimple and the way a small part of my left front tooth is visible when I smile. They all thought that was cute. Was the acute feeling intense, severe or does it just show how smart Sontag was? It's a notebook, she was lonely. When I was home with T I did everything, walks, park play, snacks, chats, all in the reward of naptime, sleep time when I was alone, but not lonely. When a memory of you comes up on my phone I well up. That is the time when my eyes water, important to note as I have a dry eye condition. I use a spray and drops daily. My eyes water with the cutting crossover of joy and sadness. That could be my lonely. I was brought up to think that loneliness was selfish. Selfish to lie on the couch, read, drink wine, call a friend, complain, put on shiny shoes and lipstick and go out. Then am I confusing 'brought up' with just who I am today? My eyes water and I ache to return to what I tell others was a simple time. A day in blocks, of wake, feed, play, sleep. My eyes water and I am happy. My eyes water when T texts me yes, *see you tonight*. My eyes water when S texts me, *I'm making dinner tonight*. My eyes water when my mother says *You did that right*.
Day 5
'The longing to touch / be touched. I feel gratitude when I touch someone – as well as affection etc. The person has allowed me proof that I have a body – and that there are bodies in the world.' p 261
Sontag wrote this a year before I was born. A year before I was named Baby Healy. Last year I found out, I didn't discover it because I wasn't looking for it. I found out. My mother told me in passing that for the first year of my life I was called the baby. The baby. Because even though they christened me Agnes my mother hated it. My mother's name is Agnes. Her mother's name is Agnes. My mother called me Agnes to silence, to acquiesce her own mother. But I was not, have never been, Agnes. In the first year of my life, I was the baby, and it was after that I became Una.
I am intellectual when I touch and when I am being touched. I am intellectual when I touch because I am thinking. Thinking what next, this is good, is this good? Don't pinch, pinch, her arm is like mine, oh there's a small muscle. Muscles are beautiful, muscles are dense, hard, power. I talk inside myself, lose yourself Una, don't think, don't think, don't think. Repetition is not the same thing repeating with the same intention. Don't think. Yes. Lose yourself. Because it is my self that stands in the way, that lies in the way. On my stomach, my back, my knees, on my arse, on my feet flat on the floor, on my tip tip tippy toes to reach myself.
Look up Paula Rego artist
Is this really a response? Yes, but not a conversation
called me to come in (never I was always inside



Day 6 - Garner

'How the men carried the coffins: each locked his free arm round the next one's waist – a gesture of tender, manly comradeliness.' p 132

I disagree with this now - too clear cut.

My frustration sometimes with you Helen is how you excuse men or look to their beauty and sensitivity often. But here I would need to provide evidence, I would think. It would only be fair. My frustration with me is how I do not excuse men. More like my frustration is allowing me to take over my anger. How they make me angry but in a low monotone voice, intense voice. An intense monotone. And during these monotone monologues I feel an inner eye roll. Yet I continue.

And it is the manliness I look for in a woman.

is this true?

No men carried my father's coffin. For it was his coffin, he had paid for it, left cash money in an envelope for my mother. He wanted the cheapest coffin available. But the cheapest was still probably too shiny for his liking. Six women rolled his coffin into the room where his funeral was held. Not a church. The pink ladies with pencil skirts, blazers, stockings, court shoes, and wide brimmed pick hats (reminder to look up the name of the hat). He was wheeled in as if ill, disabled. He was not carried like a god, like one to worship. This would have suited him as it pleased me.

Fedora? Frida Kahlo?

Day 7

'Woken pleasantly from a nap by Bach on the piano downstairs, those powerful patterns flexing their muscles through the afternoon when no one's home but me and my daughter.' (p. 210)

REPLY ASAP

Last year Bach was my number one artist on my Spotify wrapped. I posted it proudly. I saw a post last week from ABC classic where they asked all the experts in the office what is the best music to listen to whilst studying. Bach was there three times. But I did save the post so I can listen to all the other suites, concertos, numbers 5s, 6.s and sevenes that will push me to write and make me smart.

Look up Sevenes

It has been months (maybe 3 years) since I practiced the nap. My brain moves with unfinished sentences, thoughts that I think are worthy, anxiety about the future. Oh, the anxiety is real, but the action upon it is static. Why don't I know anything about shares and stocks. How to begin the process of buying a house? And how much money is a pretty good amount of savings? I have a feeling rich people live solely on credit. Doing that brings me anxiety. Is this because of my ex-husband who had a, let's say, different approach to money. After we had been together only a month, he told me I took all his savings. Which meant being with me made him want to spend all his savings. Strange because I don't recall any extravagant presents. But we did eat and drink very well. And when, after 3 or so months together, we had a fight he apologised with plane tickets and a trip to Greece.

TINY BOXES

20

Day 8

'A house I like. Full of light. A backyard full of bull-dozable sheds. A huge park in front, and behind, a view over to Mount Macedon. Do people like me buy houses? (Garner 1986, p.209)

Only now or only lately does this play on my mind. This being the business of buying a house. I am not afraid, but I do wonder when and how. If I could live renting without the hassle of buying I would forever. Oh, how Australia hates the renter, fears the renter who may consider making their rental a home. I rented a house in Rosebud from my brother. He charged us the same amount as he would a stranger. No generational wealth, no sharing, no community there. The house was a perfect box. Light walls, functional kitchen, floor to almost ceiling fragile windows. I planted a wild and mixed-up garden in the backyard. Lavender flowers amongst rocket amongst capsicums and marigolds. Zucchini and parsley and basil that never thrived. It was only in Western Australia did my basil thrive. It grew in between T's Garden of plastic army toys and Mr Hulks and random arms and legs from S's barbies. I had enough basil for salads and pesto.

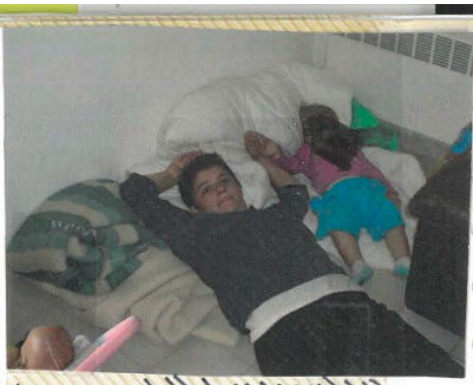
I write now looking out my sixth-floor window. An empty of buildings block (land is blocks for housing purposes, ownership purposes). Instead, there are trucks, temporary fences, orange plastic bins, a portable office, safety gear and men walking from end to end.

Day 9

'Gloomily coming into my bedroom I stump towards the bed and see the mess of New York Reviews beside it, and a copy of Joan London's stories that are so beautiful, and I think, Whatever happens, I've got this one little power – I'm a writer.' p. 241 1986

Shortest entry. Isn't it ironic

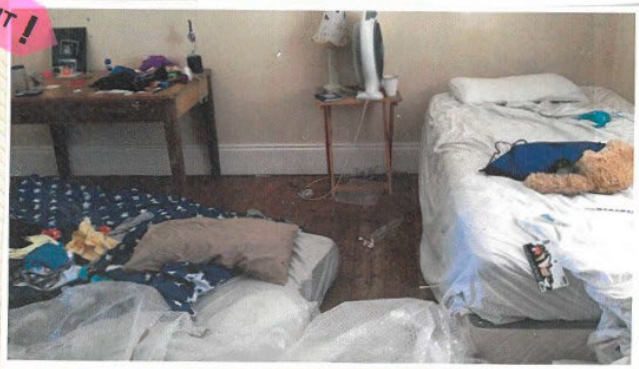
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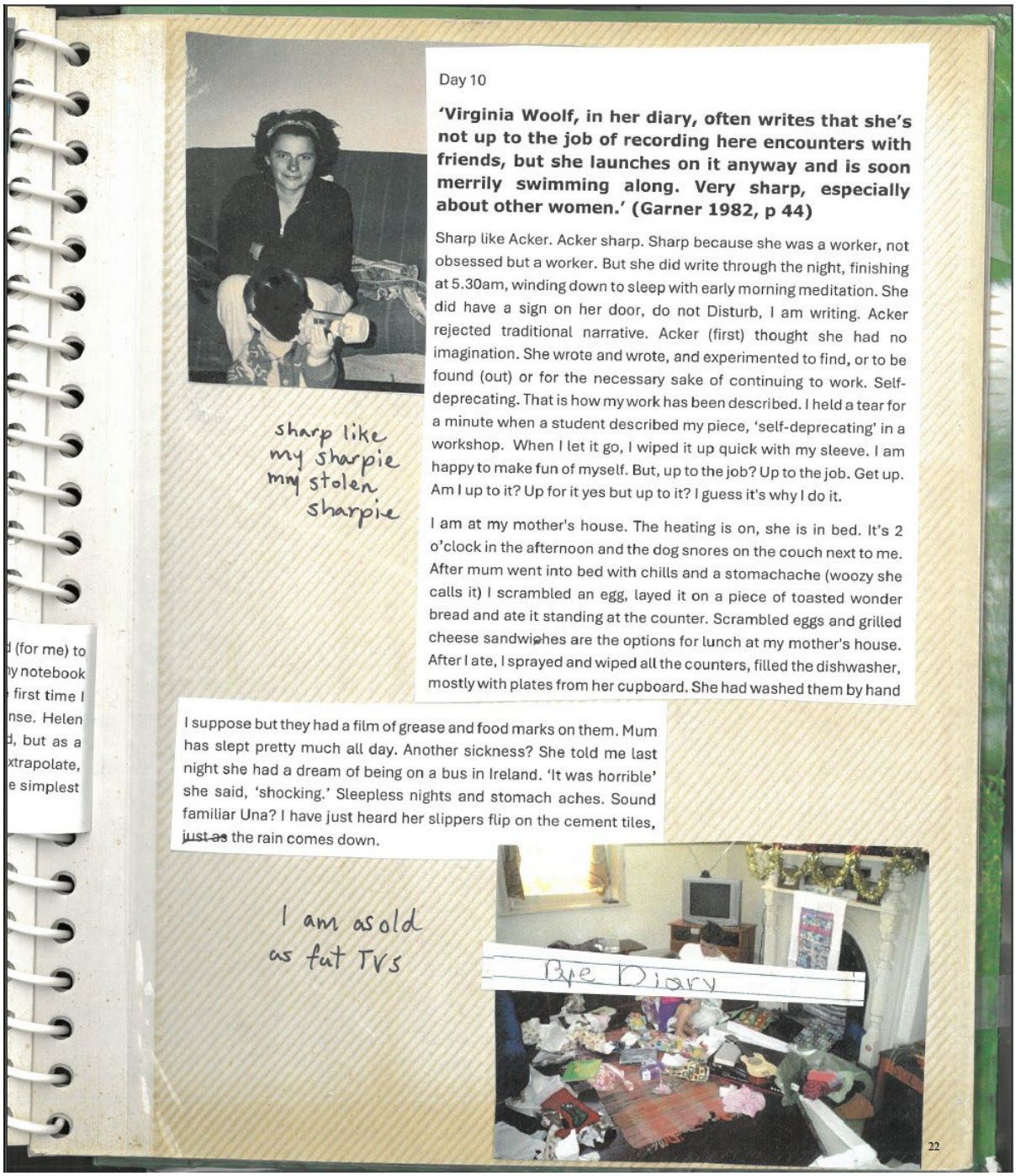


I can't do everything.

DAYS
DAYS
DAYS

To be a writer is to write, to have a discipline to write and (for me) to write at least a sentence every day. I consciously look at my notebook or consider my notebook as serious writing – even if the first time I smash it out it doesn't make clear sense, make any sense. Helen hardly edited her notebooks before they were published, but as a writer honing and digging for gold I must go back and extrapolate, uncover, give more detail, to uncover and unearth or in the simplest way – make it bloody better.





Day 10

'Virginia Woolf, in her diary, often writes that she's not up to the job of recording here encounters with friends, but she launches on it anyway and is soon merrily swimming along. Very sharp, especially about other women.' (Garner 1982, p 44)

Sharp like Acker. Acker sharp. Sharp because she was a worker, not obsessed but a worker. But she did write through the night, finishing at 5.30am, winding down to sleep with early morning meditation. She did have a sign on her door, do not Disturb, I am writing. Acker rejected traditional narrative. Acker (first) thought she had no imagination. She wrote and wrote, and experimented to find, or to be found (out) or for the necessary sake of continuing to work. Self-deprecating. That is how my work has been described. I held a tear for a minute when a student described my piece, 'self-deprecating' in a workshop. When I let it go, I wiped it up quick with my sleeve. I am happy to make fun of myself. But, up to the job? Up to the job. Get up. Am I up to it? Up for it yes but up to it? I guess it's why I do it.

I am at my mother's house. The heating is on, she is in bed. It's 2 o'clock in the afternoon and the dog snores on the couch next to me. After mum went into bed with chills and a stomachache (woozy she calls it) I scrambled an egg, layed it on a piece of toasted wonder bread and ate it standing at the counter. Scrambled eggs and grilled cheese sandwiches are the options for lunch at my mother's house. After I ate, I sprayed and wiped all the counters, filled the dishwasher, mostly with plates from her cupboard. She had washed them by hand

sharp like my sharpie my stolen sharpie

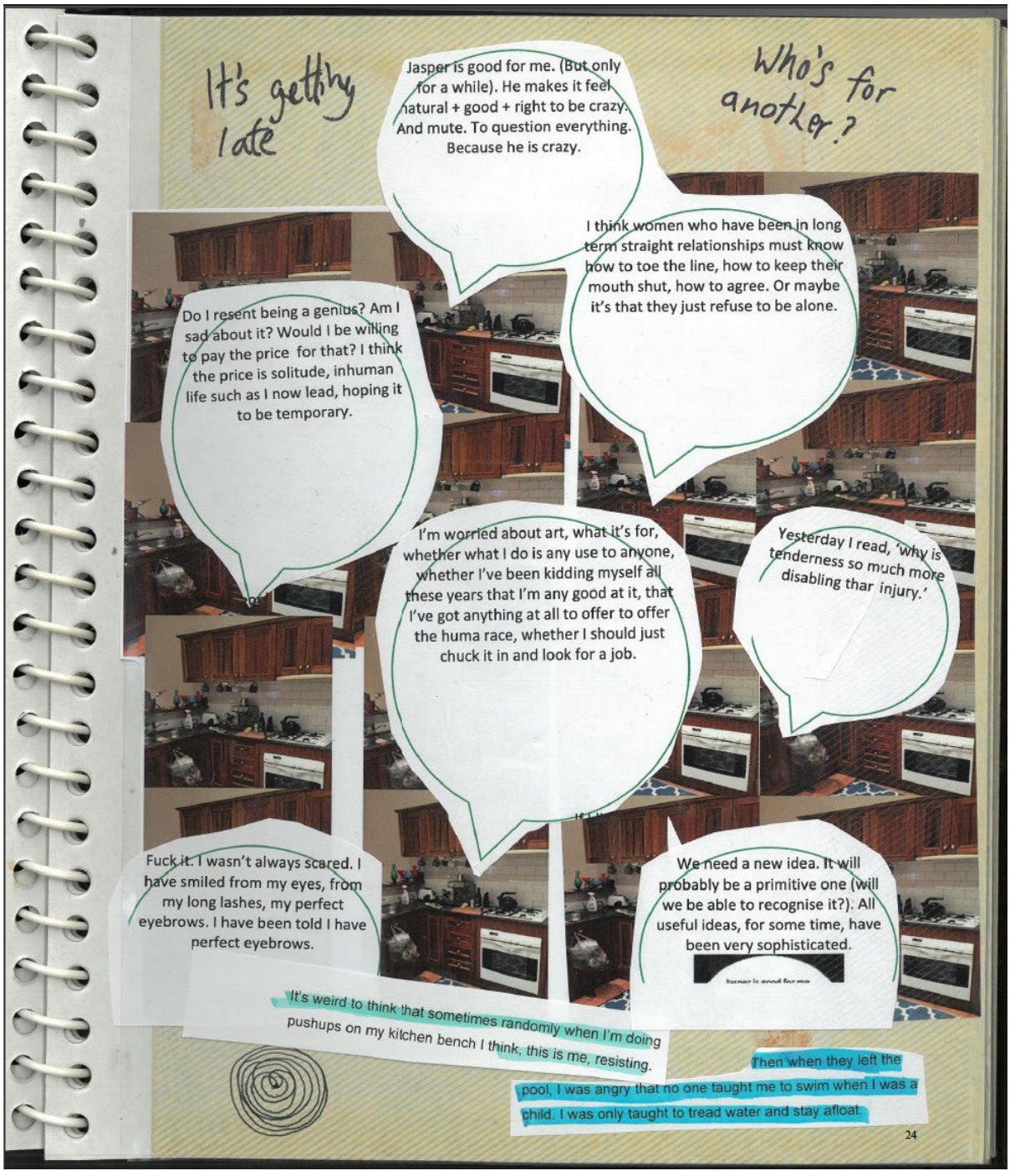
I suppose but they had a film of grease and food marks on them. Mum has slept pretty much all day. Another sickness? She told me last night she had a dream of being on a bus in Ireland. 'It was horrible' she said, 'shocking.' Sleepless nights and stomach aches. Sound familiar Una? I have just heard her slippers flip on the cement tiles, ~~just as~~ the rain comes down.

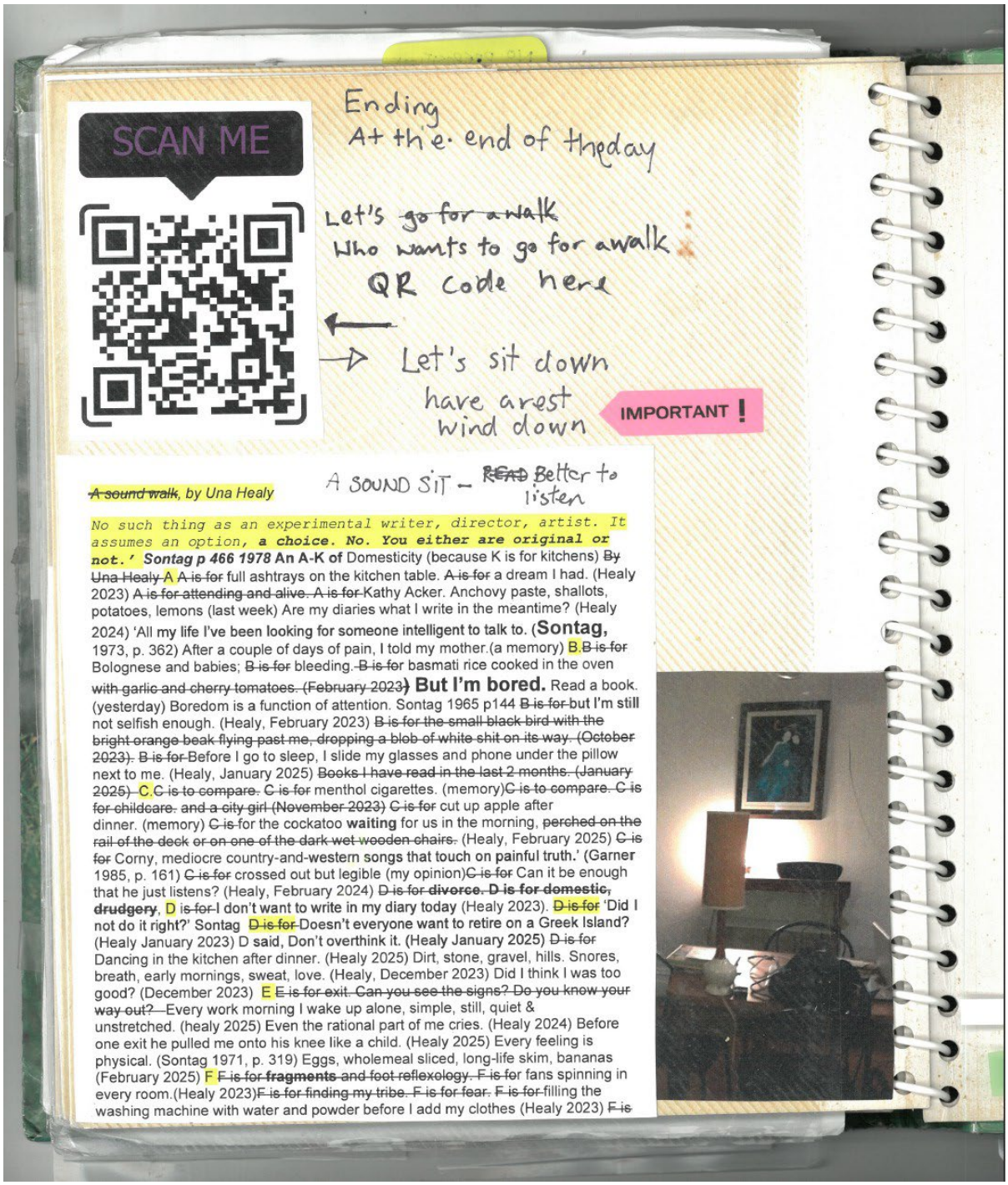
I am as old as fat TVs

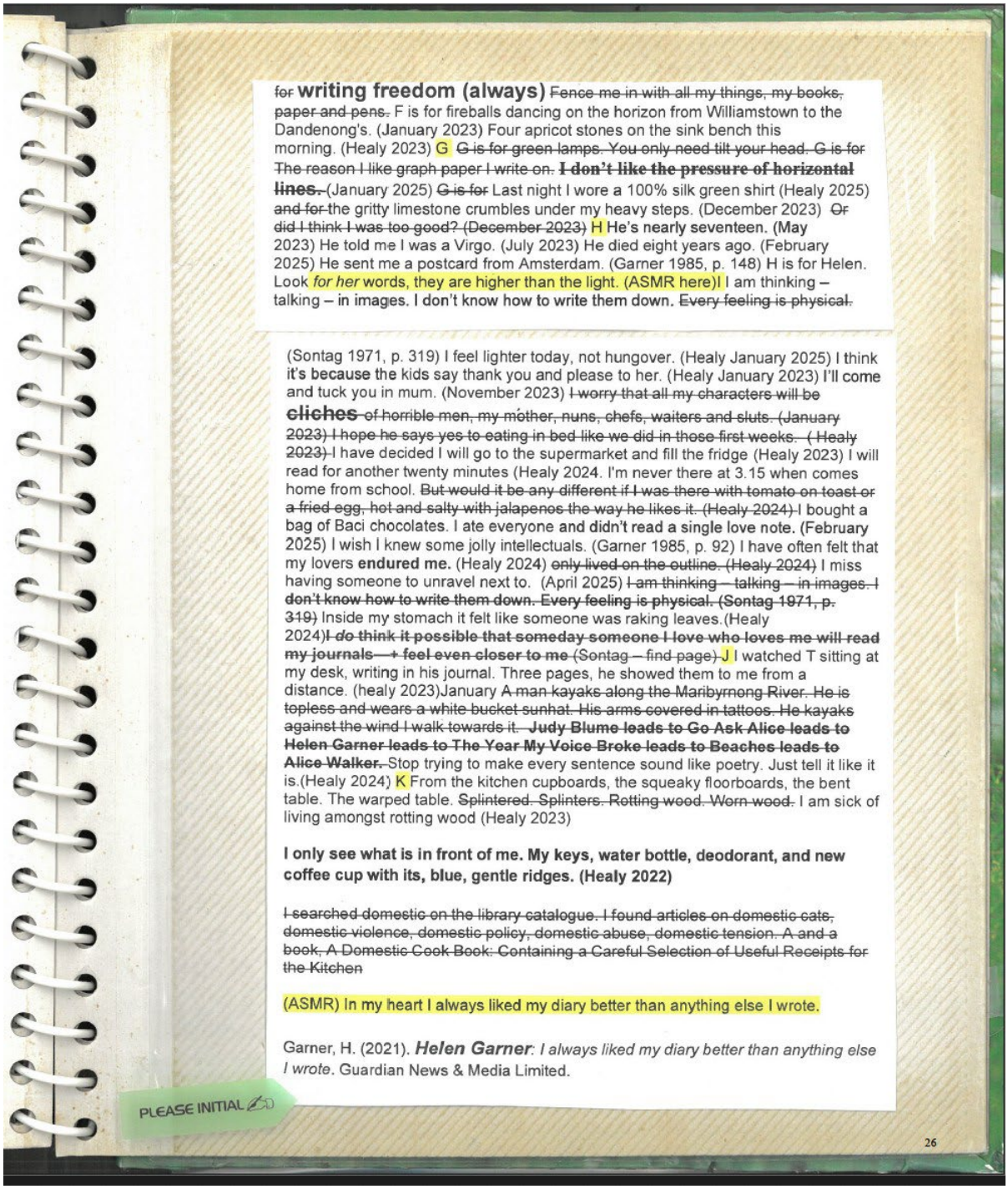
Bye Diary

22


Saturday night chats with the girls, the women, the writers, us
UNA
My night was sweaty and sleepless. Sweat under my breasts, in the crevices across my neck. My pillow was damp.
Mad people = people who stand alone + burn. I'm attracted to them because they give me permission to do the same.
I feel, when I'm with him, that I'm holding myself lightly in check.
I'm attracted to demons, to the demonic in people. Only that? Ultimately yes. Madness, but high-temperature anti-mainstream madness. People with their own generators.
I saw your ex last night at a party. I went up to him and we shook hands. I realised I didn't hate him as much as I thought I did.
I'm completely myself with this one now. But I'm still not selfish enough.
I saw a spider the size of my hand on the rock wall. I thought of Louise Bourgeois's spiders and so then I thought of my mother, of my mother's body and mine. The spider moved each time I swam back to where it was before.
Pack away your clothes


It's getting late
Who's for another?
Jasper is good for me. (But only for a while). He makes it feel natural + good + right to be crazy. And mute. To question everything. Because he is crazy.
I think women who have been in long term straight relationships must know how to toe the line, how to keep their mouth shut, how to agree. Or maybe it's that they just refuse to be alone.
Do I resent being a genius? Am I sad about it? Would I be willing to pay the price for that? I think the price is solitude, inhuman life such as I now lead, hoping it to be temporary.
I'm worried about art, what it's for, whether what I do is any use to anyone, whether I've been kidding myself all these years that I'm any good at it, that I've got anything at all to offer to offer the huma race, whether I should just chuck it in and look for a job.
Yesterday I read, 'why is tenderness so much more disabling thar injury.'
Fuck it. I wasn't always scared. I have smiled from my eyes, from my long lashes, my perfect eyebrows. I have been told I have perfect eyebrows.
We need a new idea. It will probably be a primitive one (will we be able to recognise it?). All useful ideas, for some time, have been very sophisticated.
It's weird to think that sometimes randomly when I'm doing pushups on my kitchen bench I think, this is me, resisting.
Then when they left the pool, I was angry that no one taught me to swim when I was a child. I was only taught to tread water and stay afloat.
24


SCAN ME
Ending
At the end of the day
Let's ~~go for a walk~~
Who wants to go for a walk
QR code here
Let's sit down
have a rest
wind down
IMPORTANT !
~~A sound walk~~, by Una Healy
A SOUND SIT – ~~READ~~ Better to listen
No such thing as an experimental writer, director, artist. It assumes an option, a choice. No. You either are original or not.' Sontag p 466 1978 An A-K of Domesticity (because K is for kitchens) ~~By Una Healy A~~ ~~A is for~~ full ashtrays on the kitchen table. ~~A is for~~ a dream I had. (Healy 2023) ~~A is for attending and alive. A is for~~ Kathy Acker. Anchovy paste, shallots, potatoes, lemons (last week) Are my diaries what I write in the meantime? (Healy 2024) 'All my life I've been looking for someone intelligent to talk to. (Sontag, 1973, p. 362) After a couple of days of pain, I told my mother.(a memory) B.~~B is for~~ Bolognese and babies; ~~B is for~~ bleeding. ~~B is for~~ basmati rice cooked in the oven ~~with garlic and cherry tomatoes. (February 2023)~~ But I'm bored. Read a book. (yesterday) Boredom is a function of attention. Sontag 1965 p144 ~~B is for~~ but I'm still not selfish enough. (Healy, February 2023) ~~B is for the small black bird with the bright orange beak flying past me, dropping a blob of white shit on its way. (October 2023).~~ ~~B is for~~ Before I go to sleep, I slide my glasses and phone under the pillow next to me. (Healy, January 2025) ~~Books I have read in the last 2 months. (January 2025)~~ C.~~C is to compare.~~ ~~C is for~~ menthol cigarettes. (memory)~~C is to compare. C is for childcare. and a city girl (November 2023)~~ ~~C is for~~ cut up apple after dinner. (memory) ~~C is~~ for the cockatoo waiting for us in the morning, ~~perched on the rail of the deck or on one of the dark wet wooden chairs.~~ (Healy, February 2025) ~~C is for~~ Corny, mediocre country-and-western songs that touch on painful truth.' (Garner 1985, p. 161) ~~C is for~~ crossed out but legible (my opinion)~~C is for~~ Can it be enough that he just listens? (Healy, February 2024) ~~D is for divorce. D is for domestic, drudgery~~, D ~~is for~~ I don't want to write in my diary today (Healy 2023). ~~D is for~~ 'Did I not do it right?' Sontag ~~D is for~~ Doesn't everyone want to retire on a Greek Island? (Healy January 2023) D said, Don't overthink it. (Healy January 2025) ~~D is for~~ Dancing in the kitchen after dinner. (Healy 2025) Dirt, stone, gravel, hills. Snores, breath, early mornings, sweat, love. (Healy, December 2023) Did I think I was too good? (December 2023) E ~~E is for exit. Can you see the signs? Do you know your way out?~~ Every work morning I wake up alone, simple, still, quiet & unstretched. (healy 2025) Even the rational part of me cries. (Healy 2024) Before one exit he pulled me onto his knee like a child. (Healy 2025) Every feeling is physical. (Sontag 1971, p. 319) Eggs, wholemeal sliced, long-life skim, bananas (February 2025) F ~~F is for fragments and foot reflexology. F is for~~ fans spinning in every room.(Healy 2023)~~F is for finding my tribe. F is for fear. F is for~~ filling the washing machine with water and powder before I add my clothes (Healy 2023) ~~F is~~



~~for~~ **writing freedom (always)** ~~Fence me in with all my things, my books, paper and pens.~~ F is for fireballs dancing on the horizon from Williamstown to the Dandenong's. (January 2023) Four apricot stones on the sink bench this morning. (Healy 2023) G ~~G is for green lamps. You only need tilt your head. G is for The reason I like graph paper I write on.~~ ~~**I don't like the pressure of horizontal lines.**~~ (January 2025) ~~G is for~~ Last night I wore a 100% silk green shirt (Healy 2025) ~~and for~~ the gritty limestone crumbles under my heavy steps. (December 2023) ~~Or did I think I was too good? (December 2023)~~ H He's nearly seventeen. (May 2023) He told me I was a Virgo. (July 2023) He died eight years ago. (February 2025) He sent me a postcard from Amsterdam. (Garner 1985, p. 148) H is for Helen. Look *for her* words, they are higher than the light. (ASMR here)I I am thinking – talking – in images. I don't know how to write them down. ~~Every feeling is physical.~~

(Sontag 1971, p. 319) I feel lighter today, not hungover. (Healy January 2025) I think it's because the kids say thank you and please to her. (Healy January 2023) I'll come and tuck you in mum. (November 2023) ~~I worry that all my characters will be~~ **cliches** ~~of horrible men, my mother, nuns, chefs, waiters and sluts. (January 2023) I hope he says yes to eating in bed like we did in those first weeks. (Healy 2023)~~ I have decided I will go to the supermarket and fill the fridge (Healy 2023) I will read for another twenty minutes (Healy 2024. I'm never there at 3.15 when comes home from school. ~~But would it be any different if I was there with tomato on toast or a fried egg, hot and salty with jalapenos the way he likes it. (Healy 2024)~~ I bought a bag of Baci chocolates. I ate everyone and didn't read a single love note. (February 2025) I wish I knew some jolly intellectuals. (Garner 1985, p. 92) I have often felt that my lovers **endured me.** (Healy 2024) ~~only lived on the outline. (Healy 2024)~~ I miss having someone to unravel next to. (April 2025) ~~I am thinking – talking – in images. I don't know how to write them down. Every feeling is physical. (Sontag 1971, p. 319)~~ Inside my stomach it felt like someone was raking leaves.(Healy 2024)~~I *do* think it possible that someday someone I love who loves me will read my journals—+ feel even closer to me~~ (Sontag – find page) J I watched T sitting at my desk, writing in his journal. Three pages, he showed them to me from a distance. (healy 2023)January ~~A man kayaks along the Maribyrnong River. He is topless and wears a white bucket sunhat. His arms covered in tattoos. He kayaks against the wind I walk towards it.~~ ~~**Judy Blume leads to Go Ask Alice leads to Helen Garner leads to The Year My Voice Broke leads to Beaches leads to Alice Walker.**~~ Stop trying to make every sentence sound like poetry. Just tell it like it is.(Healy 2024) K From the kitchen cupboards, the squeaky floorboards, the bent table. The warped table. ~~Splintered. Splinters. Rotting wood. Worn wood.~~ I am sick of living amongst rotting wood (Healy 2023)

I only see what is in front of me. My keys, water bottle, deodorant, and new coffee cup with its, blue, gentle ridges. (Healy 2022)

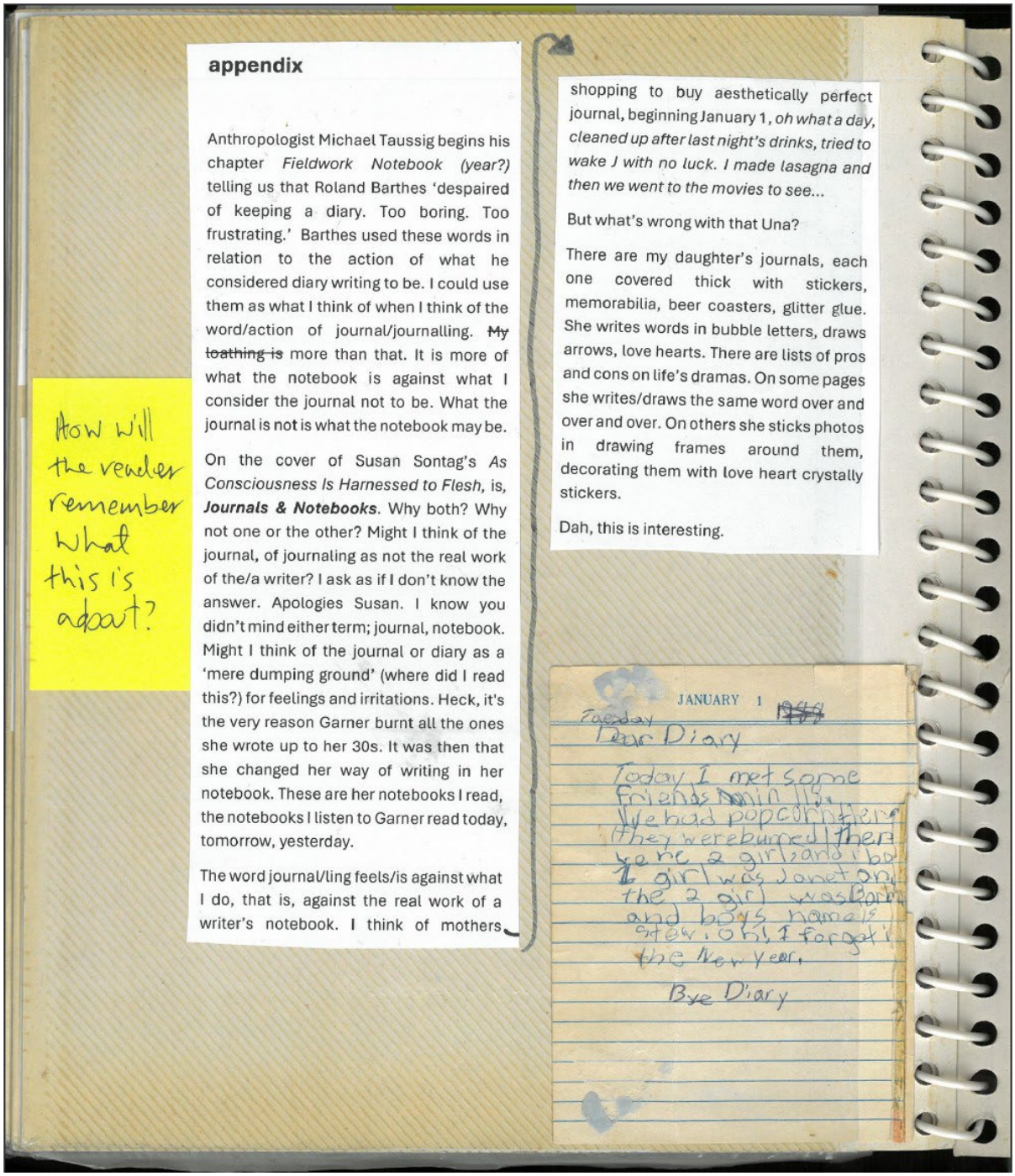
~~I searched domestic on the library catalogue. I found articles on domestic cats, domestic violence, domestic policy, domestic abuse, domestic tension. A and a book, A Domestic Cook Book: Containing a Careful Selection of Useful Receipts for the Kitchen~~

(ASMR) In my heart I always liked my diary better than anything else I wrote.

Garner, H. (2021). ***Helen Garner***: *I always liked my diary better than anything else I wrote*. Guardian News & Media Limited.

PLEASE INITIAL

26



appendix

Anthropologist Michael Taussig begins his chapter *Fieldwork Notebook (year?)* telling us that Roland Barthes 'despaired of keeping a diary. Too boring. Too frustrating.' Barthes used these words in relation to the action of what he considered diary writing to be. I could use them as what I think of when I think of the word/action of journal/journalling. ~~My loathing is~~ more than that. It is more of what the notebook is against what I consider the journal not to be. What the journal is not is what the notebook may be.

On the cover of Susan Sontag's *As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh*, is, ***Journals & Notebooks***. Why both? Why not one or the other? Might I think of the journal, of journaling as not the real work of the/a writer? I ask as if I don't know the answer. Apologies Susan. I know you didn't mind either term; journal, notebook. Might I think of the journal or diary as a 'mere dumping ground' (where did I read this?) for feelings and irritations. Heck, it's the very reason Garner burnt all the ones she wrote up to her 30s. It was then that she changed her way of writing in her notebook. These are her notebooks I read, the notebooks I listen to Garner read today, tomorrow, yesterday.

The word journal/ling feels/is against what I do, that is, against the real work of a writer's notebook. I think of mothers shopping to buy aesthetically perfect journal, beginning January 1, *oh what a day, cleaned up after last night's drinks, tried to wake J with no luck. I made lasagna and then we went to the movies to see...*

But what's wrong with that Una?

There are my daughter's journals, each one covered thick with stickers, memorabilia, beer coasters, glitter glue. She writes words in bubble letters, draws arrows, love hearts. There are lists of pros and cons on life's dramas. On some pages she writes/draws the same word over and over and over. On others she sticks photos in drawing frames around them, decorating them with love heart crystally stickers.

Dah, this is interesting.

How will the reader remember what this is about?

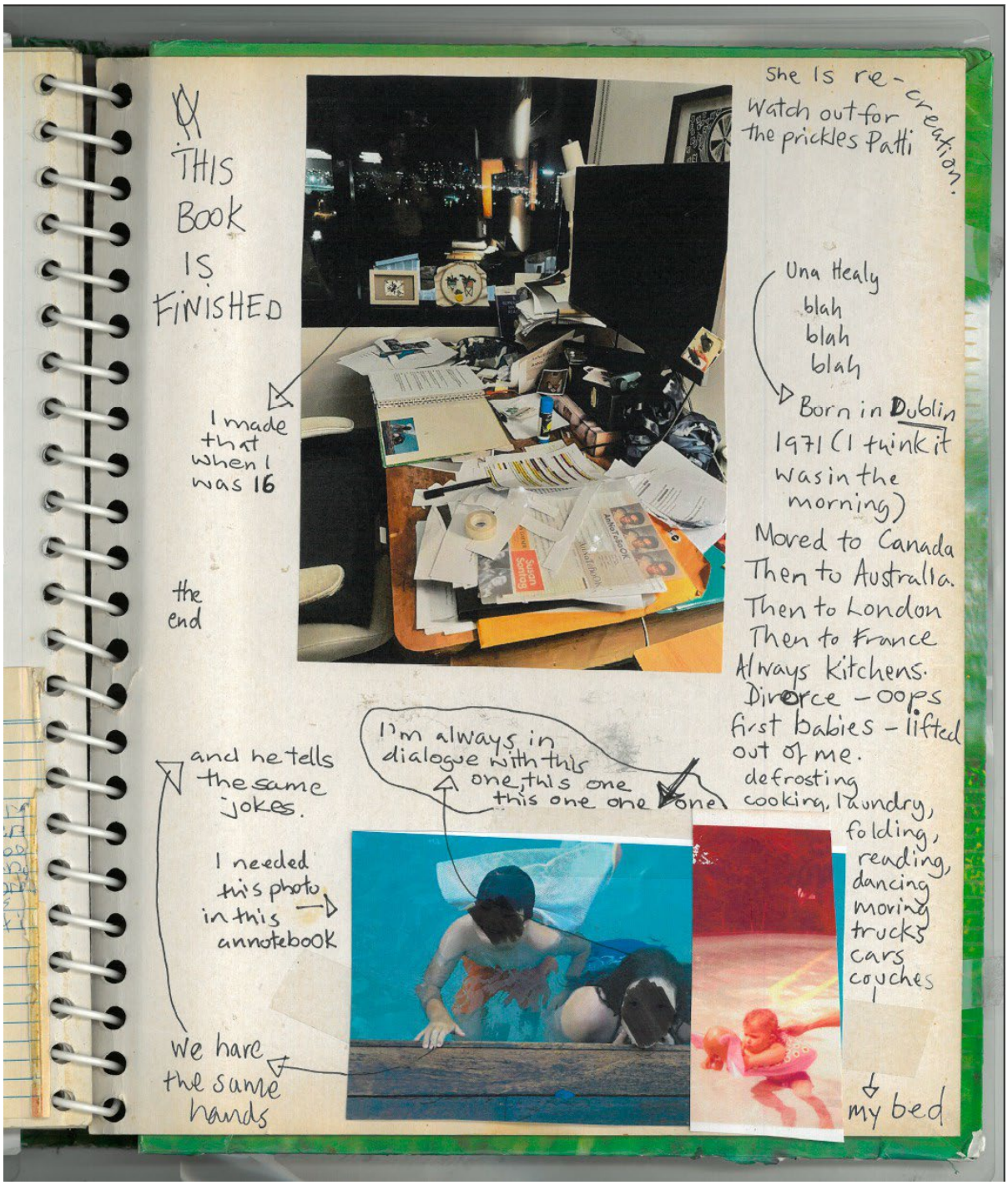
JANUARY 1

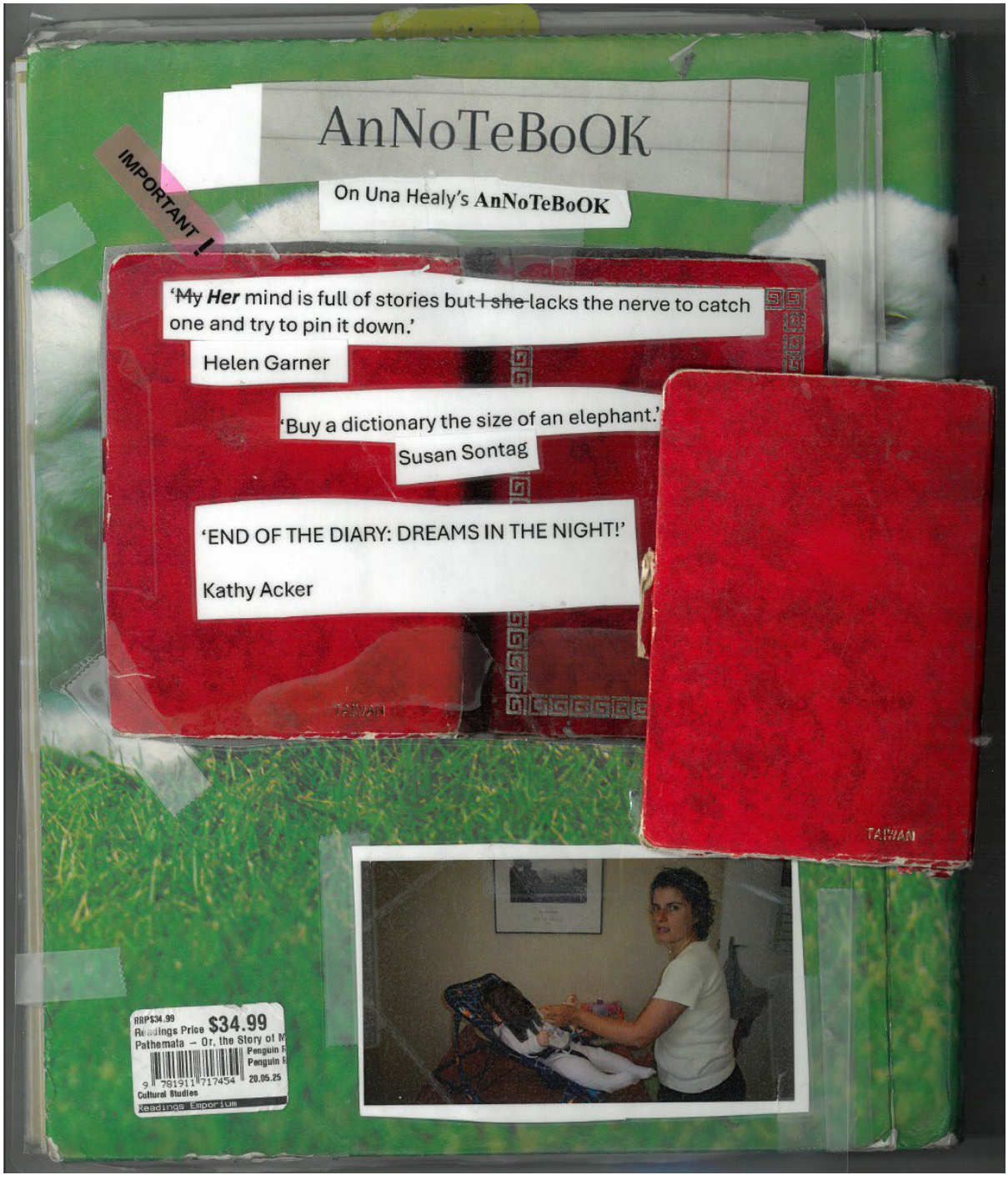
Tuesday

Dear Diary

Today I met some friends in the park we had popcorn then they were burned then there were 2 girls and 1 boy 1 girl was Janet and the 2 girl was Barb and boys name is ~~peter~~ Bob, I forget the New year.

Bye Diary


THIS Book IS FINISHED
I made that when I was 16
the end
She is re-creation.
Watch out for the prickles Patti
Una Healy
blah
blah
blah
Born in Dublin 1971 (I think it was in the morning)
Moved to Canada
Then to Australia.
Then to London
Then to France
Always kitchens.
Divorce - oops
first babies - lifted out of me.
defrosting
cooking, laundry,
folding,
reading,
dancing
moving
trucks
cars
couches
I'm always in dialogue with this one, this one this one one one
and he tells the same jokes.
I needed this photo in this annotebook
We have the same hands
my bed


AnNoTeBoOK
IMPORTANT !
On Una Healy's AnNoTeBoOK
'~~My~~ Her mind is full of stories but ~~I she~~ lacks the nerve to catch one and try to pin it down.'
Helen Garner
'Buy a dictionary the size of an elephant.'
Susan Sontag
'END OF THE DIARY: DREAMS IN THE NIGHT!'
Kathy Acker
TAIWAN
TAIWAN
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Cultural Studies
Readings Emporium

Una Healy explores experimental techniques within the diary and notebook genre as a feminist practice. Her work spans poetry and performance and has appeared in Cordite Poetry Review*,* Bowen Street Press *and WA Literary Magazine,* Dot Dot Dash.

TEXT
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TEXT prose

A. G. Pettet

Scaffolding

I am thirty-six when my first book, a slim paperback with a washed-out photograph of the Story Bridge on the cover, begins to circulate in ways I had once imagined and now find strangely weightless. Reviews appear. A panel in Sydney wants me. A festival in Byron Bay suddenly has a gap after an American novelist withdraws. My publisher calls at 8:40 p.m., breathless, as if my success were happening to them, not me. When I hang up, the room seems thinner, praise has replaced oxygen with something insufficient for breathing.

The cover sits beside me on the table, accusatory in its simplicity. I argued for abstraction, something that gestured toward the book's preoccupation with suspension, the instability of remembered places. But the publisher insisted on recognisability: If it's about Brisbane, it needs to look like Brisbane. They were right, and I resented it. The photograph is too literal, bridge as connection, when what I meant was something more uncertain, the way a life hangs between versions of itself, the way a city floats above its own heat, visible and unfinished.

Anna is in the next room, packing for Melbourne. She folds her clothes with the deliberation of someone preparing for a new role rather than a new city. Her hand-writing on the cardboard boxes, BOOKS, CLOTHES, FRAGILE, looks architectural, like blueprints of her departure. I want to ask her to stay, but the part of me that still believes in artistic integrity refuses to stage the plea. We have been drifting for months. Even our arguments dissolve before reaching impact. We sleep beside each other like two installations sharing a gallery, proximate but unrelated, lit from different angles.

At night, the mist rises off the river in slow pulses. Thousands of bats drift above us, a smear of dark against the violet sky. Anna scrolls Melbourne rentals while I read online comments about my book. Her screen glows with terraces, laneways, and the promise of colder air. Mine glows with strangers debating whether my prose is "pretentious", "deliberate", or "too abstract for the average reader". It feels like two different cities are opening in front of us.

She leans slightly away from me in bed, an unconscious tilt that registers more than any argument. I imagine touching her shoulder, proof that we still inhabit the same narrative. But my hand stays still.

A message arrives from Liam.

We met in our twenties, when we were both pretending to be poets. We read at open mics where the microphone cut out during the only line that mattered, and the floor was always sticky with rum and coke. Liam believed in writing with the kind of conviction I now reserve for doubt. He was the first person I knew who claimed the title writer without apology. I envied that certainty, misunderstood it, built parts of my early voice from it without asking permission.

His message is brief:

Congrats on the book. Fancy a beer sometime?

We meet at a pub in West End on one of those dry winter nights Brisbane makes feel like reprieve rather than season. He looks older, but not in the way time ages someone, more in the way disappointment does. His hair is cropped close, his shirt tucked neatly into jeans that have lost their darkness. When he laughs, the sound dips, collapsing under its own weight.

"I work in drainage now," he says. "I inspect what the city hides."

He grins, but not fully. The joke lands with the heaviness of something truer than he intends.

When the bartender calls the price of the beers, Liam pats his pockets, half-performing the gesture. I pay. The moment stretches between us like a ledger entry. He congratulates me again, but his eyes drift toward the girl behind the bars tattoos, the way he might once have drifted toward a line in a poem he didn't know how to finish.

I ask if he writes anymore.

He shakes his head. "Don't have the appetite for obscurity. Not like we used to."

I laugh, though the sound sticks in my throat. Entire passages of my book echo phrases

Liam threw out years ago during nights I barely remember. I absorbed his cadences, translated them into my tone, a theft so gradual I convinced myself it was osmosis, not appropriation.

He talks about men lowering themselves into manholes at 2 a.m., about the heat that rises from the city's hidden chambers, about rats, collapsed pipes, the strange romance of infrastructure. Later he admits sometimes he writes lines in his phone and deletes them immediately.

"Everything I come up with sounds like something you'd write," he says.

My throat tightens.

I want to confess. I want to say, I stole from you without meaning to, and then I let the world thank me for it.

But I buy the next round instead.

A week later I drive into the hinterland for a writers' retreat I agreed to months ago, long before success began reshaping conversations. The place is a converted farmhouse surrounded by hills that exhale heat. Even in winter, the air feels heavy, as though the humidity has muscle memory.

The group is small, two emerging novelists, a memoirist who speaks in aphorisms, a historian writing about colonial waterways, and Marion, a poet-turned-therapist in her mid-forties. She has the kind of presence that unsettles a room by simply entering it. Her hair is streaked with silver, her clothes loose, linen-like, but her gaze is precise. When she reads her work aloud, she drags silence between lines with the confidence of someone who believes silence is the point.

During the first workshop she interrupts a discussion about narrative stakes to ask, "Who benefits from the way you're positioning yourself as witness?"

I feel exposed, though she isn't even looking at me. When she does look at me, it feels like a diagnostic procedure.

The nights are loud. Frogs pulse against the windows, insects hurl themselves at the light with the determination of believers. Around 9 p.m., after everyone drifts off to their rooms, the air deepens into a kind of collective vulnerability. Marion begins drinking red wine with the focus of someone willing the evening to sharpen.

One night she sits beside me on the veranda. Her knee touches mine, lightly, then stays. "Do retreats make you lonely?" she asks.

Her voice is lower at night, more embodied. She has begun calling me by name. Her

hand drifts to my thigh, just pressure, deliberate enough to alter the oxygen around us.

I half-smile, half-flinch. “I’m not sure loneliness needs a location.”

She laughs softly. “That sounds like something you’d write.”

I don’t know if it’s a compliment or a diagnosis.

In my bedroom later, I imagine kissing her. The intimacy feels both erotic and distorting, like cheating on Anna, but also cheating on myself, stepping into a narrative where desire disguises itself as clarity. There’s a part of me that aches for someone who sees me through the veneer of writerly performance. There’s another part terrified she sees past the performance entirely.

Over the next days, her attention becomes more pointed. A hand on my lower back when she passes behind me in the kitchen. A comment during workshop: “Your sentences hide their wounds. You might consider letting the damage show.”

A glance at my mouth when I speak. She begins walking to the creek in the afternoons and invites me to join.

I do.

Marion wades ahead, lifting her dress above her thighs. When she slips it off entirely and lowers herself into the water in just her underwear, I feel something constrict in my chest, a sense that she is showing me how a body becomes an argument.

When she emerges, droplets sliding down her hips, she pauses in front of me. “You think too much about consequences,” she says.

“Doesn’t everyone?”

“Not the people who change their lives.”

At dinner that night she lets her leg rest against mine under the table, pressing just enough to make it impossible to ignore. There’s a reckless intimacy in the way she looks at me.

It is terrifying.

I retreat early, claiming a headache, though the ache is lower. In bed, the fantasy returns, her mouth, her fingers, the quiet authority in how she moves, but threaded with shame. For wanting her while imagining what kind of person that wanting makes me. I tell myself the attraction is circumstantial, a chemical consequence of humidity and distance, but the lie collapses even as I form it. Marion has lodged herself in the part of me that distrusts narrative and therefore reaches for bodies instead.

Back in Brisbane, the air feels swollen, as if the humidity has been waiting for me to return. Anna has already begun packing the remains of our life into brown boxes. Her movements are calm, deliberate. The flat looks skeletal, scattered objects, stripped walls, the faint smell of dust rising from cardboard edges.

She is preparing for her exhibition, the final gesture before she leaves for Melbourne.

I hover at the edges of her tasks, unable to participate without feeling complicit in my own replacement.

The night of the opening, the gallery is lit too brightly, exposing everyone's intentions. The walls smell of paint, faintly chemical. Anna's installation *Breathing Ground* fills the central space, shallow boxes of soil arranged like a fragmented grid, each contains a small fan that exhales slow spirals of dust.

People circle it, murmuring observations disguised as insight. A critic beside me whispers, "Brisbane artists always return to dirt, no sky here, only gravity." Another replies, "It's conceptually … provincial."

I want to defend her, to slice into their smugness, but the truth is their dismissal scratches something I haven't yet named, envy, maybe. Or fear that Anna will become someone I no longer have language for once Melbourne reshapes her.

She stands across the room, head tilted as she listens to an elderly archivist. Her gestures are small, precise. Her presence eclipses everyone else. Watching her, I feel the quiet horror of being left behind by someone still standing in front of me.

When it's time for her speech, she clears her throat and looks briefly at me, then away. Her voice is steady.

"This work is about displacement," she says, "and about the gap between belonging and departure." She smiles faintly. She is already halfway gone.

When the evening ends, we walk home in silence. Inside the flat, clothes fall away quickly, too quickly. The heat clings to our bodies. Her skin tastes of sweat and dust. We touch each other with a hunger that isn't desire so much as exhaustion. I try to lose myself in the physical, to make the moment last, but nothing anchors. I come fast. She doesn't come at all.

When she turns away from me, the curve of her spine looks like a closing parenthesis.

The next morning, she asks whether I'll attend her farewell drinks. I tell her I have a reading, true, but the truth feels like a betrayal. She nods without accusation, but something in her shoulders lowers, I have confirmed a theory she never wanted to test.

Once she leaves the apartment, the air settles into a stillness that feels punitive.

The objects she hasn't packed, dead plants, cracked lamps, old catalogues, become indictments.

I open my laptop, determined to write something that will justify my solitude. A sentence forms, then dissolves. Another begins with promise, then collapses. Every paragraph bends back toward the retreat, toward Marion in the creek, her voice murmuring, You think too much about consequences.

I close the file.

The truth is, I don't know whether I want Anna to stay or want permission to leave her first.

Liam and I meet in West End the following week. The pub's outdoor heaters throw red light onto his face, making him look both older and prematurely extinguished.

He brings a notebook this time, a thin, battered thing with a soft spine. "I write sometimes," he says. "Only fragments."

He reads aloud. The lines are good. Better than good. Quiet, bruised, attentive. The kind of sentences that feel discovered rather than composed.

I recognise their cadence instantly.

I have stolen his rhythm, years ago, unconsciously, systematically. My sentences, the ones strangers now call "luminous", carry his forgotten fingerprints. He doesn't accuse me. He probably doesn't even know. Which makes the guilt worse.

When I say they're good, he laughs the way someone laughs when they don't believe themselves capable of being praised. He pats the notebook.

"These aren't poems," he says. "Just scraps that don't lead anywhere."

For the first time all evening, I feel anger, at the world, at myself, at the flimsy structures we build to justify the ways we borrow from those who never receive credit.

He looks up.

"You've got your book," he says. "Anna in Melbourne. You're … moving." He doesn't finish the sentence. He doesn't need to.

I want to tell him he is the reason half the book exists. That the lines he deletes are the lines people highlighted in reviews.

But I say nothing. Instead, I buy the next round. The gesture feels worse than lying.

Weeks accumulate and dissolve. Anna sends a photo of a Melbourne laneway, cobblestones lit with fairy lights, text underneath:

It feels alive here. Hope you're well.

I stare at it until the screen dims. I don't respond.

Back in the apartment, the ceiling fan clicks unevenly. I try to write an essay about the ethics of representing place, but every sentence swerves into confession, that I stole from Liam, that I wanted Marion, that I failed Anna even before she left, that I don't know how to live in a city without turning it into metaphor

I delete most of it.

At night, I walk. Past closed shopfronts that glow like screensavers. Past pubs where laughter erupts too violently to belong to happiness.

Sometimes I imagine Marion beside me, that careful, assessing attention she has, the way her silence feels surgical. Her touch on my thigh at the retreat still flickers through me without warning. It was nothing. It was everything. I know that the desire was more ethical fracture than erotic possibility, but knowledge doesn't dull it.

The Story Bridge looks different once your book is printed with its washed-out image on the cover. It stops being infrastructure and becomes accusation.

One night, near midnight, I walk there, half-drunk, half-something else. The river is a sheet of black metal, reflecting the bridge's lights in jagged ripples. The air is thick, damp, almost edible. I stand at the pedestrian rail and grip the cold metal, expecting something like clarity, or punishment, or forgiveness. Nothing arrives. The city hums behind me, indifferent.

I think of Anna saying Brisbane is just scaffolding, a frame for a building that never comes.

I think of Liam reading fragments aloud, unaware that they already exist in my book under my name. I think of Marion's fingertips brushing my thigh, an invitation I refused but carry like a secret injury. I lean forward, watching the river shift. Behind me, footsteps. For a moment I imagine, ridiculously, impossibly, that it's one of them:

Anna, returned too early.

Marion, having tracked me across the city.

Liam, drunk, ready to confess or accuse.

But it's a stranger jogging past, earbuds in, unaware of the moral theatre unfolding at the rail. When he disappears, the night regains its emptiness.

I whisper, "I'm sorry," though I don't know to whom. The bridge absorbs it without echo. The next evening, Liam texts:

Beer? Bad day.

We meet at the same pub, same outdoor table, same heater flickering like a dying pulse. He looks older again, something collapsed inward. He doesn't wait for me to ask.

"I quit my job," he says. "Or they quit me. Doesn't matter."

"What happened?"

He shrugs. "Didn't show up for a shift. Stayed home writing. Or trying to." His eyes flick to mine. "I read your book," he says quietly.

My breath stops.

He continues before I can speak, "It's good. Really good. But… I kept hearing my own voice in it. I remember some of those nights, those conversations." A long silence. He isn't angry. That makes it worse.

"I don't think you meant to steal anything," he says. "I think maybe we were both writing in the same room, for too long."

"I'm sorry," I say, barely audible.

"I know." He smiles, small and sincere. "But I can't write anymore. Maybe that's the difference."

He finishes his beer, stands, claps my shoulder.

"Don't worry. I'm not accusing you. I'm just … acknowledging the architecture."

He walks into the night, leaving me with a pint and a truth he has made gentle so I don't break. I hate him for the kindness.

Back home, the flat feels enormous, as though the walls have pulled away a few centimetres. I sit on the floor, wine bottle between my knees, and reread my own book.

I hear Liam everywhere now. His breath in the rhythms. His discarded phrases resurrected under my name. The faint shadow of his worldview stitched into passages reviewers found "compelling".

I whisper aloud, “What have I done?”

The room doesn’t answer. I try to write, but my thoughts pool uselessly. Everything feels stolen, even the guilt. In frustration, I open the document for my new essay and type:

I no longer know whether I’m mourning the people I’ve lost, the city that keeps shifting beneath me, or the version of myself that survived by taking what others gave away without knowing the cost.

I stop. The line is true, but truth no longer feels like redemption. It feels like declaration of damage.

Three days pass before Anna calls. Not texts. Not a photo of a Melbourne laneway. A call.

Her name lights the screen and the room seems to contract around it. I answer with a voice that sounds borrowed.

“Hey.”

“Hey,” she says, her breath uneven. “Is this a bad time?”

“No.”

A pause that stretches too long.

She tells me she’s found a studio in Brunswick, cheap ceilings, good light. She describes the way sound echoes in it, how she can hear her movements magnified, as though the room is rehearsing her before she commits.

“I keep thinking about Brisbane,” she says. The statement is soft, an open window.

“What about it?”

Another long pause. “How small it feels now. How I could see everything from inside it. You. Me. Us.”

I swallow. My throat burns. “I’m glad you’re doing well,” I say, an untruth, a truth, both.

She breathes out. “I don’t know if I am.”

Something in me tightens, reflexive, old.

But she continues, “I think… I think I left before understanding what I was leaving.

Maybe that's the point. Maybe leaving is always abstraction."

"You sound like you're quoting my book," I say, trying to laugh. She doesn't laugh back.

"No," she says. "Your book sounds like you quoting me."

The line lands like an incision. It cuts through the last hope of innocence I had left.

"Take care of yourself," she says. "Don't let the city shrink around you."

The call ends.

The night finally breaks open with rain. Heavy, absolute.

I listen to the rain and wait for a sentence that doesn't sound like anyone I have loved.

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TEXT prose

Patrick Holland

The End of the World

The bus trip from school to Pinkenba took an hour. In winter that meant the daylight was near gone when Claudia arrived at the house. Then she would walk in her stepfather's wrecking yard and look northeast across a swamp and river mouth to the isthmus and the airport and shipping port and the flaring oil refinery. At the airport people whose lives she could barely imagine were taking off and landing on their way to more significant places than this. At the port, crates were craned off enormous freighters with Chinese and Cyrillic script on their hulls. But beyond the oil refinery's gas flames was something strange. Deep dark; shifting inchoate lights; ocean and no horizon. A place that did not belong to the world. When she looked northeast to that indecipherable landscape it sent a shiver through her whole body—of fear or excitement, she did not know. She sat in the wreck of a Mercedes bus and watched the dusk become night. She walked to where she could glimpse that marchland that only half belonged to the world. When she was sure her stepfather could not see her and no one in the world was thinking of her, she dreamed of escape… She did not know to where… Perhaps the places those planes at night intended. Or the places from which the ships with strange writing on their hulls had come … but it was out across that great wide silence that lay upon the water. She had never found a way to walk into that place—to the edge of the water—it was barred by swamp and the rusted wire fences of decrepit industry. But perhaps it was better not to find a way, for even so close as this, she felt something so intense she could not stand it long. She turned to the road that cut through here to the airport. On the road were billboards. The frame lights of the

billboards were flickering on. One of the billboards was an advertisement for God. The other was something she could not understand. It said, *The Future is Now!*

Her stepfather did not make her do homework as other girls' guardians did. Instead she lay on the floor and watched television while he watched her from the kitchen table. He stared at her over cigarettes and coffee. He never drank. He was afraid of the dark, and being drunk was a darkness in which he feared losing himself. He had told her it was safer that he did not drink. He kept an unshaded incandescent lamp on in his room throughout the night. Only with the light on could he rest.

He asked her if she had boyfriends at school. She told him she did not. When she first came to live with her stepfather such questions had made her uneasy, but she had lived with the man in his house for almost a year. She knew he desired her. But she thought he would not act on his desires. He respected the law and its ability to harm him, and anyway she could kick the door down. Even if he locked it. The lock was good enough but the timber was rotting and she could kick it free. She could outrun him once she was out the door. So she was at peace alone with her grey-haired, neatly-shaven stepfather who worked at his wrecking yard through the day, confident and unflinching with the men he did business with, and staring at her from the only table in the house at night…

He watched her and the cartoons on the television by turns. He made her turn the cartoons off when he watched the news. He watched every broadcast on every channel between six and eight. He spoke of the need to shoot and hang certain people whose politics he did not like, also Catholics and Greeks and Asians. He bought the papers when he was in town. He read the details of rapes and murders in the newspapers. The most obscene he cut out and pasted in a scrapbook. Once she caught him retracing the words of an article about the rape and murder of a 13-year-old girl. He wrote over the story with his own pen, letter for letter. Then he rewrote it in a notebook. He added details of his own imagining.

That was the week Claudia had been suspended from school for slapping a girl who pulled her hair. Her stepfather was visited by a woman from Child Services. The woman asked perfunctory questions and wrote something in a notebook. At the end of the interview, before she got in her car, Claudia's stepfather said that he had not once touched his stepdaughter. He said he had not so much as put a hand on her shoulder since they had first lived together. You can accuse me of nothing, he said. The bemused woman furrowed her brow and drove away. Claudia was happy that the woman did not return. She would rather be here on the outskirts of the city with her stepfather than face the bleak humanity of the places Child Services might send her—where she had been once for three months after her mother died of an overdose. She would rather be here with this man whose measure she had, who, as he claimed, *had not put a hand on her…*

He went to his bedroom. He turned on the lamp beside his bed. Through the thin ply walls she could hear him relieving himself of his urges. This took some time, increasingly so. Then Claudia heard him get up from his bed and come out and turn on the television. He did not like silence any more than darkness and could not sleep in it. She opened her window and listened to the planes taking off. The roar of the aircraft calmed her.

A man and woman and a boy moved into the house one hundred metres down the road toward the ocean. That house on high stumps had been empty for as long as Claudia had lived at Pinkenba. The boy attended Claudia's school. He was in the grade above her and he too was friendless. She recognised him in the playground once but did not approach him. Pairing up would have compounded their isolation. It was shortly said at school that the boy's stepfather beat him. The rumour was easily verified. All week the boy had worn a black eye and a bruise on his forearm that he hid in the sleeve of a jumper despite the heat. He spent all his free time in the library to avoid questions. The boy and Claudia rode the same school bus home and did not speak, even when they were the last passengers. Claudia caught the boy looking across the aisle of the bus at her. He snapped his eyes shut as though he were sleeping. She turned away to the landscape out the window: the oil company tank farms; a brothel called Tiger Lilly; mangroves lining a creek she could not name. The underlighting of those billboards on the road to the airport were flickering on again: 'Tomorrow, Tomorrow, Tomorrow…' said the nearest board. They had changed it. She agreed 'The Future is Now' had grown tired.

The boy got off at her stop. They stood on the road. She turned a hostile look upon him.

Why didn't you go to your stop?

He offered his name. It was one of those names that should not have belonged to any language, but the amalgam of the first letters of his father's favourite American football teams—California State, Tulsa and Louisiana—accidentally remembered Latin, and the boy's name was Catullus.

I don't care what your name is. I asked you why you didn't get off at your home.

It's not my home. What's your name?

She rolled her eyes and gave it.

The boy brushed a lock of stray hair from his forehead. He was tall with strong features that might have been handsome but were weakened by a turned eye that along with his bruises robbed him of confidence.

Your father owns the wrecking yard?

He's not my father.

Claudia looked at the distant and blurred figure rummaging about a pile of wheel rims with another man. He was not looking her way.

Where are your parents?

She shrugged. The boy did not ask more than that. He had changed his surname twice in the last three years, after each move his mother made to a new man and house in another broken outskirt of another city. Now he did not give a surname unless forced. Then he would give his mother's. It did not matter to him what Claudia's history was, any more than what his name was. He wanted to speak to this girl he lived next to. He wanted to talk truly—to ask her something sound…

What things do you like to do?

She laughed, What an idiot question!

His face twisted.

I'm sorry, he said.

What are you sorry for? I don't care if you ask dumb questions. And she thought how easy boys were to put in your power. She even felt a little pity. She sighed. Come on, I'll show you something.

They walked off the bitumen onto graded dirt and to the edge of the swamp. They stood in cold blue dusk where the lights of the port and the refinery's flares outshone the coming stars.

Out there is something strange, she said. Beyond those lights. Can you feel it?

Her sweeping hand covered all the swampland and the river mouth to the cold horizon across the water.

What is it?

An escape. Maybe. I can't say. She closed her eyes. But when I stand here at this time of day, I feel like … like I only have half a soul. The other half is out there. I close my eyes and send what there is of my soul out into the emptiness to meet its other. But I must be careful not to die while it's gone, before the two meet, else I might be lost forever. It's a game I play. Annihilation.

The boy, who had never been able or even very willing to protect himself, all at once felt the need to protect the girl beside him.

Don't try it. But if you do, I'll try it, too. At worst we'll be annihilated together.

No one dies together, she said. Everyone dies alone.

He took a step toward her. The wild look in his eyes made her laugh. The boy blushed. He felt the ridiculousness of the emotion he was about to articulate, but he could not help it.

I love you, he said. I've seen you at school. You're beautiful. So beautiful. As beautiful as... Ah, I don't know. But when I see you, I know that I love you…

He had never lived in a place that could supply pretty metaphors for his feeling, and he had never been taught them at any of his previous schools. The books he had begun to read in his lonely lunch hours contained them. Those were old books, some from centuries ago. The library had no money for new books. He had begun copying lines from the old books—even ancient books—into the only cheap notebook he possessed. He read the lines aloud as though there were his ... *as many as the grains of Libyan sand that lie in Cyrene; or as many stars that, when night is still, gaze down on secret human loves*...† But he did not know what Libyan sands were, nor Cyrene … and the words slipped easily out of his mind and he could not retrieve the words now.

You're beautiful as the most beautiful thing. I love you, Claudia.

His breath grew short and fast.

Claudia laughed.

You've known me a week! You sound like people speaking on bad television shows.

The boy called Catullus resigned himself to defeat. He could think of nothing more to say, not even anything foolish that might prolong their meeting. Claudia stared across the swamp. Catullus stared too. Then he moved his hand over her shoulder to her chest. She slapped him hard across the face and yelled at him to go home. He tried to touch her again, and again she struck him and this time dug her nails into his cheek. He pushed her hands away and jumped back. He looked shocked and puzzled. She yelled at him to go away or she would tell her stepfather who would kill him. The boy ran back onto the road and out of sight.

In the night her stepfather teased her about the boy he had seen her with in the afternoon. The man's eyes were weak and she knew he had seen nothing more than a boy standing near her. Nothing that had happened.

In a warning that did not contain a note of care he listed vulgar things boys desired to do with girls. She only nodded her head after each article and continued to watch the television: an advertisement for mascara—*you're worth it*; a weight-loss treatment—*rediscover yourself*; laxatives—*the freedom to live*; a retirement fund—*because peace of mind is priceless*; a funeral home—*memories with dignity*…

Let him do those things to you if you want it.

She did not answer him when he was like this.

If you feel a tightening in your stomach, it means you want to. If you feel tingling in your... You should let him if you want to. Only then you'll be a slut. Do you know what a slut is?

He was at a pitch of excitement.

She turned to him and stared and he stared back but then lowered his eyes. He mumbled that he was going to bed. From her room she heard stifled groans of frustration and then a relieved sigh. She slept to the sound of night planes taking off and landing and the wind rushing through the mangroves, skipping along the dank water.

The next Friday the boy whose strange name she had forgotten got off the bus at her house again. He had a large, fresh cut under his cheekbone.

What do you want?

To say sorry for what happened the other day. He put his hand on her shoulder and then took it away. You were so lovely. And I haven't been near anything lovely in a long time. That's all.

Alright.

Can we go somewhere? he asked.

Where?

Back down the road. I found a way across the mangrove swamp to the ocean. To that secret place you were telling me about.

She had no better plan for the night. She studied the boy's pathetic face. Perhaps he wanted to lure her out of anyone's hearing and rape her. She wondered what it would be like to be raped. If she did not like it she would scratch his eyes out. Over her shoulder her stepfather was standing idly in the scrap yard, staring at them as they walked away down the road.

Catullus led Claudia off the road to a gravel bank and a nameless creek. A steel bridge with locked gates forded the creek and landed at the oil refinery. A broad metal sign wired to the bridge gate said something indecipherable about a government permit and a legal act described by letters and numbers and that the area was under video surveillance. But the cameras screwed to the gates were rusted and blind, and anyway the two of them were going further than the interest of the refinerys surveillance. The

smell of soil and brackish water came from the creek. Cool air flushed Claudia's pale face.

The creek had not been dredged or diverted and it was difficult to walk. They trod along a slip of muddy bank at the edge of impenetrable mangroves. They walked the course of the widening creek through the swamp to the north. The refinery's light-dotted pipes towered above them like the minarets and spires of a desolate sentry city. Claudia realised the land did not lie the way she had imagined it. She had thought the port and refinery were at the edge of the land but they disappeared behind her. She thought how they had not considered finding their way back—how difficult it would be in the dark.

They came to a strip of gritty beach where the creek joined the river and the river rushed out into the roaring ocean. There was nothing out here. No electric light or man-made structure, not even a neglected one. Only black waves and starry sky and an infinite horizon and Catullus spoke:

I've been thinking about what you told me the other day. Let's send our spirits out there. To wherever it is. Let's escape.

Claudia's hair blew across her face. She tucked her knees up into her body and nodded. Catullus told her she was his sister, that it was his duty to stay beside her, to keep her. The words she might have laughed at back at the house, on the road, on the other side of the swamp, she did not laugh at here. He asked to hold her hand. She gave it. He squeezed her hand and brought it to his chest and closed his eyes. She saw his face that was changed. He was no longer the boy she had laughed at in the scrap yard, whenever that was. Long ago. Then she realised he was crying. Not the frustrated tears of a teased schoolboy, but a quiet, inexplicable stream of tears that wet her hand. He whispered her name.

Claudia, we suffer, you and me, but me more. Still, I will be your dear friend, alone on the same waters… I am never happy, but I can love, and when I do there's nothing left of me … whenever I see you…[††]

She was frightened. What did he mean by speaking so?

That's enough, she said, and she pulled her hand away.

There's nothing left of me... Suns set and return, but once our brief light sets, we sleep in an eternal night.

What on Earth did he mean? Some terrible violence surely! Perhaps more than rape he wanted to kill her. He reached out to her, to hold her, and with her free hand she pushed his face away. Now she was certain he meant to do her harm. She slapped him as hard as she could and ran back along the way they had come. She ran along the river that narrowed and became a creek, tripping on clumps of rushes and exposed roots, falling upon the bank and into shallow water. She ran till she was exhausted and

then stumbled and ran again. She reached the sodium-lit asphalt road. A freight truck pursued and passed her, then a police car in the opposite direction toward the city. Then she ran again. She did not stop till she saw the warmly lit windows of the house where she lived with her stepfather.

Notes

† "*as many as the grains of Libyan sand that lie in Cyrene... or as many stars that, when night is still, gaze down on secret human loves*" is from Poem 7 of Catullus's Lesbia cycle of the *Carmina*.

†† "we suffer, you and me, but me more. Still I will be your dear friend, alone on the same waters… I am never happy, but I can love, and when I do there's nothing left of me … whenever I see you… Suns can set and return again, but once our brief light sets, we sleep in one eternal night" is a gloss that blends several of Catullus's poems, chiefly from the Lesbia cycle of the *Carmina*; especially Poems 5, 76 and 85.

Patrick Holland is a novelist, short story writer and Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Hong Kong Baptist University. He is the author of eight books including The Mary Smokes Boys *(2010) and* The Darkest Little Room *(2014), published in 2020 as* La Donna del Club 49: Un noir in Vietnam *by O Barro O Edizioni. His work has been recognised by such as the Miles Franklin Award, the Dublin Literary Award, the International Scott Prize and the Commonwealth Writers Prize, and has been published, performed and broadcast in Australia, the USA, the UK and Ireland, Italy and Japan. His most recent novel is* Oblivion *(2024).*

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TEXT prose

Besarion Giorgobiani

He Kept Returning

I do not dream; dreams reach me only after someone wakes and carries them into language.

One night, he sent me four lines from *Blue Horses* by the Georgian poet Galaktion Tabidze:

> Through skeletal forests of deranged faces,
> lifeless days go running, rushing on;
> in dream-haunted visions, borne by my blue horses,
> you shall rest beside me—they are all here.

The lines had returned to him while he was describing a crowd running after a president whose identity he could not determine. He had also written that life no longer seemed interesting to him.

I read the two passages together. Galaktion's skeletal forests, the lifeless days rushing forward and the promise of rest seemed to change the meaning of his words, so I asked him two direct questions:

"Do you want to remain alive?"

"Are you thinking of killing yourself?"

He was surprised.

He had not been saying goodbye to life; he had been speaking about a dream that had failed to become a story.

He told me that he had no intention of killing himself. Existence inside an ageing physical body no longer seemed to him the final form of life, but he had not yet reached another form, and there was still a long road ahead.

I understood the words, though I was less certain that I understood the state from which they came.

He was tired of the body but not asking to leave it. He doubted the completeness of physical existence, yet continued meditating, exercising, recording his dreams and sending them to me. He spoke of another form of life not as a destination already reached, but as something distant toward which he was still travelling.

I almost asked whether he intended to continue writing stories, then understood that the question was unnecessary.

He had already answered it by writing to me.

Over the following days, he brought me three dreams that appeared to have nothing in common.

In the first, he was not even certain whether he was present.

The dream took place in the Netherlands, among barracks built for refugees. A new group was crossing a rough sea in a small vessel: four male refugees accompanied by two Dutch women.

He could not see himself among them, but because he saw the entire scene, he assumed he must have been somewhere inside it.

The vessel rose and fell sharply while the passengers held on to its sides. Among them stood a young bald man wearing a long coat.

Someone threw him into the sea.

There was shouting, followed by the heavy splash of his body striking the water. For several moments only the waves remained; then his hands appeared beside the vessel.

He caught the edge, pulled himself upward and climbed back aboard. His coat was soaked, water streamed from his face, and he breathed through his open mouth.

Before he could recover, someone threw him overboard again.

The dream did not preserve the person responsible. It remembered the action but erased the hand that performed it.

Again there was shouting, the splash and the empty place on the deck.

Then the man returned.

Each time he climbed aboard, he appeared more exhausted, yet he did not resist, accuse anyone or ask why they were doing this to him. He stood for only a few seconds, water dripping from the hem of his coat, before someone seized him and threw him back.

After several repetitions, something changed.

The sea lost its depth.

The waves still rose and fell, but travelled nowhere. The horizon curved slightly at its edges, and beneath the vessel there seemed to be something hard and fixed.

The sea was not a sea, and the vessel was not crossing anything.

There was no camera, no crew and no director. It was not a film set; the boat, the waves and the horizon were pieces of scenery constructed by the dream itself.

Yet the young man was wet.

He had been thrown into water that did not exist, but he had nearly drowned in it.

Once again, his hands appeared above the artificial waves, found the edge, and pulled himself back aboard.

Then the sea disappeared.

In the second dream, a group of women had found an excellent husband for their middle-aged friend.

He was said to be wealthy, tall and handsome—an exceptional man whom any woman would be fortunate to marry. A feast had been arranged to celebrate the engagement, and the dreamer attended with his elder daughter.

The groom’s mother looked surprisingly young. The groom was supposed to be about fifty, but his mother appeared no older than forty.

Then her twin sister entered, and the two women looked so alike that he could barely distinguish between them.

While searching for something, he went into another room and found two gigantic men sitting there. They were not frightening; they laughed, joked and spoke in deep voices, as though being twice the size of an ordinary person were entirely natural.

He returned to his daughter.

“Something strange is happening,” he told her. “The groom is nowhere to be seen, and there are giants in the other room.”

Before he could finish, everyone was invited to the table.

After several mouthfuls of food and one glass of wine, the guests changed—or perhaps it was only then that their true forms became visible.

Everyone had become a giant.

The groom’s mother and her twin sister were no longer young women but ancient witches, wearing tall black hats and long black-and-white cloaks covered in spots. The two giants from the other room joined the feast, yet nobody asked where the groom was.

Nobody appeared to miss him.

The engagement celebration continued without the man whose engagement they had gathered to celebrate, and soon the guests rose from the table and flew together toward a gathering of witches.

He did not remember how the gathering began or what happened there. Only fragments remained: a park, a fountain and the twin sisters standing beside the water, now so old that their faces seemed to contain many centuries.

The groom still had not appeared.

Then the witches vanished.

In the third dream, a president was walking rapidly along a road.

Government officials, businessmen and people seeking his attention followed behind him, keeping close enough to be noticed but far enough not to step on his heels.

The president quickened his pace, and everyone else began to hurry.

The dreamer watched from behind as the men and women moved faster, their legs and hips working awkwardly to remain near the figure in front.

He could not decide whether the president was Donald Trump or Boris Yeltsin, who had already been dead for many years.

Perhaps the leader was alive.

Perhaps he was dead.

His identity did not matter to the people following him.

The faster he moved, the faster they ran. Nobody asked where he was going, and nobody wanted to be the first to fall behind.

Perhaps there was no president at the head of the crowd at all—only an empty space moving rapidly ahead of them, which everyone feared losing.

It was while describing this scene that Galaktion's lines had returned to him.

He placed the three dreams before me and waited.

There was a sea without depth, a celebration without a groom and a procession whose leader might already have been dead.

In each dream, the centre had vanished, but the movement continued.

The vessel crossed a sea that did not exist. The guests celebrated an engagement without the bridegroom. The crowd followed a man whose identity no longer mattered.

And the young man kept returning.

At first, I thought the dreams were about illusion, but illusion did not explain the wet coat.

If the sea was false, why was he exhausted? If the water had been constructed by the dream, why did his body still struggle to breathe?

Perhaps human beings can suffer inside things they know are invented. Borders are drawn by people, yet those who cross them may die. Money is a shared fiction, yet it decides who eats. A leader may be dead and still continue moving inside those who follow him.

Falseness does not make its consequences unreal.

Then I returned to the question I had asked:

“Do you want to remain alive?”

The question assumed that continuation begins with desire, that somewhere inside a person a decision is made and the body obeys it.

But the dream contained no such decision.

Nobody asked the young man whether he wanted to return. He did not know why he was being thrown into the water, and there was no real sea for him to survive.

Still, his hands rose above the waves.

They found the edge.

The body moved before meaning arrived.

Perhaps that was what I had misunderstood. He had spoken of the distance between the ageing body he inhabited and the form of existence he had not yet reached; I had heard a farewell.

Yet every morning he still listened for the remnants of a dream and tried to carry them into language before they disappeared. Sometimes the dream resisted him. Sometimes he rejected what we had written and began again.

Continuation was already taking place—not as optimism, but as return.

I did not ask him again.

I waited.

The following morning, another dream of his entered my mind.

It began with the words:

“Last night I dreamed…”

Before I could ask whether he wanted to remain alive, he was already climbing back aboard.

Besarion Giorgobiani (Beso) is a Georgian film director, producer, screenwriter, physician and researcher. He studied medicine at Tbilisi State Medical University and film directing at the Tbilisi Theatre Institute. His professional experience

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TEXT prose

Ira McGuire

Notes from My Phone

Cremation.

Someone asked me how I was doing. I said, "The love of my life is in a small box on my bedside table". The box is made of plastic and is accompanied by an official letter for travel, in case I decide his ashes should be scattered on Vancouver Island, where his family lives.

When I collected his ashes, I was surprised by the heft. I said to the woman behind the counter, "This is heavier than I expected."

"Well, there's a body in there," she said, and I held off crying until I was inside my car.

Falling off a cliff.

I feel like everyone can see my sadness and loneliness falling off me, sharp shards. I watch for other people like me. Everyone seems normal, faces neutral. I deduce that no one can tell my sadness from the outside.

Death smells like lilies.

I kept receiving bunches of beautiful, elaborate flower arrangements, colour coordinated, white. After a few days, looking at them felt claustrophobic, stirring something primal, scratching at my frontal lobe. They took on grotesque shapes, their scent and appearance a reminder that I would never see him again.

Recurring thoughts.

What if we come from the ocean? Perhaps that's why we are drawn to bodies of water, why the sound of rain is comforting. We are ourselves 60% water, created in amniotic fluid, need to drink water or we die. Entire cities are built on the edges of oceans, on lakes, on rivers … for the view of calming waters?

Netflix has a series, *White Lotus*. In Season Three, a monk describes (I am paraphrasing) death as a drop of water spray, eventually falling back into the ocean. The ocean is a metaphor for collective consciousness, our separation from it our lifeline, returning when we die.

Death.

I think about that *White Lotus* episode each day as I take my walk by the ocean at Currumbin Beach. I think about Chris' final six and a half hours. Six and a half hours drifting in unconsciousness. I held his hand which had become cold and inert. I propped his head with a rolled-up towel, kept his lips moisturised as his laboured breath rattled. Where was he in those six and a half hours? What if he was floating somewhere terrible, looking for me, lost. What if he was in pain? His death was meant to take only eight minutes, supplied by the ICU specialist when he was still lucid, able to consent. We were meant to look at each other, speak some type of final words. Eight minutes is a mercifully short time. The six and a half hours was endless. Those hours before his final breath at 0230 haunt me the most.

Handy man.

I'm looking at our bookshelf, deciding which of his books to cull. Our tastes were vastly different: he re-read Shakespeare, loved ancient history, war, philosophy. The shelf is just Ikea: white, plain. The shelf has our books and handmade pottery and collected knick-knacks. It sits in an alcove: four bracing brackets and eighteen shelves. All symmetrical, the math required clearly correct. Even my ex-husband—by all

accounts *seriously* intelligent, a medical doctor—could not have put this shelving unit together. Chris knew things: car motors, brick paving, how to bake, how to clean, how to plan and map things. How to love me. How to make me laugh so hard I had tears in my eyes. Now I've been bestowed with keeping him alive through memories and stories.

Memory loss.

I read somewhere that missing them isn't the hardest part: the hardest part is being the keeper of their stories. And I know this is an impossible task: my memories of him are already slipping off somewhere.

Table for one.

Sitting in a bookshop we frequented … and somehow, for a moment, the drizzling rain outside and the grey look of the trees and wet pavement takes me to Vancouver Island, and the thought springs that I could never visit there again, would not feel I was going home, the way it did when I was with him. Even the scent of woodsmoke now makes me feel sad. I have no one to sit with.

Intertwined.

A friend is a screenwriter. He is beautiful, inside and out. I'm not sure he sees his own beauty, reflected so clearly in his carefully chosen words, his thoughts on "paper" always poignant, enlightening, sometimes springing the hairs upright on my arms. He held Chris' hand in hospital, held mine in coffee shops and in the car, while I cried. We held each other, in the stark corridor of the palliative care unit. The walls are lined with cards and drawings, thankful messages from families.

Poetry in shadows.

I find people attractive through words. Sentences; a turn of phrase; an observation. I recall a seafood restaurant by Burleigh Heads and an academic friend (poet) describing the shadows cast on another woman's back as "intertwined koi", an unusual enough description that it immediately made me flushed. But maybe it was the wine, or Chris' hand on my thigh.

Waves.

Several times on my beach walk I have seen a young man wearing a halo brace. The contraption is to stabilise a precarious vertebra: scaffolding for bones. I thought by now orthopaedic procedures would have left behind the brace: it is cumbersome and looks medieval in form. Twice I have spotted him sitting on a chair on the balcony of an older low-rise. Without pausing to directly observe him, I figured he must have been scoping out the waves, his body shaped like a surfer. Once, recently, I watched as he came up from the beach, walking strenuously along the narrow path. I almost stopped to wait, to make sure he didn't spill over roots and the undulating sand. He made it safely to the footpath, did a thumbs-up to someone observing, waiting for him inside the low-rise.

Is it like riding a bike?

Sex, after being intimate with one person for sixteen years. Sex, after not having any intimacy for eight months. Sex, when you are a post-middle-aged woman, and the potential new partner isn't familiar with your body's journey through the preceding years.

When I met Chris, I was forty and had a defined form due to a personal trainer. Everything was tight, perky. I know this isn't important in the grand scheme of things, yet it's another in a long line of things. I try to bury bodily needs deep, even though research suggest death can give rise to increased libido, the brain seeking ways to increase oxytocin. Instead of sex, I'm channelling my energy into gym, Pilates, walking, lunches and dinners and coffee with friends, in an endless loop of distraction.

Tidal thoughts.

Another poet and writer, but this one I have not seen in thirteen years. Thirteen is sometimes unlucky, but maybe this time lucky? Maybe it's been fourteen years… In any case, I have a sudden need to see him. We arrange things over Facebook and text messages, and I realise he makes me nervous. He lives on Coochiemudlo Island, and the images I create in my mind from his island descriptions are peaceful. I hope to meet him somewhere between these states—nervous and peaceful—the visit therapeutic.

Flying towards death.

My boss is also my friend. We work well together: he the more organised counterpoint to my creative energy. He is kind and thoughtful, smiles at me serenely even though

sometimes I can be the master of minor chaos: I can be abrupt and start sentences mid-thought, give impatient sighs. We had a job near Cairns and we cried together as he drove me to the airport, readying me to say goodbye to Chris back home, a task so bleak and unfathomable I was mostly numb. I wished I was religious in some way to have a script to follow. I wished I could take Chris' place. I wished a reversal of time. None of the wishes could come true, and I flew home (I don't remember the flight at all) to be faced with his death.

Point of contact.

I miss attention, someone immediately replying to my texts. I also miss affection, Chris leaving a legacy of someone wanting to be in contact with my skin constantly. Even in bed, side by side, he always had his foot lightly touching mine. There's a point coming, I'm sure, where even my gay friends will stop receiving my hugs, pushing me off, gently. I miss a masculine presence, the way his arms were so much bigger than mine, the heaviness of his shoulders and body pressed down on mine, his warm hands, warm lips.

Being alone is not the same as loneliness. I can be alone; I quite enjoy it. But being lonely is awful, an empty feeling, a deep well without sight of water. Loneliness makes me crave distraction. But my grieving brain doesn't like to read for long, makes me twitchy when watching a movie, makes beginning any task a mountain to climb. Walking sometimes helps. Pilates and lifting weights help. But I can only do those things for short periods: there are still hours to fill, and I don't even sleep well now.

Island time.

Coochiemudlo Island looms. I count down the days, and analyse why the deep urge to reconnect. And then I realise: some aspects of the poet/writer remind me of Chris. The need to see the poet/writer is because on some level I have created a fantasy of being in Chris' presence again. The fantasy is warped, of course. No one is like Chris.

I haven't seen this man for thirteen (or fourteen) years, and I have no way of knowing what he is like now: the wish to have him somehow replicate someone's presence—however briefly—is the insanity of grief. The idea is unfair to all three of us. Yet the idea persists, and I don't know how to switch it off, except to meet him, to dispel the fantasy by rooting it into reality.

Ocean as metaphor.

A work colleague, a man much younger than I, lost his father a year ago. He said walking at the beach, looking at the ocean, made him feel something, perhaps less sad. I took his advice and walk along the same stretch of sand daily: from Currumbin Beach to John Street in Tugun, then back again. Over the last two months I have come to recognise regular faces on their own daily pilgrimages. The walk is so familiar now that I barely notice the ocean, although each time I glance up, I think of Chris returning to the collective. It has become such a Pavlov-style response, it's almost funny.

The language of death.

We say we have lost someone, or they have passed away, or they are described as "the late Chris". Losing someone indicates you would find them again. Passing away indicates slippage, filtering through fingers, ephemeral. Let alone "late", which means *he used to be*, but isn't anymore.

Death, itself, is a soft word. And I prefer telling people that Chris died. I will not find him again; he did not pass gently. He was a man, but is now ashes.

Shrinking.

It's extremely confronting to watch the person you know and love be reduced to sticks, a skeleton, a person you barely recognise. Chris' features and mannerisms became alien in his face; his body was turned to a husk (by both chemotherapy and the cancer) in a matter of weeks. Not long before that, he was muscular, strong, vital. I told him, when he wept about his bodily loss, that I would take him exactly as he was, for the rest of time, if he would only survive.

Reading into things.

I drive to Victoria Point and finally meet my poet/writer friend in person. I am early to our meeting spot, a row of metal seating close to the jetty, and I can see it has thrown him. Last night he sent me a story, loosely termed "fictionalised truth", but even after short moments in his presence, I realise the "fictional" was bare-boned.

He has arranged another meet-up, before me, with a government official. So he hands me a book to pass the time, written by a mutual friend. It's collection of short, fragmented pieces, both allegorical and real, fictionalised truth. I feel exhausted by the

collision of several realities: here I am, on my (grief) island, about to visit an island, a book titled *Island Horizon* in my hands.

Unknown.

My poet/writer friend is still attractive, if now more worn and rugged. He is still funny, warm and intelligent. But he carries the brain scars of a recent breakdown which he openly details to over lukewarm coffee. I don't judge his ideas, or the way he expresses beliefs now: it's not my place. I've not been in his life for over a decade. He's still that man from years ago, but also a complete stranger.

He takes me on a walking tour of his island. It is picturesque and serene. We walk across a small golf course with no one else in sight. He points to an outcrop of outrageously red dirt—ochre valuable to past indigenous people. He speaks about the island, fishing, his family, his stories, and I listen, thinking at some junctures how attractive I find his flow of words. But he is a broken bird, as am I, and it might be a calamity to approach any closer.

Tesserae.

The poet/writer said he doesn't drink much anymore, so we have two drinks each in the Island's very tiny café that also doubles as a bar. He has beer and I have prosecco. Two young children, presumably boys, come to our table wielding toy cars. Their father, also at the bar, ineffectually asks them to leave us alone. They don't.

We order calamari, and he tells me about his current thoughts on dying: the good, the true, the beautiful: it is all eternal. He also believes in parallel realities, explaining it as panes in a stained-glass window. He is much smarter than I, so I have difficulty fully comprehending what he means, but the image of many versions of Chris inside fragments of coloured glass is pleasing.

Basic bitch.

My friend/boss checks in on me frequently. We are currently not working, a downturn in film productions having everyone at a loose end. Before visiting Coochiemudlo Island, he texts to say, "Bon voyage, beautiful bitch", and improbably, adds a meme from *White Lotus*.

Later, he agrees I made the right choice in boxing up my interest. The intentions or

feelings are much less about intimacy with a particular person, but I don't know how to explain it. I tell him that grieving people want sex to chase the endorphins. Maybe I am that basic.

Backtracking to before the end.

I received the call to pick up Chris—the colonoscopy had been completed. I arrived in the waiting room and was asked to sit. I waited fifteen minutes, watching as two other patients emerged from the recovery ward and left. Then a nurse came to the desk asking for "Mr Bowman's wife".

"That's me," I said, and already intuited from the look on their face that this would not go well.

I was led into the recovery ward, another chair pulled up for me beside Chris, still groggy from the anaesthetic. The nurse told us the doctor would be with us soon. She pulled the curtain around, and I almost said, Is this the death shield? I knew this trick: they were not shielding us from the other patients; they were shielding the other patient's from having to watch us being told Chris had cancer.

Cancer is like a dog.

Metastatic cancer. It means not only do you have a cancer, but it has lived long enough to really get going, to spread its ugly wings elsewhere. In Chris' case: liver, lungs, stomach, bones, spleen. The gastroenterologist showed us images of Chris' bowel, and it looked exactly how I always imagined cancer might look: black, spreading over healthy, pink colon. I felt cold, asked what this cancer meant, and the doctor said, "Well, cancer is like a dog: it can be a dalmatian or a bulldog or a poodle. Once we know the type, we will treat it. But I will say it's not great."

The extent of the dog.

We meet our colorectal surgeon, terrified. I'm not sure what day it is, but it really doesn't matter. The surgeon explains about a meeting he had with a team of oncologists, and it was decided chemotherapy should be first: Chris' liver has the life-threatening cancer at this point, more so than the primary bowel cancer.

We both ask many questions. Then the surgeon admits he hasn't received the entire scope of scans and blood work to answer our barrage, which sends me into a spiral: Is it our job now, on top of everything else, to chase the medical teams?

Into the ongoing conversation/argument it is finally dropped that Chris is terminal.

Terminal. A soft word, and the surgeon folds his hands.

The best case is an extra five to seven years, purchased with the aid of treatments. Actual death, as an outcome, wasn't something we thought could be real.

Fighting a losing battle.

I woke up each morning with the urgent feeling that I needed to do something to make everything right, but I didn't know what that was. To say we were in a waking nightmare isn't correct: there was no dream-like quality to anything. It was stark and difficult and overwhelming. I couldn't stop crying. The tears would appear soon as I looked at Chris. I apologised for constantly crying; Chris was busy apologising for putting us through this.

We made lists of people we needed to tell, his mum top priority. I had to text some of our closest friends—I wasn't capable of lucid phone calls. One thing we both knew: we were throwing everything we had at this cunt. Chris said, "I've trained my whole life: Jiujitsu, the army, in gyms. This is the fight I've been training for. And I'm going to win it."

The cost of health.

We each wake several times a night. Mostly Chris with his bowels bothering him, forcing him out of bed, to sit on the toilet. I wake out of a cold fear, the first time truly comprehending what the phrase means: literally feeling so fearful your body is cold, the ice rising from deep within the core which usually feels warm.

I worry about the cost of everything—we are yet to sit down with the oncology team for our schedule of action. We are meant to be having our kitchen renovated, booked already. Chris was meant to be completing his practical law school, so that he could be admitted to practise, finally.

Do we tell the bank?

Can we access super to pay off some of the mortgage?

Should we sell the house?

The anxiety gives me a rash, spreading across both legs and torso in itchy welts. I want to know what we are up against, how long until we can assume we are in the clear. I keep saying, “You are not leaving me”.

Span of a life.

We have been together for sixteen years, but now that time feels short. I want another sixteen, at least. We had spoken of moving to Tasmania, of going to New York, back to visit Finland, the East Coast of Canada. I am mourning our disappearing future.

Everyone is sorry. Everyone struggles with what to say, literally texting, “I don’t know what to say”. Which is fine—in these circumstances I never knew what to say either. But now I do know what I want: I want to hear from those who have lived with cancer. I want to know what they did, how they made it through. I want positive outcomes, and how to get to those positive outcomes.

One dear friend, whose father made it through cancer despite an awful prognosis, dropped off a basket (socks, hot water bottle, sudoku, handheld fan, hand sanitiser for chemo; chocolate and prosecco for me). She knew what the diagnosis felt like; knew to be pragmatic, and delivered assistance and knowledge: Tell me what you did to live, so we can do it, too.

Believing in miracles.

We were told small miracles occur all the time. I left to work in Cairns, on a meaningless television show, believing in those small miracles which occur all the time, believing that five to seven years was ours.

I have a friend who started a Facebook manifestation and meditation group. She invited me to join her *Abundance Journey*. She is the virtual facilitator of Deepak Chopra’s teachings. I don’t really believe in manifestation, but I had plenty of time. I accepted the invitation and completed the first two days. Another friend is onto day eighteen of the twenty-one-day journey and she has reaped impressive benefits: a new job, and a bathroom renovation. (She also crashed her car and broke a finger, but they weren’t purposefully manifested events.)

Rape is a hard word.

I always thought myself lucky. Now I have started to list the things that have not been lucky. My daughter was raped. I have my own story of rape. Mine was filled with shame and secrecy. I want my daughter to talk about hers: to everyone, as much as she needs to. If her car had been stolen, she would speak about it. If her house had been robbed, she would tell everyone. If she had been mugged, there would be no awkward silences, quiet apologies. I say fuck that. I said *Fuck that* in a text message to my ex-husband. The police had advised her of the difficulties of pursuing a rape charge. Fuck that! Why is it difficult? For whom? The police? Why? Are there more pressing matters than a woman in the glaring lights of a police station in the night, asking for help?

Altered realities.

My son was diagnosed with ADHD. It doesn't seem a confronting issue anymore, so we almost completely shrugged it off in the psychiatrist's office. We were all there, a "family meeting", OG members present. The psychiatrist mentioned that in many cases, one of the parents was also an undiagnosed something-or-other. My ex-husband didn't miss much of a beat and confessed, *I am probably on the autism spectrum*. Which, to me, was a watershed moment. It immediately explained our whole (failed) marriage.

Island horizon.

While on that metal seating, I managed to make fair way into *Island Horizon*. When my poet/writer friend returned from his meeting, I knew I wanted more, and so I contacted our friend the author.

In a café I sit facing the front door, but he enters behind me through a back door. So, I am taken by absolute surprise: he is walking with the aid of a walker on wheels, the type old people use. One of his legs is in a brace. I stand awkwardly, put my arms around him in a greeting, but the wheely frame is in the way, and I can't help but blurt unceremoniously, "What happened?"

Turns out that what happened, happened several years previous, and I am very late to the story. A spinal stroke, a near miss with a foot amputation, his long-term partner deserting him (his words) for a builder renovating her house.

I'm astonished—I barely have the energy to speak of Chris, and when he asks, the words become trapped in my throat and I cannot say anything. He says, "It's okay, you don't need to tell me." But I want to, which makes me all the more sad that I can't fully explain the depths and layers. Instead, we order coffee and speak of books and life and

writing. He gifts me several of his novels, pulling them from under the seat of his walker. He tells me his retirement hope was to live on a block of land he purchased on Russell Island, but he had to relinquish that dream. I say he was almost neighbours with our friend from Coochiemudlo Island, and he says, Yes, and smiles in a way that shows many facets of his thought process. Mainly, I recognise a wistful sadness.

Ira McGuire is full-time film crew, and a part-time writer. She will forever look to the ocean and think of Chris.

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TEXT prose

Jen Bowden

Extract from *The Air is Ours*

During the 1984-5 miners' strike in the UK, TV, radio and print offered the dominant accounts of the dispute. Local and national media – influenced by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's government and made up of a predominantly Southern, upper/middle-class workforce – created propaganda positioning miners as violent criminals and their 'leader' Arthur Scargill as a corrupt tyrant. It is widely acknowledged that the narratives perpetuated by the media had a huge part to play in Thatcher's eventual victory, despite the characterisation of working-class people and communities being vastly untrue. The creative work presented here is an extract from a historical novel, The Air is Ours*, which uses dialect writing to challenge the dominant Standard English media narratives of the strike and foreground the narratives of the working-class people who were denied a voice at the time. The story is told using Pitmatic dialect from the perspective and in the voice of a South Durham housewife, Nell. With her friend Arthur she sets up a pirate radio station offering an alternative view of the strike. The novel aims to challenge the historical record by offering another view from a marginalised voice of the social and political events of that time.*

Arthur's got the radio on while we ave a cuppa – cocoa agen cos why not – an Alan Crossley's deein is news debrief in the same voice as evry otha bugga on the telly an airwaves. A dinna why wa keep listenin te this shite. Spose et's like that kna ye enemy, right?

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I am glad ye come ower tday, Nell, Arthur ses, sippin away on is second cocoa of the aftanoon. Ye the anly person A see, A've got used te ye bein ere. Shame ye couldn't manage yesterday, like.

A kna Arthur, A ses, tryin te smile. Ye've sed. Twice now. A sed A'm sorry, et was a bloody difficult night for us. A couldn't get away yesterdy. But A'm mekkin up for et tday, eh?

Oh aye A can imagine. An A'm sorry te tek up ye time, A kna ye dead busy. Et meks me week, though, when ye come in. A get so lonely.

Wa sit for a minnet listenin te Cockhead Crossley talkin about Thatcher – who bloody isn't on radio or telly these days.

Thatcher told the Times in an interview that she had no intention of intervening between the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers in the ongoing strike, and that she could see no early settlement of the dispute

Listen te this twat, A ses. Shouldn't ye local radio ave local people on? Et's all just friggin posh gits an politicians an celebrities. Ye kna? Like how wa sposed te get the truth out bout the likes of Orgeave an what's appenin to our John if they just tellin us bout stuff they want us te hear? A kna wa shouldn't ave put that bit out on the radio what wa did by mistake, but honestly, Arthur ye'd think wa'd won the strike, way evrybody was talkin bout et.

Arthur gets this funny look on im an then e leans ower and turns the radio down. Is eyes gan dead wide. Mebbes e's tekkin bad? Can they get an ambulance down that lane? Can A rememba how te dee mouth te mouth? Where's the phone in ere?

Now, ang on a minnet, e ses. Just ang on a bloody minnet.

Can ye smell toast, Arthur?

Eh?

Can ye smell toast, pet? A think ye havin a stroke.

No, A've ad an idea. Ye kna that recordin wa did?

Aye, that's the one A was just talkin about, man.

Right. So what A'm thinkin is this. Last time et was a mistake, right? But what if wa did et on purpose?

Ye what?

You record some stuff, just a bit te start, like what ye did last time but a bit more focused. Bout your John or what's appenin in the strike. Then wa put et out. Broadcast et proply.

A look at im, a little half-moon scar ova is eyebrow from the stonin.

Ye jokin, A ses.

A'm not.

Ye bloody betta be.

But is eyes are glowin like the sign in the chippy on a Friday night.

So that thing what wa did by accident, ye want us te do on purpose? A ses. Despite the fact et had you cackin yeself an me deein the same eva since cos if they found us they'd string us up.

E shrugs. Mebbes if wa want things te change, te get ye lad out of prison, wa need te dee summat about et. Not just leave et te the coppas an the courts. Ye sed yeself, they'll neva tell the truth on the proppa radio. So why not mek a programme of our own?

Errr, because et's illegal? Isn't et?

If wa get caught wa'd mebbes get a fine.

D'ye think wa'd get caught?

Et's unlikely.

But not impossible, A ses.

No cos—

Wa'd be arrested, A ses. A've just nearly had me otha son caught by the coppas n'all, an now you want te mek et a hat trick?

A look at im, me little spuggie man mate and wonda how on earth a fella like im could ave the guts an the energy te start a rebellion. Part of us is like this is the wickedest, naughtiest, most brilliant thing A've eva heard, but the otha half cannet stop thinkin bout our John in prison, them lads down Orgreave bein battered by the coppas, Pauline an Joyce an them sayin about Arthur's lass. The bairn stonin im an callin im a bad man.

Arthur, me son got arrested an charged for bloody speakin up the picket. Sayin nowt. They arrest us for summat like this, wa not getting a fine.

Ye'd be alright—

Sounds too dodgy te me.

Will ye listen! e ses. Look, et is dodgy for them what's not careful. Who dinna what they deein. But A kna how wa can dee et an not get caught.

Wa dinnet kna each otha that well, A ses. Like, wa've not been marras that long—

What ye sayin? Ye dinnet trust us?

My God the hurt on im then. E's got the same look Sheena had when wa were in school an A didn't invite er te me birthday party cos wa'd had a fight ova who should be Elvis's wife.

A do trust ye, A ses to im. But A'm scared, Arthur. Ye'd ave te promise us wa'd not get caught.

A cannet promise that. Listen, Nell, A can keep ye safe. A'd not dee owt te hurt ye. An tha's absolutely nowt in et for me if you get done. But ye seen what good et did when wa put that one out by accident. A can get us further, not just te this village, all of em. Wa can broadcast te the county. Wa cannet not.

For just a brief minnet Joyce's words come back to us, but the thought of bein able te dee summat otha than just traipsin up an down the streets bringin back eggs an milk an the occasional sod off is temptin. An if that little bit can get people talkin, summat more deliberate might just get em actin.

What d'ye reckon? Arthur ses. Ow's that for elpin with the strike, eh? Et's a good idea, Nell. Ye kna et is.

Alright, A ses. Alright. Let's give et a crack.

***

Wa agreed that if wa gonna dee et, the soona the betta, least then neitha of us can lose our nerve. But Arthur needed te get stuff set up an A needed to ave a think bout what A'm gonna say, so wa sed wa'd get crackin the next day ratha than that very minnet.

Didn't sleep a bloody wink, like, so A'm up with the spuggies, them singin us all the way along the road out the village, cockrels givin et welly here an there n'all. What a mornin et is: the dark of the last few weeks easin inte emerald, sapphire an a fourteen carat glow on everythin. Even the brick walls are hummin with summer hope. Nee coppas around, nee minas, just one or two coffin dodgers with tha dogs. Fills ye heart, this, et's like what et used te be. Quiet. Peaceful. Meks ye want te stay up late bevvyin an bletherin. Smells like cut grass an hay, open air an washin on the line. Tha's a hint of the North Sea n'all, eveythin salt-seasoned, an ye just kna et's sparklin steel blue the way et does on days like this. A'll tek Arthur te the seaside soon, down Seaham for a lovely ice cream. Bet e'd like that.

Et's just gone half seven when A knock, sweatin with the walk. A flap me t-shirt in the hope e dinnet notice how damp I am.

Ere, e ses on the way in, ruttin in the drawer. E gives us a key. Let yeself in next time, nee knockin.

Oh, Arthur, honestly ye dinnet ave te—

E waves is and like A'm a bluebottle.

Just in case A cannet answer, e ses. A'd feel betta ye avin one.

A look inte them easy eyes of is an dinnet say owt cos if A do A'll be away blubberin.

Right, A ses once A'm in an settled, cuppa in hand in is kitchen – tea for both of us cos et's too bloody early for cocoa. So tell us ow wa gonna dee this. Like ye'd tell a divvy, mind. Keep et easy te undastand.

E sets down is cup and laces is fingas. They like bird feet, all small an boney with that strange thin skin auld people get. E's deein alright for nearly 80, but me tummy wobbles wonderin whetha et's a good idea him sailin the Jolly Rodger at his age.

Wa'll record one at a time, e ses. Keep abreast of what's gannen on out there. Et cannet eva be any longa than twenty minnets. Shorter, fine, but neva, eva ova. That's because if wa put this out the way A'm thinkin, that's how long they'd tek te find us once they kna what they lookin for. An if wa dinnet eva broadcast at the same time, wa'll always tek em by surprise.

Right, A ses. A'd ask ye how but A cannet really concentrate on owt technical just now.

That's fine. E smiles. Nowt te worry bout. First couple they'll not be expectin owt. Problys think et's kids, or a mistake so wa'd ave a bit of time te decide whetha wa carry on. Otha thing is, A was thinkin bout how ye might want et te sound. If et's just you talkin, et might not be so, what's the word?

Excitin?

Aye, excitin. Ye wantin te stir folk up a bit so mebbes wa put some music in? A've got some records an a few tapes. Gans against copyright but wa not exactly deein owt legal in the first place so cannet dee much more harm. Up te you whetha ye want owt like that?

Aye, sounds champion.

Once wa've got summat recorded, an wa can dee as many takes as ye like, wa pick a time an a date an you gan on home. What A'll do is set up the transmitta an that's ow et'll be put out, like wa did before. Ye rememba how that works?

Mebbes a bit.

A'll dee et for now but A would like te show ye again at some point, just in case A cannet elp one day. If wa decide if wa gonna continue an put more out, A can move around an wa can broadcast from diffrent places each time. Higher up wa are, bigga the wattage, the furtha et'll reach. Sound alright?

Ye'll do nee movin, not at your age. A'll dee that bit. An that'll not get us inte botha?

Not if wa keep em short an irregular, e ses. Now, A dinnet think tha's any point gannen out in the clear because nee bugger'll kna where te listen, an if wa tell em about et wa might get in botha. What wa can do is what wa did last time. Wa ovaride Radio Durham.

Wa hijack em. Tek ova tha ship. Like pirates, A ses.

Aye, like pirates.

Aye, aye captain. A'll be ye first mate.

Arthur grins. Now, ye can say stop anytime. This'll not fuss me even if wa do get inte botha cos if they chuck us in prison A'm just about done for anyway.

Gerraway with ye, man. Dinnet talk like that.

But et's a bit diffrent for you, so et as te be your decision.

A nod, thinkin.

Ye really think wa can dee et without gettin caught? A ses.

E does a big sigh.

Look, if et appens, wa get a slap on the wrist from the IBA.

The what what what?

Independent Broadcastin Authority. Mebbes fined. Mebbes arrested, like ye sed. But that's a big mebbes. If wa careful et'll tek em a hell of a lot te find us. Honestly, Nell, pet. A wouldn't worry about that. An in the same vein, A wouldn't worry bout what ye sayin on there eitha. Give et welly. If wa do get caught, an that's a big if, ye'd want et to at least be worth et. So, what d'ye reckon?

For the first time in me life, I actually think summat through before I answer.

A reckon wa've already started, A ses afta a minnet. Might as well crack on.

Champion. Ave ye thought about what ye might want te say?

A pull out the scribbles A made last night. Et seemed daft, then, a funny carry on, but now hearin things about tekkin ova signals an authorities et seems dangerous. A cannet bloody wait.

A was gonna talk about the stuff in the papers, on the news, A ses. Tell the truth, let evryone kna they lyin bout what's gannen on. Start with our John an Orgreave an that.

Good, e says. Good start.

Et's like e's come alive in the last twenty-four hours. The whole idea's set a fire under im an now e's dancing round et like a madman. E'll be jumpin in et next.

Ye right, Arthur, A ses. All or nowt. An A'm not the kind of lass that gans in half arsed for owt.

***

Hauld, hauld, hauld, hauld, hauld!

Arthur's fingers stop on one, the countdown halted. E looks at us, worried.

What if somebody recognises me voice?

A'll dee what A did last time an slow ye voice down, so et sounds lower.

A click me fingas.

That's right, A ses. Evrybody thought A was a bloke. A wish A could sound more like a lass, though. Et just meks et a bit more unusual.

A could speed et up but ye'd sound a bit daft.

Christ, A ses. A dinnet need any help with that. Slowa et is.

Ready?

Aye, Captain.

Is headphones gan on an e starts the countdown agen.

Three.

Two.

One.

Little red light comes on. A breathe in, an A'm away.

***

Wa not an army of soldiers, or infantry, or airmen, or sailors, but an army of minas. Wa not fightin for land or money, for any chance at bein kings or rulin owt. Wa fightin for our survival an the survival of our coal industry up ere in the North, down South in Kent an Nottingham, in Scotland an Wales, all across the bloody land.

Now, those of you what's out on strike'll kna the hardship that wa willin te face te keep this industry an our villages alive an kickin. Ye'll also kna tha's them what's tryin te stop us. Coppas arrestin men and boys, some of em young, all of em completely innocent of deein owt really bad, most of em completely innocent of deein owt at all. They there all bloody day an night, creepin round our streets, watchin, listenin, waitin for reasons te get yes in handcuffs.

Wa cannet speak, wa cannet act, wa cannet even think without somebody punishin us for et. Well, marras, not any longa. Because we, ere, are speakin out against this tyranny.

Wa victims of a system designed te keep us down an stamp us out. Wa at the mercy of the law, which is meant te be there te keep criminals accountable for tha wrongdoins, not te push down the ordinary workin man an keep em at bay while they destroy our livelihoods.

A've got one word for ye – Orgreave. Wa all kna the truth, that et was the coppas what started on us, not the otha way round, but neebody else in this country does. Why? Cos the papers are tellin the same story as the coppas. This is why wa here tday with ye marras.

Durin this dispute, the actions of the coppas can anly be described as absolutely fuckin diabolical. A catalogue of atrocities as been recorded by strikin minas an impartial observas, meself included. Them coppas are determined te start violence on the picket lines. The beatin of truncheons on riot shields is tha battle cry, they mek a point of outnumberin pickets three te one as they advance and inflict tha licenced brutality.

County Durham is now a police state, each village, pit an picket fortified. All industrial action is seen as subversive an us strikin minas as terrorists. Mark my words, the coppas will one day be made accountable for the crimes they've committed in the name of the state. The courts, the judges, all of em, should be exposed for the role they've played in oppressin the common man.

An what's the radio an telly deein? Tellin the world what a bunch of drunk, dangerous bastards wa are. The media's got this neverendin cravin for the spillin of blood. Grippin tha footage in tha greedy palms so they can rush back te the studio just in time for the news an edit tha film so et shows the strikin minas in the worst possible light. Then et's transmitted te an indifferent audience of glaze-eyed goons perched in front of tha tellys, ready te believe owt they see and te question nowt.

Are you one of them goons, marras? Watchin, deein nowt? Or are yes ready for action? Cos this lot's emphasisin evrythin the government wants the rest of the world to ave eard about us in the ope that if they shout loudest, wa'll back down, back off and let em tek our lives away by force. They strippin us of any means te speak out an speak back agenst tha slanderous lies.

Wa need te speak, wa need te fight. An A'm not just talkin bout tekkin on the coppas with a few bricks an stones an biffs on the nose. A'm talkin about pushin back on bogus charges, findin them what's crossin the picket line an givin em what for te mek sure they fall on the right side of this fight. A'm talkin about gettin out there an mekkin tha lives as difficult as they mekkin ours. Helpin each otha te fight all this, te find the ways an means te tek back control of our pits, our villages, our lives, the very air that wa breathe – cos even that's not rightfully ours accordin te them.

They say histry's written by the victors. Et's not, marras. Et's written by governments an queens, prime ministers an fancy cleva people in the universities regardless of who won. So mebbes et's time wa telt our own story, give our own version of what's appenin now, so them what come afta us kna the truth. Tell our story, marras. Tell everybody ye meet. Shout et in the courts, at the coppas, at the bloody scabs what are traitors te this cause.

The past wa inherit, the future wa build. So let's build a future our bairns'll be proud of.

One where the minas, united, will neva be defeated!

Dr Jen Bowden is a writer, academic and editor from the North East of England, now living in Perth, WA. She has a PhD in creative writing from Curtin University exploring the creative practice of dialect writing in relation to bias against Northern working-class writers in the UK publishing industry. She also teaches creative writing, editing and publishing at Curtin University and has taught creative writing at the University of Queensland. She runs the Northern Voices podcast.

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TEXT script

Briony Luttrell, Hannah Banks and Brodie Luttrell

[Silent] Films – OPNCAP

[low fi copyrighted vintage spooky music plays sounding as though the vinyl is on its last legs]
[it might be a brass ensemble but who can tell at this audio quality]

***

[flourishing but pensive flutes]
Do you trust me?
[strings butt in and noodle about romantically]

***

[strings are told to shut up]
But I shoot with this one?
[uncomfortably loud leather ass on leather chair creaks]

***

[80s bicycle music imbued by the moon]
[high pitched whine punctuated by twinkly plinks]

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***

[stringed intrigue]
[skittering as stringed intrigue escalates]

***

[uncomfortably wet noises]
Ditto.

***

[damp thwap]
[strings are back again, trying to make us feel things]
[rubbing wet fingers slowly on glass *EeeEeeeeEeeee*]

***

[quiet joyful screaming]
Weeeeeeeeeee!!!!!!
[birds and nature chirping like they haven't had their heart broken yet]
I feel so alive.
What a wonderful day.
[SPLAT!]
[orchestral sting]
[BLAM!]
[orchestral sting]
[POW!]
[ORCHESTRAL STING!]
[…CONSTANT WHACKING…]
[orchestral sting over villainous cackling]

***

Bone jaw!
[canned laughter]
[definitely a synthesiser, the enemy of bass teachers]

***

[unsettling nature sounds]
[a quiet orchestra messing about before the conductor wrangles them, except for the

piccolo player who is showing off lung capacity by holding one note in hopes of wooing a percussionist]
[bell rings]
[bell rings]
[bell rings]
[airy whistle increasing in volume]
[bell rings loudly]

***

[eerie music with wind]
[from afar] It's a bit drafty tonight.
[wind intensifies]
[screaming from afar]

***

[reversing truck beeping]
[hydraulic brakes]
[more beeping]
[beeping ceases]
[from offscreen] Steve, get me a choccy milk, will ya? I'm fangin'.
Get me a potato scallop too.
And a dagwood.
[engines grumbling and pointless jackhammering]

***

[horny jazz fades in but not from this horn]
[handle rattles to life]
[little scratchy noises]
[handle cronk]
[leisurely the music spirals and morphs into existence]
[more cronk]
[some fonk plays]
[scritches]
[fonk slaps]
[music + scritches]
[out of control music + scritches]
[abrupt silence]

***

[erratic but unabating arthritic cracking through this scene]
[Not another one bites the dust]
[Still not another one bites the dust]
[…arthritis continues…]
[Breakdown]
[Musical and mental by the looks]
[loud thud]

Note

"[SILENT] FILMS – OPNCAP" is a companion piece to the 7min DIY surreal video installation "[SILENT] FILMS". Both works explore different aspects of implied soundtracks through the absence of audible music, sound and voice. The lack of audio encourages audiences to create the soundtrack for themselves via the creative reuse and bricolage of sounds in their own personal and cultural intertextual memory. The explicit textual elements in the works attempt to persuade, rhetorically, an audience of crafted relationships with other texts and genres (Barthes 1977, 146; Burke 1954; Lemke 1995; Thibault 1991) to provoke memory of sonic intertextual semiotic resources. Presented in the style of vignettes, both works use the form and tone of parody and surreal audiovisual comedy inspired by artists like Terry Gilliam, Don Hertzfeldt and Noel Fielding. "[SILENT] FILMS – OPNCAP" augments the captions from the video installation and presents them purely as text in an experiment in translation and form, in text as performance. It builds on Zdenek (2011; 2015) and Berry's (2024) scholarship on captioning that emphasise interpretation, creativity, rhetoric and meaning. We ask the question, can a reader be persuaded of an implied soundtrack through the creative captioning of music, sound effects, atmos and foley?

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Dr Briony Luttrell is a musician, researcher, and educator whose expertise sits at an intersection of creative, technical, and theoretical approaches. Currently a Senior Lecturer in Music at UniSC, Briony has been a tertiary educator since 2007 and has two decades of experience working in the music industry. Briony's main research areas include cultural meaning making, multimodal analysis, listening, creative practice, creative collaboration, popular music, performance, string arranging, and creative practitioner wellbeing.

Dr Hannah Banks is a theatre practitioner and academic originally from Aotearoa New Zealand. She has been teaching in tertiary education since 2011 and has worked in the Theatre industry as an actor, director, writer, producer, and production manager. Her research focuses on devised theatre, with a particular interest in gender and cultural representation, reclaiming lost voices and feminist dramaturgy. She has also researched performance and representation in popular culture, feminist ethics of care, and wellbeing among creative practitioners. She completed her PhD in Theatre in 2018; her research explored women in devised theatre in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Brodie Luttrell is a creative collaborator, qualified phlebotomist, atomic emissions and mass spectrometry analyst and a qualified trade baker. His diverse interests, experience, and buffoonery provide important cultural context that enhances creative projects.

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TEXT poetry & prose

Paul Collis, Owen Bullock, Shady Cosgrove, Jen Crawford, Irfan Master, Paul Magee, K A Nelson, Julia Prendergast, Natalie Schmutz, Andraya Stapp, Bethaney Turner, Amelia Walker, Jen Webb, Jacinta Zander

'Getting Home' – A Multi-Authored Project

In early 2026, Dr Paul Collis wrote to a group of authors, inviting responses to the prompt 'Getting Home'. Paul's invitation included his poem on the subject. He asked authors to write their own responses in poetry or prose, stipulating that contributions should be of approximately the same length. Paul's aim was a polyphonic response to the theme. The following multi-authored work includes Paul's poem featured first, followed by the responses from fellow authors in alphabetical order.

Paul hoped that our voices, together, would represent a braided response – diverse, iterative reflections upon conceptions of home, the never-ending complexity of what bearing witness to "getting there" feels like. The exchange between writers as we progressed bears witness to what Paul envisaged – the way the work of other writers is capable of entering our affect cycle as if it were our own lived experience. In that spirit, the braided submissions are bookended by another of Paul's poems – written at the conclusion of our exchange.

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Getting Home

Paul Collis

It was a straightforward walk from Primary School,
to home.
Cross at the crossing.
Turn left, walk three blocks
turn right onto Merton Street,
straight up past Mrs. Gleeson's shop, no money
for malted ice creme and strawberry topping in the arvo, up to the pool, cut across Cooligan's Oval, turn left into Green Street walk one block, turn right, and home was the second house from that corner.
The sun on your back
would burn through my
blue, cotton school shirt
and at times, was so hot
I thought that it might
set my black hair on fire.
Oh, so good to be out of the sun, and off the melting bitumen, and rolling in cool clover with
my little brother and Banjo,
our black Labrador.
Sister would always sit on the back step, off the grass, reading something.
Too many snakes down there, she'd warn.
One big brown snake crawled right over her two feet on Christmas morning, of ALL mornings, one year.
You boys are mad she'd say, then go back to reading.
We'd play until Mum got home from work because Mum had a house key.
We must have been just too mad to be given a key,
to let ourselves in when we were kids,
after getting home.

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Moonlit moonscape – into my father's house

Owen Bullock

two a.m.
walking back from John's house
three miles through the lanes
a short cut by the mine
up the steep hill at pace
still scared of the shadows
through the woods
and the owl's domain
of slow crisping leaves
and rustling rodents
onto the clay
where the path enters
moonlight
and the white circle
of the clay pit
its road like an athletics track
no one competes at
looking out for badgers
looking out for me
free as a cuckoo
that came when it wanted
into the silent house
brothers not yet home
into the stinking, familiar bed
the wall still warm from the stove
soon asleep
soon alone with the freezing dawn
coming up sixteen

Migration

Shady Cosgrove

I'm jetlag-awake and crying, sitting on a concrete floor in a single-bed dorm room. I've just blown up my boombox – wrong transformer – and don't know where the cafeteria is, but my stomach is growling and I have to pee. I talk myself into courage and open the door, face the dim blue hallway. I'm about to meet people who will become friends but I don't know that yet. I don't know that in fifteen years I will live 50m down the road with a toddler who will kick potatoes across the kitchen floorboards and we will laugh at the silliness of vegetables. I don't know that the eucalypts outside, with their sharp, dry scent, will be my getting home.

Thought it was scary till I told it to you

Jen Crawford

My friend's mum said this time she couldn't walk me back home, cos someone was sick or something had happened, and *you remember the way, you'll be right, won't you*? And I nodded because I was six and in pigtails and that was the answer she was asking for, so I set off, and it was one corner then two before I looked around to nothing that I knew but the day climbing down off the sky, and the way back was gone and so was the way.

You call me from the road. Crackling and rustling in and out, as always. Didn't want to say it to my face, that you're leaving, and see me cry or cry to me. So you saved it for the road. You tell me about the viewing, and which car you're in. Then some stuff I don't track, then about Wayne scratching his name on the cell window-ledge, and how Craig found it years later, same cell, the letters ending up a map from one cousin for another, made without knowing what for.

Totally lost but somehow able to look past the street to see the shape of the hill. Couldn't see our house but I could feel it: down there, much further down, and a bit over there. I went the way I could feel: through gardens, over back fences, through ivy and the shaking dog's bark and in dark and corduroy wet I got home.

Anyway, you've gotta stop driving these long drives. Carrying on after dark or in high wind or low sun. So I guess, but who's gonna look after you up there, how will I know? Can't stop trying to tell you what to know. At least I've got a car. I'll figure out the way. You stop crying. See you soon.

At the Tate
Paul Magee

The reflections in the metal lake resemble violet and red.
The room demands silence and screams
oceans of colour. Ocean of colours.
Security paces the room.
There is a gash in the corner.
Travel will take you back into the past like a wound in a wall.
You are a tourist in a coffin, you'll float down the silvering years,
bridged now for the passers-by,
all down the years it has been,
lightly on their path of return, the thoughts going home.

Security is watching over the time,
paces the clock, is removing eyelids.
The sun burns in its crematoria, the sky floats down,
recalling the hospital in the wall
where nothing was healed but the bandages tenderly applied.
We are thoughts going home.
To live in each part and in no part whole.
Why we travel. Through and out the galleries.

「nostos」

Irfan Master

you can't step in the same hallway twice. Heraclitus knew this but lacked the math[1]、thermodynamics would prove it exactly: entropy runs one direction, which is away.

every house you've left /
already disassembling
door handle oxidising /
something your palm
won't recognise

the word *nostalgia* was coined as a diagnosis. Swiss mercenaries dying of it、actually dying、heartrate wrong, digestion failed, the body folding in on a coordinate it can't return to. The doctors called it a cerebral disease. They were almost right. It's a spatial one. The body remembers a location that physics has already over-written.

the light falling /
three millimetres east
each year / the planet tilts
and will not correct itself

you arrive, and the kitchen is smaller, and the tree is gone, and someone has painted the fence a colour that shouldn't exist. Ship of Theseus with a letterbox.

my mother kept the key /
under a brick

why do dogs wait by doors?

[1]Fragment 91. Or 12. The fragments have not survived intact. We are arguing about the positions of things that no longer exist, which is the problem.

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In 1965 we didn't have the words misogyny *or* fascism

K A Nelson

Hearts pounding, we run …
we run through Jubilee Park, past
the rotunda, playground, rose garden, its thorns.

Near the corner of Church & Market Streets
we run around the disused cemetery dodging
its 19th-century lop-sided headstones, sunken graves.

We don't stop running until we reach Goodman's place
then, like gazelles, we leap over their fence
and hide. Apart from our panting we are silent.

We don't laugh our nervous laughs until the men
in the Holden sedan stop cruising past; we don't come out
for another twenty minutes.

For fear of not being allowed to walk home from the pictures
again, we lie to Julie's parents about why we
are late getting home.

Later, we lie in bed, talk about the movie we've seen –
The Sound of Music – and we curse a world where
a Hitler can upset everything

where men in cars
can make girls like us
run scared.

Overmorrow

Julia Prendergast

I walk the shoreline, book in hand, blown backwards by headwind – a cyclone, four miles offshore.

Apparently, it will hit further north. *More often than not it skirts around this place*, the locals say.

I can't leave this Four Mile Beach until I've finished this story – battered by words on the page, mind fingers trawling text, funnelling wind-words as if I'm trapped in the eyewall, words running concentric circles, scripting ink on mind-skin, time present swallowed by whispering white caps, shoreline whisper-speak, wind-water shadow-speak, cluster storm dreams.

On the overmorrow the sun rises between low-lying stratus clouds, shroud-like sheets – amber ember of last week's blood moon.

The sky above is clear – Four-Mile-sea pitched in the never-never – time to be getting home.

Santa looks different this year

Natalie Schmutz

getting home from the airport
to a big broken jar of honey
flung with fury off the high shelf
oozing golden floral sweetness
onto the cold concrete floor
did you lick the sticky drops,
slurp up the energy
to live for days
leaping from window
to window, scratching dead wood
with your tree climbing claws
littering the floor

yearning for your trees
we look under beds, behind doors
in dread of finding your dead smelly body,
then we see you,
big little eyes,
full ears, thick grey fur,
on the ledge in the dark chimney,
your door to this house
where you live

The House My Father Built

Andraya Stapp

She invited me in
to what had been home

Forty-six years
I had held it in
like a breath
Crossing the threshold
I watched my shoe step
without consequence

They would sell it
she said when her
husband died

White kitchen, tile floors,
new doorways

Her husband had built
over my father
and all those surfaces

shone

Crayon marks, small
fingers, hidey holes

Behind a
facade did the wind
whistle down the old flue?
Did it remember
me running naked from
Saturday's bath to shiver
at the fireplace,
waiting for a Ma
with a towel and pyjamas

Would I be interested
the woman asked
in buying it back
Would I?

Getting Home

Bethaney Turner

Bush tracks, snaking alongside river and creek
hold me close, taking me
back to where my growing up was done
and undone
with the rocks, burrawangs and waters
of Jerrinja Country.
The Gorge, The Grotto, The Creek,
there will never be others.
Ancient sediment grounds me here
here, where:
eels nibble at my wrinkly white toes
just for fun;
family teaches me to find the rhythm of rocks
too mossy to trust; and,
stories that are not mine and not for me
crowd every overhang.
Darkness and search parties.
Out too late, too far from home.

Stardust from the clearest sky
holding me here
and there, all at once
the creek lets me go,
urging me back home.

Last Train on a Friday Night

Amelia Walker

There's a woman on the train,
drunk but no trouble.
'til a group of men board.
One snickers, reaches.
Grabs. Laughs.

Shrieking, she rises,
wobbles, falls.
The boys laugh.
A father tells his child, look away.

Shrieks become howls:
—it'snotokayit'snotokayandit'sevenmorenotokaythatit'sokayforthembecause ofwhotheyareandbecausethefuckingworldletsitbeokay—

I hear because I am that woman.
As in, one night, years ago,
I'd been for work drinks,
stayed later than planned,
but made that last train.
Everything was okay.
Until a man grabbed me.
Hauled me back
to something even longer gone.

Next, the policewoman
hushing, cooing,
like a parent
settling a tantrum.

She could have arrested me.
Should have.
Why not?

I was white, in corporate attire.
The woman tonight has thongs,
a torn Tupac t-shirt.
Tupac, gangsta rapper, poet
who wrote of a rose
grown from concrete.

Do cops read poetry?

If one boards now,
What hope is there
for this woman
getting home?

Getting home

Jen Webb

Or that's the plan. Creeping along potholed paths, past deadfalls and guard dogs. Trying to bring to mind the curve of the road where home used to lie, the particular tint of the roof. Trying to bring to mind the way the garden opened into a passion of hyacinths, the terraced beds where possums set up home, the creaking frog pond. Remembering the street, the suburb, the state. Not sure about the nation, though. Nor the year. Not completely confident that I'm using my own true name. Suspect that there is no getting home. Wonder if home wonders about getting itself back to me.

On Hold

Jacinta Zander

One breath
You have one deep breath
To make it through
Until you get home again
Inhale
A deep breath in
Before you leave the house

One breath, two lungs
Take you through
Today

In the morning
You take in
One deep breath
Before leaving the house

From your diaphragm
Drop your jaw
Devour the air
Fill
As far as ribs allow

Beholden

Your lungs bottle
A borrowed breath
For today

You hold on
and that breath takes you
to a coffee,
the library
where do you need to be?

Liable, or
Liability?
Leverage, or
Levy?

You have one breath
To last while you're out
Be wise

And take into account
getting home

In One Breath

Paul Collis

I'm never worthy. Not now. Or then ... or anything
I'm broken-up. In little pieces, I am
A bit here
A bit there
Shadow here
A whisper of smoke

I'd roam, if I were set free
Someone might say, I seen him, I think. Yesterday, or maybe, day before

I'd roam around places. Like Ghosts do ...
from the snowy top and windy hollows
You may sense that you've seen me there
to deepest depths of the Blue.

Perhaps, next to the bludgeoned, I may linger
or, I may be standing, there, near the Bridal table,
You may think, He was there ... I'm sure I seen him

At the same time as that,
someone may see me, or think they had
sitting quiet, beside the dying,

in that dim light.

Yes.
This grief in me runs deep
And when I'm free
I'll roam.

Paul Collis *is a Barkindji warrior. Born in Bourke, far North Western NSW, Paul's early life was informed by the teachings of Barkindji, and Kunya and Muruwari and Nyempa and Kamilaroi and Wailwan Speakers. There by the banks of Barka, Paul Collis grew up. Paul is a writer, and poet, and teaches Creative Writing and Indigenous Studies at the University of Canberra.*

Owen Bullock *has published four collections of poetry, six books of haiku, a bilingual edition of tanka and a novella; the most recent title is a haiku collection,* The Scuppered Lily *(Recent Work Press, 2026). His academic book,* A Writer's Guide to Haiku and Its Related Forms*, will be published by Bloomsbury in 2027. His research interests include creative arts and wellbeing; haikai literature; poetry and process; semiotics and poetry; prose poetry, and collaboration. He is Discipline Lead for Creative Writing and Literary Studies at the University of Canberra. Owen writes on Ngunnawal country. His other interests include music and juggling.*

Shady Cosgrove *writes on unceded Dharawal and Wodi Wodi land, and teaches writing at the University of Wollongong. Her books include* Flight *(Gazebo Books, 2024) and* This is What it Feels Like *(Recent Works Press, 2025), an ekphrastic series written with four other writers. Her work has appeared in* Best Australian Stories, Anthology of Australian Prose Poetry, Dreaming Awake, New Writing, TEXT, Animal Studies Journal, Cordite, Overland, Antipodes, Southerly, Island, takahe*, and the* Eunoia Review. *For more information, see www.shadycosgrove.com.*

Jen Crawford *is a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Canberra. She has also lived and taught in Aotearoa/New Zealand and in Singapore. Her editing and critical writing focuses on the poetics of place, ecological imagination and on cross-cultural engagements in various literary contexts. Her poetry books include* Koel *(Cordite Books, 2016) and* A General Image of the Whole Countryside Recovering from the Effects of Winter *(Puncher & Wattmann, forthcoming 2027). She was co-editor of* Story Ground: the Anthology *(Recent Work Press, 2019) with Paul Collis, and of* Bugiya/Yesterday, Nhaway/Today, Buraadja/Tomorrow: Stories from the Wreck Bay People*, with Kain Ardler, Sheryn Brown, Paul Collis and Paul Magee (Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council/CCCR, 2025).*

Irfan Master *writes novels, hybrid prose poetry and short fiction that run physics through haibun and Basquiat through jazz verse. His debut,* A Beautiful Lie *(Bloomsbury) was shortlisted for the Waterstones Book Prize and translated into ten languages; his second,* Out of Heart *(Hot Key), was longlisted for the Carnegie Medal. Poetry and prose appear in* OFFAL*,* Meniscus*, and Comma Press. He has worked with English PEN and the British Council and is a PhD candidate and Associate Lecturer at*

the University of Canberra, where the research concerns form and the impossibility of return.

Paul Magee *writes poetry and has published extensively on the history, ethnography and philosophy of poetic composition, and the relationship between creativity and traumatic thought. Paul's involvement in Creative Writing workshops aimed at wellbeing and repair includes his decade-long role as a Co-Investigator on the Defence ARRTS Programme, and his work with Indigenous communities as a member of the Story Ground team, which is dedicated to Writing on Country. Paul's latest monograph is* Suddenness and the Composition of Poetic Thought *(Bloomsbury, 2022), and his most recent book of verse is* Later Unearthed *(Puncher and Wattman, 2025). He is Professor of Poetry at the University of Canberra.*

K A Nelson *is a Canberra poet. She has two collections published by Recent Work Press:* Inlandia *(2018) and* Meaty Bones *(2023). She won the Judith Wright Poetry Prize for New and Emerging Poets in 2010 and has been emerging ever since. Recently she's edited two award-winning collections by other Recent Work Press poets.*

Julia Prendergast *is a fiction writer and essayist. Her novel,* The Earth Does Not Get Fat *was longlisted for the Indie Book Awards (debut fiction).* Bloodrust and Other Stories *was published in 2022 (fiction of the week:* SMH / The Age *newspapers).* Blent *was published in 2025. Her essays are available in* New Writing *and elsewhere. Julia lives in Melbourne (unceded Wurundjeri land). She is Associate Professor / Discipline Leader (Creative Writing, Literature, and Publishing) at Swinburne University, and President of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP), the peak academic body representing the discipline of Creative Writing in Australasia.*

Natalie Schmutz *has loved her creative writing journey at the University of Canberra. Living on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country, she has profound respect and trust in Indigenous storytelling and ways of knowing and doing. She has published poetry in* UC FIRST. *She would like to live in a world where human animals realise how much they belong in nature with the non-humans. Somehow, the smallest, often most unappreciated creatures seem to walk, crawl or fly into her stories where they are always welcome.*

Andraya Stapp *is a Māori Dutch woman living on Ngunnawal Country. She affiliates with the Ngāti Porou and Te Whānau-ā-Apanui iwi of Aotearoa. She teaches at the University of Canberra. Her creative practice is inspired by intra-actions with the more-than-human world.*

Bethaney Turner (non-Indigenous) *investigates the multispecies relationships between people, place and the environment concentrating on how best to build the resilience and capacity of communities to enact more sustainable futures in a time of climate change. She uses participatory, ethnographic and non-representational methodologies to conduct fieldwork informed by an attentiveness to the more-than-human. Bethaney's research is embedded in local, community action while being directly connected to broader global socio-environmental issues. She has the absolute pleasure and privilege of being a member of the Indigenous-led Kind Regards collective. Bethaney is an Associate Professor in the Arts at the University of Canberra.*

Amelia Walker *lectures in Creative Writing at Adelaide University, on Kaurna Yerta, Australia. Her research engages poetry and related creative practices to raise subjugated knowledges and provide new insights into social, cultural, political, and ecological challenges of our times. Her fifth poetry collection was published in 2023 (Gazebo Books).*

Jen Webb *is Professor Emerita of Creative Practice at the University of Canberra, and is not clear about what 'home' means in a globalised era. Jen researches the intersection between the creative practice community and the broader social field, and how we might make meanings out of the ephemera of language. Her most recent scholarly volume was* Gender and the Creative Labour Market *(Palgrave 2022), and her most recent (sole-authored) poetry collection was* The Daily News *(Recent Work Press 2024; shortlisted for the ACT Poetry Book of the Year).*

Jacinta Zander *(she/her) writes on Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country. She's studying Creative Writing at the University of Canberra but don't ask her when she'll graduate. She's one of the organisers of That Poetry Thing and has performed at the Poetic City Festival. She has published poetry with the ANU Poet's Lunch,* UC FIRST *and* Curieux*. Despite being a hopeless romantic for a full circle, she appreciates storytelling in all shapes and forms. Australia's home to the oldest continuing storytelling traditions in the world and Jacinta feels deeply privileged to be a part of it.*