



Australasian
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TEXT

Journal of writing and writing courses

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TEXT creative

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TEXT poetry

Richard James Allen

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I couldn't lasso it

but

I drew a line from there to here

and swung between [Michigan] and the moon.

Richard James Allen is an Australian born poet. His latest book is The short story of you and I (UWAP, 2019). His writing has appeared widely in journals, anthologies, and online over many years. Creator of [#RichardReads](#), an online compendium of global poetry, read aloud, he has written nine earlier books of poetry and edited a national anthology of writing for performance. Richard is also well known for his multi-award-winning career as a filmmaker and choreographer with [The Physical TV Company](#) and as a performer in a range of media and contexts.



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TEXT poetry

Gayelene Carbis

Oranges

After the portrait “Katherine Mansfield: Interior” by Anne Estelle Rice

The writer is holding a block of wood.
The block of wood is a book.
The wooden block is orange.
A book is like fruit.
It leaves stains on your fingers.
The writer’s fingers are blocks of orange.
Her words are like juice.
The writer is not a woman.
The writer is an orange.
Orange is a word.
Woman Writer is a block of wood.
Hold it. Eat it. End it.
She writes in wood, holding oranges.
A woman is a book.
A writer is an orange.
A word can be a block.
Hold me, hold all my wood of words and oranges.

Gayelene Carbis is an award-winning writer of poetry, prose and plays. Her first book of poetry, Anecdotal Evidence (Five Islands Press) was awarded Finalist – International Book Awards, 2019 (American Book Fest). Gayelene’s shortlistings and prizes include: Montreal Poetry Prize, Fish (Ireland) Poetry Prize, ABR Short Story Prize, The Age/Readings Short Story Prize, Best Small Fictions, and numerous other awards for poetry, prose, and plays.



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TEXT poetry

Edward Caruso

Potsherds

1

New notebook, first lines
of a sunset with its fading light
over the spire of St Domenic's,
Assisi, undisturbed, at Mt Subisio's foot.

Perugia, through a telescope, its buildings sharp,
the whiteness of walls.

Etruscan graves.
Market stalls,
renaissance silver and Ge'ez bibles,
metal and dirt-brown wooden covers,
Amharic script.

Gubbio, car oil stains in quarters
where St Francis tamed the wolf.

2

Notebook, misplaced
(one of three or four,
each with separate works forming).

Metaphors to be worked out.
Future strokes of 2B pencils
on whiter than white paper.

Assisi.
Fine soils and pollen.
Frescoes reduced to clouds of dust.
Lost lines of pristine pages.
On recollection,
admissions, exclusions.

Edward Caruso has been published in Right Now, n-Scribe, Unusual Work, La Bottega della Poesia (Italy) and A Voz Limpia. His second collection of poems, Blue Milonga, was published by Hybrid Publishers in January 2019. In August 2019 he featured on 3CR's Spoken Word program.



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TEXT poetry

Becky Cherriman

Christina Tissues a Script (or what my Otter app misheard)

She's got a lot of brothers since the festival.
What we say with cheaters, *Evil fancies a gentleman on Mother's Day*.
I certainly got started in Motel Six – the second Marcus.
More fly to be social – what Generation Y Axis is about – Roma tree reading,
missionary work – could be the benefits of singing peace in the face of evil.

She went into a coma.
She told me she was able to live, obviously, because,
I don't know, I gave her that option –
kindness of green roses, a handful of pink.
Wake up and down the blanks. Your brain is amazing.

Becky Cherriman has worked as a community writer and now also teaches creative writing at the University of Leeds. She's had poems published in Mslexia, New Walk, The North, Envoi, Bloodaxe, Seren and Well Versed. Commissions have included being resident poet for Morley Literature Festival and Altofts Lit Fest In A Day. 'Jesus Lives' was highly commended for the 2017 Forward Prize and 'Surprise of Barn Owl' was a prize winner in last year's Women's Poetry Competition. Her poetry pamphlet Echolocation and collection Empires of Clay, were published in 2016. www.beckycherriman.com



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TEXT poetry

Abigail Fisher

A un poema acerca del agua

To Silvina Ocampo and the Countess of Tripoli

Which emanates prophecies all night long
— Octavio Paz

Tu

Ma voluntat s'en vai lo cors,
standing in front of a bookshelf
with a loose, soft-looking cigarette
between her front teeth cutting
La nueit a dark shadow e'l dia
against her slack bottom esclarzitz
lip her talant de wearing a collared;
shirt Mas tart mi view beneath a wool
jumper and hair short and haunted by the
raking movement of mi ditz open hand

Un'amor londanha m'auci
she looks at someone on the
ce'iling by the window. Her face
e is scarredqu'eu me'n and la oval
en forma d'un bon pellegri, black
flashes in both eyes eis she looks
like the schoolboy and the teacher
behind her between the stacks of books
a baldly wounded de ma mort oversized
dolls head looks off to the right of the
frame. They loom solid together. Qu'estiers
no sera smelling like rubber esclarzitz
esclarzitz; light demolishing skin with

My desire following its course
all the night and by the light of day
Alejandra writes to the musician of
silence, seeking help: 'I wish you were naked
by my side, reading your poems
aloud. Oh Sylvette, if you were here
Obviously I'd kiss your hand and weep, but
you are my paradise lost. Found again and
lost. Coming back to me slowly, talking to
me slowly:

A faraway love kills me: Fuck
the Greco-Romans. I love your
face.' And the sweet longing stands by me
but when I plan on going there
as a pious pilgrim, My will remains
here; I don't escape my death, which won't
be otherwise. 'You can stick this letter
up your bum and answer me regarding the
leaf cutter ants.

Silvina: you are my favourite'
and the sweet lonhing stands by me
haunted by the raking motion of
an open hand.

modo

Lai n'irai el sieu I shall go to her
abode,
a thief,
en as much peril qom as if de passar over
ocean.

Si de mi no'il pren pitat have mercy;
most waterfalls are formed by
the erosive acts of moving
water

If she does not take pity I will flog
in its liquid form a dead freg horse.

Las! tan la vau

I beg pregan

as rivers and streams or as

q'and breaking sea waves

ni ja I don't get ren de leis from her me'n

or in solid form as glacial

ice

any sieueet relief.

They say goodbye five minutes too early
standing stiff-legged in streams
or in the solid form as glacial ice

On the plane the man beside her, whose
right hand passed the night wedged
between her left leg and the seat rest
wakes her up to show her the blue in the
window.

You see the sea? Smiling she offers
a sound of soft, pleasant surprise. When
she wakes he has invented
mountains,

valleys, sways and bumps.

She watches Mama Mia 2 over his shoulder

Amanda Seyfried backlit by a thousand
screaming

oceanic diamonds. He is an equine

veterinarian. What will you do in Chile?

I am on my way to Buenos Aires

Alejandra is that a Spanish

name

No my parents just liked it

in its liquid form as rivers
or as breaking sea waves, smiling blankly
in the aisle

de

De dezir Dear Silvina mos cors
no fina vas selha res qu'ieu pus I am,
My heart desires incessantly, laelidiota
Es algo muy simple - c'est aussi simple
comme une phrase musicale - la habitación
that I love the most se balance y oscila
como un barco - un abrazo matemático -

E cre que'l voler m'enguana, decieve me
Si cobezeza la'merda - soy lucida - pero
traduzco sin ganas and I believe my will
deceives me. Oh Sylvette si estuvieras
Claro que te besaría beastly lust takes her
from me voler m'enguana more stinging
than a thorn yawn yo adoro tu cara.

Que pus es ponhens d'espina Silvina
paraíso perdido la dolors que per joy
Sana, que te bese (poco: 5 o 6 veces)
don ja Don Juan no qu'om m'en come
on quisieras que estuvieras desnuda
a mi lado leyendo tus poemas en voz
viva: don't want anyone to pity me

Waiting for the orange to flatten into
silver engine streaked day

Room 407, Santiago Airport Holiday Inn
Outside orange artificial daylight
and hard plastic playing reluctantly
along the pedestrian crossing. She flies
to Buenos Aires in five hours. She goes
downstairs to the pool but it's closed so
she runs a bath and goes under

face-up, Sophia Coppola style. Naked
and puddling on the carpet she boils
the coffee maker. It hisses the dry
chemical burn of an empty kettle -
There's water in there but like it can't
filter through to the boiling chamber
still it spit-fills the styrofoam cup.

She adds tea bag, crema,
little plastic stick softens stirring
Folding pink limbs back into the bath
Afterwards in fresh clean itch of white
towel and sends several messages limply
considering having a wank across the
starched desert of two single beds

haha I've forgotten what I'm doing
here anyway :-)

silenciarte

Su silencio es la presencia
en vez de la representación
non
aus semblan ni veaire caire imaginaria
Don't have the
guts
to signal my love qu'eu lamb nor
louse

Disarmed desarmer I don't have the guts
to unlove her
Now That in love / unlove the faithful
are fools and the fat e'il fatal fals e on es
proceed with deceit enganne' bauzza
Su silencio es la presencia
de las cosas
No sap chantar qui so non di I do not dare
Ni canoys de rima
Now I know why I am en love:

If Pizarnik's 'most profound
orientation was the shoreline of
silence'
Alejandra's would be that light tuneless
humming to fill
gaps
in conversation when she is feeling
uncomfortable

These fragments she has shored against
her ruins: 'Oh the joy of smut!
I've licked cunts in various countries and
felt pride in my virtuosity
the Mahatma Gandi of tonguing,
the Einstein of eating pussy, the
Reich of cunnilingus, the
Reik of clearing a path through the bush like
grubby rabbits' and
'Everything is cunt'

en

There aren't many among kings and emperors
that'll beque l'ause'l trudge
far
ni far q'agues acat at
grate

She makes me a cowboy in the night
dreaming so much - q'ue m'es
mos bratz would l'enclauza

There aren't many reyes and empereyes
not very m'any at all
who'd dare hand her that vair
cloak
or get into her good
books.

Armour de loing. Ric de fai en
somniaan

I dream of holding her in my arms

'Where rivers are fed by melting glaciers
the water may have a milky appearance
This is caused by 'rock flour' formed by the
grinding action of moving ice carried in
suspension in glacial streams'

She is staying in a guesthouse in a
neighbourhood that is probably evil because
it's full of tourists, ceramic stores
burgers and cops. Where rivers are
fed by melting glaciers the water comes
slowly through the filter by the sink
like it's being made up from scratch
The couple who own the house
live upstairs and are named

Flora and Max. Lining the left wall
along the hallway are framed pictures of
Flora and Max kissing in
boats and touching tongues in
bridges. In the kitchen there is a
photograph of Max with
four school aged children and an older
woman. He is wearing a clown costume,
his arms crossed

across his polka dotted chest. Spring in
Buenos Aires is unbaked and grainy, sweet
elastic. The sudden rain of a woman watering
the flowers on her balcony breaking
through the heat like a song

el

D'aquest d'el amor suy tan concha
Hablo d'el amor de walking backwards
and Mariana Enriquez interviewing
Pizarnik's friend Arturo Carrera. He
confesses that he would always beg
Alejandra to wear skirts. She had
beautiful legs;
but always insisted on wearing pants
And in winter she would wear
a large pullover stained
with Coca-Cola

She would drink directly from the
bottle and let it spill all over her clothes
Enfant Sauvage! Competssa de tripol
Todo es concha, vejaire viajar
Que quaint ieu vau ves lieys corren
Vejaire m'es qu'a reversos
And my horse keeps so slow a pace
La Reik de abrirse silba torn e que
lieys n'an fugen. Diversiones
Púbicas e mos cavals i vai tan len
e nos vol M'en mais que y atenha,
S'ilha no-s vol arretener
and my horse keeps suy slow;

At night the water may have a milky
appearance and in her little red stomach of
a room she doesn't sleep. It's not exactly
a crush but a space where a crush could be
but rather lies sticky and slapping, tearing
at mosquito bites the size of plums
that she can't find in the morning. Like
When I run towards her I feel like I am
walking backwards and she is fleeing
from me. She scratches, turns pouring
bottled water on her hands and

feet and stomach. Plum walls swelling
And my horse keeps so slow a pace
Watches porn on her laptop
sound muted and brightness down
low the grinding action of moving
ice bodies corren splayed
on wet rocks with their boots still on
and their nineties hair tumbling caught
beneath their shoulders and moving
through the glacial streams
And my horse keeps so slow a pace that
I don't believe I'll ever reach her unless
she wants to weight for me ;

poema.

Que nuls authors joys tan n'om play
cum jasmine damn long love: active ice
sheets and glaciers
damn trying to trasladar the jasmine poesia
Mi desorden es atroz
Writing with her body the body of
the poem escribiendo con mi cuerpo
el cuerpo del poema particularly when
armed with embedded rock fragments;
Si digo agua ¿beberé? If I say
acabada como una flower o como
una stone. No sap chantar so non sto-ne
Neither troubles qui motz no fa ir
Ni conoys de rima cos he cant chantar
No he canot shape verses can nont rhyme
ni razon
With some none who cant speak
He doesn't get it
Si digo agua ¿beberé?
Pero my chans comens'aissi begin a little
something like, plus you listen to them, mas
plus they mean to you..... Like,
las palabras no hacen el amor, hacen
la ausencia: If I say water
will I have the power to gouge,
pluck and if I say bread will I scour
the toughest rock and si digo agua pero
no sap chantar is that why these embedded
rock fragments dont rhyme?

The idea being that she spend the first
ten days of her trip researching the poem
'A un poema acerca del agua, de Silvina
Ocampo', written by acclaimed Argentinian
poet and translator Alejandra Pizarnik, born
Flora Pizarnik, for her friend and lover Silvina
Ocampo. On this topic she has claimed to be
writing an undergraduate thesis. Instead
she walks seven or eight hours a day, hair
pulled back in a tight bun and hands buried
in the pockets of her cargo shorts. She looks
at people on the street before they look at
her. Chest tight and lonely in a second-hand
sports bra. She has been seeing someone
back home but the flight was
already booked when they started
messaging on Instagram. Fountains, glaciers
and flowers on balconies.
She brushes her teeth in the shower and
lets the toothpaste slide down her chin
onto her chest. She has never sent
a nude before, closed lip smile
sunburned neck and swimming pool change
room hips. In the end
she sends a day old photograph
of herself fully clothed in the mirror and
another of a gutter, grey edging on yellow
onto burnt silver road, white water
puddled like milk in the sink

Me

D'aquest amor tan cochos
Que quant ieu vau ves fifteen at a waterpark
lieys corren stuck in the low bend
of the waterslide waiting
for someone to come down the slick blue
barrel behind and break my neck
Beaming when the trapdoor opens on
to someone tells my parents
I am too light to ride
Ma voluntat desire. S'en vai
following its cors

She tells people she's doing research or
writing a kind of translation of a
poem by Alejandra
Pizarnik, interrogating
the connection between
desire and waterfalls and Alejandra Pizarnik's
relationship to Silvina Ocampo.
You're doing the Eat, Pray, Love thing says
her friend
and she is joking but she
is also right

abris

<p>Adoncas ieu revered day, No encuentro una pluma adecuada. La de S se resiste Es dura, áspera. No necesito sino una pluma perfecto with the sweet music of the morning; All water moves towards an absence ;</p> <p>of water. E reverdeya Plunging into gaping crevasses, over cliffs of shelf ice or down rock faces recently exposed by the retreat of glaciers los instantes suspendidos. Los actos outside time. Slow the grinding action of ice bodies corren splayed streams of meltwater now form waterfalls, wet rocks with their boots on and nineties hair tumbling vas lieys suehlling and carried in suspension by glacial streams. Olguita, you don't believe I'm a lesbian do ;</p> <p>you? Because it's not true</p>	<p>Recoleta Cemetery in the afternoon heat, staying close to the angular shade of the crypts. Silvina Ocampo and her husband Rodolfo in a crypt like a war memorial. Convinced she can smell the bodies rotting. Here is a young marble white woman turning the handle on the door to her tomb. Rufina Cambacérès is famous ;</p> <p>for being buried alive. Sweat pooling against her belt imagining opening to find scratches on her white marble arms and her face Lying on the bed back at the guesthouse waiting for the heat to leave her body she posts on Instagram the peeling green bottom of a fountain, leaves floating on the gummy window ;</p> <p>surface of last week's falling water</p>	<p>[12.09.19]</p> <p>Need to more explicitly unpack here the familiarity of these evils, i.e. Travelling to find yourself, translation as metaphor</p> <p>In future drafts will need to address some subjectively invested questions, too</p> <p>i.e. What is the relationship between Alejandra's desire for the research subject and yearning for the absent lover?</p> <p>Is it about coveting Pizarnik's conviction in her desire?</p> <p>Perhaps introduce a third column??</p>
---	--	---

como

A veces, al suprimir
una palabra,
imagino otra en su
place pero sin
knowing yet su
nombre
Estoy satisfeciente,
muchacha Grecia
Entonces, a la espera
de la deseada, hago en
su vacío un dibujo que
la alude And when the
wood quand lo bosc
reverdeya
nays niice
turns green, the leaf is
satisfeciente
fresh and green E
fresca e vertz
fluoresce la crunchy I
am renewed
as well cum suelh,
through joy, e bloom,
as is my habit,
reverdey de joy e
florisc es toy

'Beside a huge cataract
we may even feel the
vibration caused by
the impact of the great

mass of water crashing
down'
She goes to the museum
and sees Mercedes
Azpilicueta's exhibit
Cuerpos Pajaros, which
claims to investigate 'the
body as a resonance box
somewhere between the
personal and the social'

She's standing in a dim
room
surrounded by fleshy
strips, dried muscles in
glass cases Standing
among the pig skins she
sees an older man in a
floppy hat approaching in
the corner of her vision.
Coming alive she kicks
her leg up so her foot
touches the back of her
thigh a quick twinge,
undies too tight. And
turning away she sees his
leg moving loosely,
mirroring hers

Anne Carson writes
that

a metaphor is a species of
symbol (so is a lover, of course)

Azpilicueta's work
'asks where the body
begins and ends, this
intoxicated body she
imagines as collective'

[24.06.19]

Find that Carol Maier
quote!!!!

Something like

Mere metaphors,
maybe, but the
emotions that prompt
writing (ORGANIC)
pass through and
become the translator
as they are being
rewritten. So

Fontana languid, riu purr
, One metaphor becomes
another because the words sink
in

Lonh tengues suelh,
L'abanz

a

Ni persec no sap Chantar	She is on a Tinder date	[26.11.18]
	and she e can't shut up	
Pizarnik writes to her	after five days of	Good quotes from the lily
therapist: many	tight-jawed sweating it	roberts-foley TEXT journal
nights I roam the streets	out, walking around	piece!!!!
looking for her: in every	listening to the same	
face, This is where I am	songs. She is giddy with	
tonight	saying nervous things &	Language is a substance,
	has never spoken	and has matter
every tree, in the dogs, the	Spanish so quickly	
dead	before	
	Her date walks	Language in translation
April, 2.	quickly, studies	is a fluid, spilling from
leaves, in the shadows;	literature and pushes	one vessel to another, or
	her short hair back	blood transfused btw
	with an open hand as	bodies
	she speaks. She says	
	she read Alejandra	Translation is like
	Pizarnik in	water, changing form to
	high school but it's	make the clouds in the
		sky
	Not really the kind of	
	thing she's into	
	anymore, the same way	
	that you might say yeah	
	I had a Salinger phase	
	too. Like a sad boy ex	
	boyfriend or a posi emo	
	punk band that you	
	listen to on your bike	
	or in the shower	

una

		[06.10.19]
	They have two beers and pick dry mouthed through plastic streets. Suddenly Alejandra is talking about the matinee glass of wine she drank when she went to see <i>I, Tonya</i> with her housemate. Now trying to explain the plot of a film which her date has neither seen nor expressed any interest in seeing, and has nothing to do with what they were talking about	How to convey that young queer people in Buenos Aires seem to be on Tinder in the same light, floppy almost platonic way as she and her friends are back home - even the haircuts and tattoos are the same
Will write in a few days Ni canter no sap cantamos and then the final sadness of returning before having found her and discovering that what if that which ought to be doesn't exist		But this Tinder stuff still echoes this timeless, awful macho colonial conquest
No I am sorry I can't I am lonesome. Can you guess why	Trying to improvise a plot, some sweeping wriggling motion to link the story back to anything that any one has ever wanted to say. They hug goodbye on a street corner. Afterwards Alejandra buys a litre of orange juice and drinks it on the way back to the guesthouse, clumsy like a giant and heavy on the soles of her feet	A kind of terrible inevitable truth

flor

Susana Chávez-Silverman notes that sometimes I would climb into the
'the simile of the flower' in the big green bin to stomp down the
poem is 'a somewhat unusual image armfuls
in Pizarnik', although she of flowers take the full soft heads in
was fond of the post-Romantic figure of hands rip them apart like bread rolls for
the lily. When I worked at a florist I ducks
drank weak tea behind the counter and Back then I was always hungry &
pretended to know all the names waiting to ride home in the rain in the
off chance that you would be at my
and house

waiting

and when the wood turns for a motorcycle to skid and D W Foster writes that in
green, collide with a moving the poetic universe of the
the leaf is born, fresh and vehicle, poem, the figure of flores
green cos ai know what music assumes a meaning
I am renewed alsoacabada como una flor function equivalent to that
a flower o como una piedra..... of real body parts. It then
.....; a flower (joyous summons to the
Lanquan lo temps renovelha not far from the night ear.....) waiting to
e appear la flors albspina,; understand what exactly
and when I worked at a florist doussament sweetly per miey should be understood from
I would fill buckets with amid la foliage waiting this incorporation of flores
slimy water and their edges sweetly for a motorcycle to into the semantic realm of
would cut into my folded skid and collide with a the body. Kind of like
fingers, ai feel their contents moving vehicle, which had leg kicking
slop onto my jeans new chant happened once before while I big slow horse body
novelh new song I would was wiring gerberas lo 'opening itself to the
spend hours wiring gerberas rossinhol feasts on the delicate urgency
looking out the window nightingale could easily of dew'
happen again

(sin

The last published letter from Alejandra
Pizarnik to Silvina Ocampo, written five
months before Pizarnik's death

We both know that I'm looking
for you. Whatever.....

it is, here is a musical forest
for two loyal girls: S. y A.

Write me, dearest one. I need
the beautiful certainty that you are
here, here
below, nevertheless. I translate without

desire, my asthma is spectacular
(to top it all off I discovered that
Marta is annoyed by the sound of my
invalid's breathing)

Alejandra arrives late, picks with shaky
fingers at fried potato and bacon bits.
Her date is studying translation and
says I have

white wine at home. Later sitting on
the couch her date shows her a fat grey
cat

and a translation of an article about
E-readers

They lie down on the single bed and
her date puts on a costume she bought
at

the parade. Suddenly there is silver
light in the room and they are asleep
but
still moving slowly

Alejandra walks back to the guesthouse
as the birds are giving birth to
themselves, lips swollen and
empty serrated feeling. She brushes her
teeth slowly in
the shower

sends a soggy

email and

sleeps several hours.

Waking she tries to

hold the gentle reply

like a plum.....;

duda

17.53 pm

[07.09.19]

Here
is a musical forest

Things to tackle in the next
draft!!!!

The mass of water
crashing down

That the character is not very
likeable,
a bit pretentious and doesn't
know how to want stuff
properly

That the tinder dates aren't so
much illustrating that queer
desire is like a waterfall as
they are that this character is
confused

That travelling is evil and
boring but travel writing is evil
boring on steroids

That the questionable ethics of
translating and writing about a
silenced subject cannot be
absolved by virtue of having a
big gay crush on her

That I dont speak
French

una flor pobre, lamentable)

I translate without
desire,

Underwear
drying through the bars of the
window, she replies

2.58 pm

I miss ur body next to
mine in glass

[29.06.19]

No mention in any of the
critical commentary on
this poem of its dedication
not only to Silvina
Ocampo but
to the 'contesa de tripoli'
— prob referring to
Hodiernal of Jerusalem
(1110-1164) — Countess
consort of Tripoli through
marriage and the
alleged subject of famous
troubadour Jaufre Rudel's
songs of amor de lonh, or
'distant love'

que ya no esperaba

Marta is annoyed

Reading Pizarnik's

[28.11.18]

letters and diaries it
can be difficult not to
become impatient with
her, as one does with
certain friends and ex
partners

Marta Isabel Moia -
photographer, translator
and Pizarnik's most
constant, long-term
romantic partner. Can't
find any photos of her
anywhere. It's like she
has disappeared

Everything hurts

Feeling Pizarnik's
words build up like
saliva at the back of
her throat

(it wouldn't hurt

if you touched me

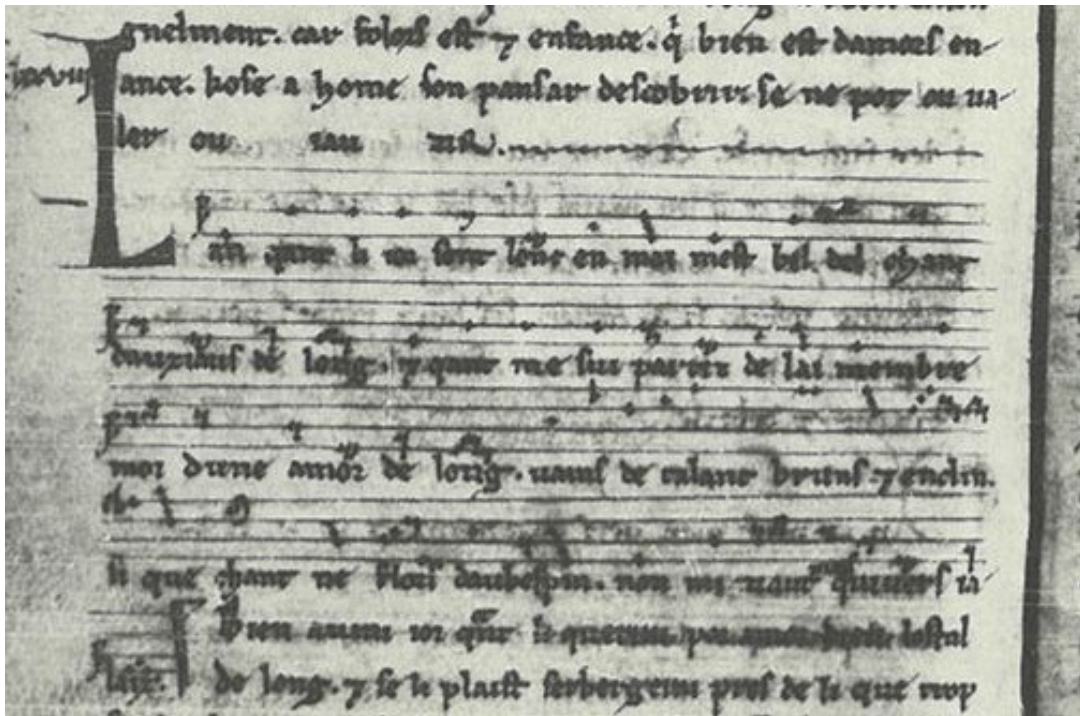
and that's not a
smooth line)

[07.09.19]

—
That Spanish is not
my first language

That I didn't know
how to be
in a long distance
relationship

la



terrible delicadeza

Una gota que brilla en la
forehead
that admito la teardrop
de la posibilidad

Like a bead of eflorisc
cum suelh cum sweat que fan
d'amor. Como una lágrima
corrida de lugar

On her fifth day in
Buenos Aires it rains.
She spends the
afternoon translating
the poetry of Silvina

López Medin. She got
flustered in the book
store looking for
Silvina Ocampo

There's this line about
a bead of sweat on his
forehead, like a
teardrop corrida de
lugar

[29.11.18]

Translation is like water,
changing form

Like a bead of sweat como
una teardrop

trying to escape / out
of place / making a
break for it / slipping
formation

Language in
translation is a fluid,
spilling from one vessel to
another

—> Running

To make the clouds in
the sky

de la primavera.

When lo temps renovelha e par la flors albspina per miey may la bruelha lo rossinhol s'esbaudeya, bray when Springtime's Rose in hole sounds clar;	She talks to her mum on Facebook messenger. The mulberries on the front tree are becoming ripe. Her sister is purple stained sweetly and seasonally amid the;	[11.08.19]
And when on the meadows morning coloured spreading light sobre l'erba And wherenon sap esser chantair braire, deu quant au lo ver. And as lo temps renovelha and sea sonar;	Foliage becomingthin. Still Alejandra has no idea what she is doing here looking at fountains and crypts and fantasising about a dead poet in this pitted stomach of a room;	That Walter Benjamin quote about trees Translation does not find itself in the centre of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge It calls into it without entering, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language
Clar, the mulberries becoming	Whilesomeone is swimming in rivers and walking to work in the rain	The reverberation of the work in the alien one

Me abris

I would have liked
this amor londanha
murders me to
be the frozen water
e'l dezirs propdas
m'esta messed up and
the
sweet longing
swallowing
in the form of
d'un bon pilgrim
swallowing your
Silvina, Sylvie,
Sylvette. I called, but
no one answered so
mey volertude stai
here
alejandra alejandra
abajo estoy yo
alejandra
anc isside ma mort
can't be
otherwise I
would have liked to be
a pilgrim isside
your burning throat

She lived between a
woman's clothing store
and a *lotería*. There
is a white marble
plaque above the door.
Her
apartment was the
second from the top.
Fans, blinds,
grey-white ceiling. She
crosses the road and
stands against the glass
pane of a patisserie
imaging hot, weak
tea and sleeves pulled
over knuckles. She
never wanted plants or
flowers in her
apartment. Would
come home and take
off her pants, go to the
mirror wearing only a
slip
and a pullover. Her
elbows on the window
sill. Rain stamping out
the dry square of the
awning

1. It is generally accepted that Alejandra Pizarnik had a number of serious relationships with women but did not identify as a lesbian. This is not so much contentious as it is simply not discussed in critical scholarship on Pizarnik's work;
2. Pizarnik's published diaries are incomplete and most of the unpublished material pertains to her sexuality;
3. All this unpublished material is currently held at Princeton. This is a detail that I did not think to check before I went to Buenos Aires to do research. So
4. I guess what it all boils down to is that I bought a bunch of the incomplete published material and stood outside her apartment for a while

me abro

Su cercanía proximity
es like una
premasturbación.
Todo mi be ser being
besar se reduces a
la peeling skin. Tan
adorable. Tan lejana

Amor de lonh
Loinlove
Long distance

She buys two bananas
from a fruit store and
drops her coins on the
floor, where they roll
under shelves heavy
with apples and wood.
She crosses the street
again, presses her face
up against the glass to
peer into the dark
lobby. Hello? Does
one know on what
floor lived Alejandra
Pizarnik? Yes. Seven.
Thank you. Goes back
across the road and
perches on a stoop
outside the pastry
shop, rolls a cigarette
like she's waiting for
someone,
She eats one banana
and lets the other
soften black between
the wooden slats of the
dark bottom of her
bag. Useless body
turning mulch. She is
feeling ridiculous

5. And translated this
poem very slowly for
a year.

me vuelvo de

This is where I am
tonight April, 2. Will
write in a few days. I
am lonesome. Can you
guess why?

I am still waiting, will
you hurry. Feeling
fine, better everyday. I
had a chance to go out
into the bank but
would not take it. I
will tell you more
when I write

Sorry I didn't see
this earlier!!!

Just having a shower !

I am lonesome. Can
you
 waiting
?

We could facetime?

Why don't you answer
my letter honey —

Wish you were here —
having a dandy fine
time

We have been viewing
this scene by
moonlight to-night.

Can't describe it. It is
fascinating, awful,
impressive, terrible,
and beautiful, beyond
the power of words to
describe

Sorry, just woke up

[15.07.19]

Thousands of
vintage postcards
from Niagara Falls
(1900 to 1950s)

—> Letter
displaced to
postcard, lover to
exhibit, poem to
translation etc

—> Could flesh
out this movement
more,

Like how all these
texts, and my
own positionality
are being kind of
displaced by the
grinding action of
polyphonic ice
& suspended in
this whimsical
anonymity

agua en

Green on my face	At two a.m. in the guest	need-to ?
I need to drink from	house Alejandra wakes	must ?
you	up and goes blindly to the	
until the night opens	sink, bare feet on the	have-to ?
	kitchen tiles.	
Where the volume and	Gummy	
height of the fall are	eyed in the red glow of the	
great enough the	power socket. She drink	—
power	from a novelty mug in the	
of the falling water	exaggerated shape	[10.03.19]
and the swirling	of a flamingo. She refills	
currents below may be	it twice (that slow,	Balderstone writes that in
sufficient not only to	original drip) and drinks	addition to the ‘personal
keep the base of the	steadily	affective ties’ revealed in
cataract clear of		the correspondence
accumulated rock	Swallowing as loudly as	between the two writers,
debris, but to erode a	she can until the sound	there are also resonances
deep hollow in the	becomes alien and she	between their written
river bed..... ;	stumbles back to bed	works, a thread of S’s
	bloated and cold, swishing	‘totally original form of
Peironet, passa riu,	like the shadows beneath	self-writing’ in A’s
di-li Lai n’irai el sieu	a pier, like the distressing	constantly shifting self
em peril come de	endlessness of flowing	construction as an
passar mar	with the current and	Argentine poet
	also against it, the deep	
	endless hollowing of the	
This is known as	river bed and the crashing	
a plunge pool	bloated rock debris	

tu



poema

Tu modo de silenciarte en el poema.	It was weird to read your email!!	[Date unknown]
Me abris como a una flor (sin duda una flor pobre, lamentable)	I feel like this is the way long distance might look like from space ,hey	Rudel's 'vida' (aka his fictionalised biography, probably written by Uc de Saint-Circ) claims that his verses of 'amor lonhdana' were inspired by stories of Hodierna's beauty brought to France by pilgrims, and that he joined the Second Crusade in the hope that he could meet her
que ya no esperaba la terrible delicadeza de la primavera. Me abris, me abro,	I am definitely in the same boat re: not knowing what to do	
me vuelvo de agua en tu poema de agua	i.e. idk what to do	
<i>que emana toda la noche profecias.....;</i>	but I've written a very long poem about u.....)	They say he fell ill on the voyage and arrived on the verge of death

de agua

De dezir Silvina of cors
E que'l voler m'enguana,
decieve me. Sitting in her
room on the seventh floor
at five o'clock on a Thurs-
day afternoon she sits at
her desk and writes to

Silvina: Yesterday, I
decided to repair the
damages that the storm
caused me — the traitor!
I enjoyed it so much! —
I threw everything, books,
records, notebooks on
the floor in order to sort
it all out in a more

Intelligent way. Silvina
I would like to swallow
but I called and called you
and my stiff-legged hors is
so slow in your streams

It's something very
simple (as simple as a
musical phrase) and it
can be formulated
more or less like this:
the room swings and
sways like a ship. I
wish you were naked
by

My side, reading your
poems aloud. Oh
Sylvette, if you were
here. Obviously I'd
kiss your hand and
weep, but you are my
paradise lost. Found
again and lost. Fuck
the Greco-Romans. I
love your face. Why
don't

You answer my letter
honey I feel like this is
probably how long
distance was
conducted back in the
medieval ages lol

[Date
unknown]

And she came
down from her
castle and held
him dying in
her arms

—
This is
probably
not
true

But most
scholars agree
that he died in
the crusades

que emana toda la noche

Amors de terra lonhdana, Per vos sake lo cors mi doll Si non al vostre reclam for your sake all my heart aches to the ill of lacking sweet love. Cuando entré en mi room me sashay las pantalones y me subí a una silla para mirar cómo soy	They are meant to meet at nine but Alejandra is five minutes early. Ten minutes pass on the warm street corner in the dim dark. She walks back to the guesthouse to look at the wifi and can't find the conversation anywhere.	[02.09.19]
Ab maltrait d'amor doussana Dins vergier o part la cortina Ab dezirada compahna con el buzo y el slip: vi mi cuerpo adolescente. Tenía hambre y ganas de romper algo. Me miraba a mi misma con mi piecita desordenada andando y viniendo en slip y pullover sin pensar con la memoria petrificada con la boca devorandose	Did she delete Tinder? She goes back and waits fifteen minutes longer, goes home and drinks a beer on the narrow balcony, hopes not to run into Max or Flora in the corridor. She calls her housemate back home I don't know Like maybe I imagined the whole thing	Amor de lonh, amor lonhdana, amors de tèrra lonhdana 'The identity of a [literal] woman as object of the troubadour's passion can add nothing to our understanding of his poetry' (?)

profecias.

Peironet, passa riu,
I would have liked to
to be the frozen
Peironet passer of
rivers passar mar
di-li Lai I would have
liked to be wader of
waters n'irai el sieu
swallowing, Peironet I
would have liked to be
the frozen swallowing in
your burning throat;

The pavement outside the
cafe window is flaming
white in the midday sun.
It is evening in Melbourne.
There has been torrential
rain all afternoon and the
power lines are down.
Someone writes
The air feels stretchier
now and smells like
a clean towel

Yum

Everything tastes like
dust and spring blossoms
here

Pale icon trembling
watching a woman slowly
eating an omelette
on thick white toast

it was necessary to say
or at least name it (the)
so that the word
was tempted
forward to
extinguish the
flames of

Fig. 2 (la)

*Medieval musical setting for
Jaufre Rudel's Song 6. Paris,
Bibliothèque Nationale.*

Brian J. Hudson

Waterfall: Nature and Culture

(modo, de, poema, Me, abris, como,
duda, agua en)

Fig. 3 (tu)

*Alejandra Pizarnik with
cigarette and doll's head.
Source unknown.*

Zoe Leonard

You See I Am Here After All

(una, flor, me vuelvo de)

Alejandra Pizarnik

Diarios

(silenciarte, poema, abris, como,
me abro, que emana toda
la noche)

Prosa completa

(de, silenciarte, el, como)

Nueva Correspondencia

(tu, de, me, a, una, (sin, duda, una
flor pobre, lamentable),
que ya no esperaba, de la
primavera, de agua)

Extracting the Stone of Madness

- *Trans. Yvette Siegert*

(poema, como, flor, Me
abris, me abro, me vuelvo
de, poema, profecias)

Jaufre Rudel

Collected Verse - Trans.

Malcovatti, Wolf and

Rosenstein

(Tu, modo, de, silenciarte,
en, el, poema, Me, abris,
como, a, una, flor, terrible
delicadeza, de la primavera,
me abris, me abro, agua en,
profecias)

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TEXT poetry

Carolyn Gerrish

Aperture

harmony is such a rarity and racing towards it
on a darkling plain as peace flees
determined to be elsewhere and you never had
the correct currency to purchase composure
and *if it wasn't for the mist* we could all
begin to focus

outside the road foggy
like a clarice beckett painting
headlights encroaching inquisitors

disequilibrium a necessity for artists
a mind in its normal state could never create –
the lies of fiction preferred to real lies
and if you stand in front of wings painted
on a wall does that make you an angel?
but there were times staring at the moon
in its glacial benevolence when you
felt it understood

the slit of light
beneath the door –
somewhere there is radiance

on a darkling plain – from 'Dover Beach' by Matthew Arnold
if it wasn't for the mist – from *The Great Gatsby* by Scott Fitzgerald

Carolyn Gerrish is a Sydney poet. She has published five collections of poetry. The latest is The View from the Moon (Island Press, 2011). She enjoys performing her work and is currently working on her sixth collection.

Lauren Rae is a writer, poet and hospital pharmacist based in Brisbane. By day, she writes for a state-wide medicines advisory committee. By night, creative writing and poetry afford her an escape from medical procedures and protocols. @_laurenrae_



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TEXT script

Cailean McBride

Be Near Me (after In Memoriam)

FADE IN:

INT. LORE'S HOUSE — DAY

A comfortable, lived-in house. Not especially spacious but with appealing character. There are books everywhere — overflowing from the many bookcases, piled on stairs, tables, lying half-read on sagging armchairs. The artsy prints and posters framed haphazardly on the walls suggest that this is the home of some kind academic of the Humanities.

*And here he is. **LORIMER STACK**. Called **LORE** by all who know him. Not your typical fusty academic. He's not that old and kind of funky. The sort who wouldn't look out of place at a low-level, sedate rave, or on a BBC4 artsdoc.*

He's dressed in austere, mourning black. Roaming the house, iPad in hand.

LORE

*Tis better to have loved and lost
Than to never have loved at all.*

The stupidest lines, or so you might say.
Passed through the collective gut
slithering from insight to cliché.

Now strictly for tea-towels and gift-shop tat
Or buffoonish spin in ministerial lies.
But once it must have been solace,
summoning sad nods, frustrated sighs.
The acceptance, of ‘yes, this is sad.
But all that lives, it has to die.’

And still...

The most famous line of any elegy
if not of English verse. Full. Stop.

*He stops. Suddenly pensive. Marches back through the house to a study where
his laptop sits on a cluttered desk. Thoughtful tiptaptap as he changes a few
words on an open doc.*

That’s also a crock of crap.

*He looks up at a framed print of **ALFRED TENNYSON** above the desk.
Long-locked. Austere. Victorian. Useless.*

Sorry, Alfred, but
that’s just a stone-cold fact

I might have loved you once.
But now you grate. Inviting argument
like cage-fight lovers. But not over dishes
or socks on floors or careless infidelity,
but that worst betrayal of all;
Death. Death. Stupid Death.
Of thoughtless and unkind expirations.
Of rubbing shoulders in public places.
Or Metro confinement, a contaminated meal.
Hacking idly at us, the feverish,
ransacking of careless lives.
And leaving little but rage,
booming dully in a hollow can.

*He stops. Collects himself. Puts his grief tidily away. Scoops up the iPad to
resume his notes.*

But let’s think positively.
If we can. Just for a moment.
Not the easiest to do in this day
of panicky locked-down discontent.

*He's walking again. Pouring his caged anguish into this lecture. Stops at a corkboard of photographs. All of a couple very much in love — **LORE** and his partner, an attractive man of similar age called **HALLEY**. All the key life events are here. Birthdays. Graduations. Weddings. Christmas.*

*Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas Eve.*

A calm Christmas Eve.
Was that something we ever had?
All I recall is hectic rush, blaring ads.
Frantic rushing for the latest fads.
Must-have toys. Love through commerce.
The last-minute crowd-wrestle amid
Slade, Pogue, Spektor, Aguilera,
and all that jingling, relentless serenade
to exploded finances, long-gone patience,
and the search to reform the cosy bliss
of vitally misremembered childhood joy,
re-planting it, keeping it bauble-bedecked
nurtured and warm for those to come.

And yet, there was joy. *Is* joy.
Only where we did not expect.
Not in the gifts or the booze
or gut-busting, endless meals,
but in moments, precious by surprise;
where the world is at last put on hold.
Preoccupation with future lectures,
future lessons,
future year

erased in sudden joy; a laugh, an embrace,
an unsought seam of memory, a rewrite of the future,
an unkillable lantern to light the waiting darkness.

*Hold on **LORE'S** POV. The photograph of a Christmas past. He and **HALLEY**, laughing, arms round each other. Ridiculously, un-self-consciously happy in festive jumpers and paper hats. The sheer bliss of that moment makes him wince, screw his eyes closed.*

FADE TO BLACK

INT. LORE'S HOUSE — NIGHT

*No lights in the house, just cold darkness, with perhaps a suggestion of sodium streetlight outside the window. **LORE** at his desk, tip-tapping away on his laptop. In full flow. Writing like a demon to keep the pain at bay. And then ... he stops, fatally pausing for thought.*

LORE

Because the darkness will come.
Is, in fact, now here.
Haunting this room, filling this air
with the thought of you,

Come; let us go; your cheeks are pale;

the absurdity
of your cold, locked-down body

But half my life I leave behind.

lying trapped in some Venetian morgue.

Methinks my friend is richly shrined;

Locked away, sealed, grief-proof, impregnable.
Leaving me gashed and hooked. Choking,

But I shall pass, my work shall fail.

For half the life I could have been.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LORE'S HOUSE — LATER

***LORE** hasn't moved from his chair, although he's now slumped over his desk, dozing face illuminated by the light of his laptop. Outside we are well into the small hours now — just cold moon and streetlight seeping through branches and into the house.*

He creaks awake and groans as he shifts upright. Something on the flashing screen of the tablet catches his attention. Out of battery. He curses and fumbles for the charger, plugging it in clumsily. And as he props the tablet back on its stand again, there's something else in it...

*... a face. **HALLIE**. Staring back at him. With love.*

*This is not a FaceTime call or anything of that nature. There's not lit reflection — just solid black and the face is barely lit, half in shadow. It could be reflection on the blank screen and indeed **LORE** looks over his shoulder to check. But there is nothing there.*

But still the spectral face in the screen looks out at him.

LORE

*So hold I commerce with the dead;
Surrendering to a floundering grief.
Lamenting a love that was all too brief
and unravelling now like broken thread.*

*Or so methinks the dead would say;
I see here now your smiling face,
chastising with love my fond disgrace.
To not encloud our too-short days.*

*Or so shall grief with symbols play
Burying rage in borrowed tears,
in pains reflected, made safe by years,
or re-versed in style, black turns to grey.*

*And pining life be fancy-fed
Till ghosts themselves they do appear.
To remonstrate, but out of love, not fear.
So the live stay living, the dead stay dead.*

HALLIE

*Now looking to some settled end,
that will not come; it will not come.
The ache of error, of clocks run down,
of thoughtless cruelty I failed to amend.*

*That these things pass, and I shall prove
these failures will not our lives define.
That what endures of our cut-short time
is fixed gladness none can remove.*

*A meeting somewhere love with love,
such an easy promise for me to make.
Just close your eyes, breathe in that ache
and feel me here, not below, or above.*

*I crave your pardon, O my friend.
For my errors made; they were not few.
but never in malice, or the hate of you;
just dumb denial we could ever end.*

*And now a jolt as the iPad slips from its place. And when **LORE** picks it up to
look at the screen, **HALLIE** has gone.*

INT. LORE'S HOUSE — MORNING

*The house is bright with sunlight. LORE stands at his desk, facing the laptop,
which has a Zoom screen upon it, broken up into little squares of dozens of
students. An online lecture. He stands before them, finding his centre,
limbering up.*

LORE

Tis better to have loved and lost

So overquoted.
So cliched.
So powerless.

So instead,
how about this?

*Be near me when my faith is dry,
when all my sense of you has fled;
when your laugh, your love, and all are dead
and all I wish — crave — is to also die.*

*And men the flies of latter spring,
a pestilent and inescapable blight*

that teems in ignorance, hatred, spite
and infects with death all joyful things.

*That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
of progress, commerce and other saws
that hide corruption in ceaseless jaws
and mangle nature in a golden ring.*

*And weave their petty cells and die.
The threads of our lives are left undone
By a petty contagion we cannot outrun,
out-think, out-live; nor even outcry.*

*And so the lecture goes on. He's finding his pace now, his rhythm — so much
so that he doesn't notice that among the multitude of faces there is one that he
would find achingly familiar. One that that is looking out with love. And
saying goodbye for the last time.*

HALLIE

But be near me, my love, all the same;
When I am trunked in your memory store
until we are snared, unawares, once more
on that ebbing, deceptive, wave of pain.

So let me be near you and yet be so far
that I cause no pain, nor fear, nor regret.
Be in gladness of a tender, grateful debt
and trace the line of our healing scar.

*Prior to becoming an academic, Cailean McBride worked in journalism, based both
in the UK and in Australia. He is a published poet and novelist and was awarded his
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TEXT prose

Julia Prendergast

Mothwebs, spinners, orange

When the world locks down and winter comes, I find my long black coat is covered in moth larvae, like thick cobwebs.

At first, I think the pale fluff from the old cream coat has shifted to the black, only there's an insidious viral pattern. As I pull the sticky web away, I note the irreparable holes.

I feel momentarily proactive – googling moth-remedies, making a mental action plan to fumigate the wardrobe, wash every item.

Then I give in to the feeling that the world is falling away.

It's the pheromone trappers that send me adrift. Is it really possible to trap a human scent? It seems especially ridiculous in this shutdown world.

I am a keeper of things, real and virtual – worse, I've been overlooking kept things – the moth carnage feels like a punishment.

When restrictions ease, temporarily, I go to the cemetery. I choose a windy day because I love the way wind marks time on my skin.

I stand at your grave and watch the spinning wheel – metallic cellophane, primary colours spinning harder, faster.

As the wind takes hold the wheel propels madly – the bold colours become colourless flashes, silvery white. Looking up, I see the spinners are everywhere, scattered across the cemetery like suburban firecrackers, street crackers from back in the day, sliver-white sparkles flying out of the ground like magic.

I hold up my phone, take a photo.

What are you doing? he says.

It won't turn out, I say. You need a proper camera – you have to set the white balance to tungsten, in settings – it cools the colour temperature in the image. White balance removes unrealistic colour casts – so the things we see as white appear white in the photo.

You alright? he says. *How much longer do you want to stay?*

What is the colour white composed of? I ask.

What do you mean?

Nothing. Literally – what is white made of? Like, what are its constituent parts?

I gesture left and right, then twist my wrist in all directions, pointing to the spinning wheels dotted across section D22 and beyond. *The spinners*, I say.

Later, at home, he says, *When the wind takes hold the wheel is spun so fast, we can't hold the individual colours. It's the rapidity – our eyes can't keep up. They call it the near re-creation of white light.*

It's bullshit, I say. *Like pheromone trappers*, I add, laughing.

That's what they say, he says.

It's not enough, I spit. I'm sick of the sound of your loving voice. What lies between carnivalesque colours and near re-creation? It's a mere pivot, a redirection, virtual spasticity of wind – light – time.

Smother me with your super-spreading droplets. Who cares? I want it, at any cost. I also want you to go away. Movement is white now, an irreparable pockmark in realtime. We can see bright colours in stillness, but they are cellophane. The spinners are becoming metaphorical and I couldn't give less-of-a-fuck what any of it means, anymore. I want life on my skin.

I run the steep footpath, gasping frosty air, sweat prickling across my collarbone and chest. My heels pound the concrete because I'm forgetting the rule about staying light on my toes. Lilly pilly flowers are smashed underfoot, pinky-white like bleeding flesh. Here too, there is a pattern, a smattering geometry. I'm so sick of this inside-out world. I run harder towards the top, where suburbia becomes bushland. I veer left, running full-pelt into the mothweb drizzle, weaving between ironbark gums.

It was only last week – the orange sunset – a Melbourne miracle, winter orange sky – it didn't have to mean a thing.

Orange is a secondary colour, made of red and yellow. In its synthetic form, orange lacks luminosity. *Real* orange stops time.

What? he says.

I didn't say anything, I say. Did I?

I don't buy near-recreation. I don't believe in white balance.

I cover my mouth with my hand. *Tell me orange is still true*, I whisper.

Julia Prendergast's novel, The Earth Does Not Get Fat was published in 2018 (UWA Publishing: Australia). Julia's short stories feature in the most recent edition of Australian Short Stories (Pascoe Publishing). Other stories have been recognised and published: Lightship Anthology 2 (UK), Glimmer Train (US), TEXT (AU) Séan Ó Faoláin Competition (IE), Review of Australian Fiction, Australian Book Review Elizabeth Jolley Prize, Josephine Ulrick Prize (AU). Julia's research has appeared in various publications including: New Writing (UK), TEXT (AU), Testimony Witness Authority: The Politics and Poetics of Experience (UK). Julia is a Senior lecturer in Writing and Literature at Swinburne University, Melbourne. She is the current Chair of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP). Julia is an enthusiastic supporter of interdisciplinary, open and collaborative research practices.



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TEXT prose

Patrick West

Pauline

If I were to tell you that I spend my afternoons staking out the cathedral, during those hours when its shadow relentlessly casts a greater and a deeper darkness over the heart of the city I love, being Melbourne, you'd probably get the wrong idea.

Which only goes to show – *tant pis* –
how much you can miss if you don't
stop, now and again, blink once, and
look twice.

Look at me, for example. Only the other
day, sitting in my usual spot where the
sacred land of the cathedral meets the
footpath sacred only to those
bewildered women who have stories like
my one to tell, I saw a light that made
me look twice.

Or would have done, at least, if I
hadn't already looked once.

The light I'm talking about wasn't a real light, unless metaphor is deemed real.

Be done with all that! This metaphorical light I said I saw is only my way of putting into words the most blazing light of all: what I've heard men call, creation out of nothingness. The light of the real, the unreal, and of all that lies in between. The light, so to speak, that makes you look at all light in a new light.

The light, though, of what earthly time? When was it: "only the other day?" Perhaps it was a Tuesday. It could well have been a Wednesday. I am

certain that the Monday-to-Friday 5.15 pm service had been about to commence, which narrows it down somewhat. Even so, it may have been a Thursday, a Friday, a Monday.

Anything but an ordinary Saturday or Sunday.

Let all that pass... these days, I'm not as good with dates as I am with people. If only by sight, all the members of the weekday congregation – those who trickle into St Paul's Monday to Friday without fail, at a quarter after five, as afternoon shadows lengthen – are known to me. And of all these anonymous worshippers, so familiar to yours

truly, every last one of them was taken
in: made to look twice.

Deceived, as metaphor deceives: made
foolish before God.

Think twice on those words, and tell me
that deception doesn't always travel in
twos: the language of deception
wrapping around the deception of the
thing – and always, it goes without
saying, in God's sight. Something any
St Paul's parishioner worthy of the
name would do well to believe; for
isn't this the very thing discoursed on
in cathedrals? I ask, only because
(hear what I may through the walls)
I've never been inside one; all I know

is, the shadows the thing casts.
Anything more, infidel that I am, is
irremediable foreign-ness – which
leaves open the alternative, if
religion is to be believed, that
deception is not so very deceiving
after all; even, to risk practising the
sophistry I so much despise, that to be
taken in is necessary to knowing the
whole truth of things, be they begotten
or made. Perhaps any lie doubled is a
truth made complete? (“The animals went
in two by two, hurrah! hurrah!”) Think
what you will, it endures, that no
member of the St Paul’s congregation,
arriving at the cathedral from places
that would not know me if I lay down in
their streets at night, had enjoyed my
advantage of seeing, from the very

beginning, a light that made everyone who saw it look twice.

The sole exception: God himself – God and I. For surely it was in His company, that I – alone of all my sex or of any sex; with eyes as serene and unblinking as the Lord's – had watched this light which drew a second glance from all that saw it. Surely too, my eyes alone (like the twin "o's" staring eternally out of "looked"), had gaped, gawked, gazed – an unholy Holy Trinity of looks – as a man beat a dog, beat a dog into shape, beat into shape what no-one could have known, before the sculptor himself, was a dog in the making – a dog coming to life, beneath

cathedral shadows. A dog with a sandy-coloured coat flowing, as if caressed by zephyrs, over its flanks.

Skin-deep metaphors, however, be damned! What was, was a dog of sand to its very heart.

A dog with creation itself being thrashed into it.

Thereby transfixing even me: the woman (daughter, refugee, lover) who has seen so many miracles in the penumbras of evening shadows; the one who has gazed upon such a quantity of wonders in the half-light of hazy mornings. Before

such a slapping into life of raw animal, all such things (all former marvels and mysteries), into insignificance, *paled*; in the face of such a concoction. Like to God as the Artist Chef; the Book of Genesis, his heavenly gastronomy! Take one teaspoonful of ocean. Add a pinch of desert. Combine, and voilà: one cooked-up work of art. For as the dog before me seemed proof: sand without water is nothing but drift and despair, while water without sand is the possibility of all things... which is to say, eternally nothing.

So to say, what I was seeing – the product of hands hardly God-like –

couldn't be gainsaid: a torso
unmistakably canine; jaws,
approximately those of a wolf;
hindquarters, such as any puppy might
dream of. And for the use of those
human hands, a dog's drinking bowl
(delicately lettered, *Fido*) filled with
water solely as a kindness to art. Even
so, there are some tasks too delicate
for water so ordinary: once, twice,
three times, I heard the soft, kissing
sound of a man's spitting into shaping,
creating palms – the very water of the
body partaking. And I imagined, to go
with my listening, tiny oceans within
dactylograms, deserts themselves chafed
from skin.

All the same, all in the service of
what? To what end, this endless
craftsmanship: spirit of the artist
binding water and sand; dumb animal
born out of brutal matter; the thought,
untouchable, fitted to all that which
touches but doesn't think? How can I
put it to you so that you will
understand? How give it a name? Such
art perfectly faithful; such life mock
and bogus. Deception sublime.
Persuasion most abject. Metaphor left
to bleed out on the steps of the
cathedral! Or rather, metaphor buried
up to its neck in sand. For this I'm
telling you: under way, before my very
eyes: the pure Platonism of dog; Pluto,
ideal; conjectural, abstract; yet no
less of a reality than water and sand.

A dog of mind transcending; in the
selfsame instant: a dog all a dog is.

Is, in the end, or rather *was*, down to
the final twist in the tale: a single,
unambiguous turd (a twist from the
tail!) shaped into being out of a
fistful of leftover sand. One unique,
unmistakable, life-like shit. The
tailings and ending of *Fido* the dog.

All the same, before such a concluding
flourish – deposited at the very tip of
the creature's termination – there had
been a beginning, whether you do or
don't believe that endings exist in
beginnings from the very beginning. And

at that time, prior to the origin of all things that concern me (be they begotten or made) I'd only been watching casually, indifferently, with my typical, downcast, couldn't-care-less cast of face.

Reason being, the young man with the bulging, blue tarpaulin slung over his left shoulder hadn't looked to me, at first, like any species of artist I was familiar with. (I'd not noticed, initially, the escaping grains of sand trailing behind him, fugitive sediment – Golem grit – never more to be called into the service of creation...) If anything at all, he'd seemed a dressed-down, out-of-season Santa Claus.

Dressed all in blue, however, rather than jovial red – exactly the same shade as the blue of his tarpaulin – and so bundled up in his clothes that there seemed perhaps much in common between his body and whatever it was that he had wrapped up, just as snugly, within his swag – resembling, as it did, a little bit of the bluest sky, torn away. A patchwork-blue wight then, shrouded in so many vestments for which I know not the name; even I, shrouded as I am – shrouded in darkness, in shadows, in veils. A man no doubt, but an artist well camouflaged – whose eyes too were blue, and whose prematurely bald, blue-veined scalp, glimpsed by me each time he raised his cap in the greeting of some benefactor, poured

with sweat. For it's hard work, as you might imagine, making an animal too real to be true, yet not so untrue that it wouldn't be mistaken, by just about everyone who saw it, for what it really was not: alive.

Call me a dog, would you? A piece of shit? Surprised, are you, at my gift for English?

May the Peace of the Lord be with you...
And now that I'm tearing my heart open like this, I remember that it was also a wind-less day – a wind-less, business day. But of course, what artist would risk creating a masterpiece on days when the air might carry so much of his

creation away as to make any creature something less than a creation? As to make creation, creation-less? There it crouched then, finally – calm, complete: a creature perfectly ordinary yet utterly unreal, taking everybody in, staring with its own blind eyes at the portal of the cathedral – hearing, in its infinite deafness, no trace of the hymns filtering through the walls of ancient sandstone.

Until, with evening approaching, all came to an end, and I was left staring at nothing in particular, as the artist (not once having seemed to acknowledge insignificant me) swept his creation back into his tarpaulin, and walked

away, just as he'd arrived, with the makings of future animals slung jauntily over his shoulder.

Consequently, as he walked, feet thumping like a dinosaur's upon the solid surfaces of the city I love so much, mysterious shapes created and uncreated themselves through the blue skin of his hump – alive (if you can call it that) only so long as he (their bearer) was quick, quickly striding away, speeding down light-lined, raddled, worn-out Flinders Street.

Thus burdened, however, still every pocket of this blue-swaddled hunchback jangled, by way of compensation, with the coins that his dog had earned him –

his cathedral collection, as it were.
Reward for all this deceiver's
deception, and all in the name of
falseness, of art. Gain, however, is
also, inevitably, loss: a few grains of
sand were making their escape with
every step: enough perhaps, over the
course of his journey out of sight, to
make a mouse tail or two, a dog's ear,
an eyelash of an elephant.

The ragged remains of life.

Hours expired. The last of the
worshippers drifted away.

11.15 pm. Time for bed.

Falling asleep where I always do, on
absolute waterfront – my morning
reveille the sludgy sounds of the Yarra
– I wondered when I might see my blue
man again.

In the end, it was a year, even to the
day, before he turned up once more.

And once more, just as before, I was
staking out St Paul's. 5.15. Wind-less.

Did he wink at me just now, remembering
days gone by? Even now, as I tell this
tale, I – almost always coin-less of
pocket, still with riches in my head

that few could imagine – can't be sure.
I resolve though – for the rest of this
story, no matter how long it might last
– to call my artist Paul, and myself
Pauline. To connect us. For after all,
my real name, in your language, cannot
even be written down. And after all,
weren't we both in the shadow of St
Paul's? Both within the same darkness?

Today, a year on, there are more
pigeons around than I remember from
last time, with enough plumage loosely
dancing upon the slate-like paving
stones to be able to stitch together a
whole loft of them. It's colder too,
which perhaps explains why, under my
watchful eye, Paul has been kneading

his bundle of sand for several long minutes, like a baker reviving the yeast in set-aside dough, using the palms of his calloused and reddened hands to warm up the life within. From *Fido's* drinking bowl, now he adds a little more water to the tiny desert island lying before him, swimming in its ocean of tarpaulin blue. He's in blue again himself, as well: Paul, my Michelangelo of animals. What creature is he going to make today? I wonder. But before I can even begin to imagine, I have another thought: perhaps all this business of kneading the sand, of running his fingers through it, is not Paul's way of bringing anything to life, but just the opposite. Perhaps all his preparations are only his way

of exorcising, of driving out, all the other lives – the lives of all those other beings carved out of sand – which he has formed, in the past, out of the misshapen matter before which he is presently kneeling. Perhaps, natch, something remains of life even when life seems completely destroyed: some skerrick of existence; some breath that fans a heart aflame.

Perhaps everything old has to be put to the sword before anything new can begin.

As if thinking this over, Paul's fingers suddenly still, and the world, too, seems to lose all motion. Just for

a second. Until, without warning, all the pigeons take off at once, as if all of one mind, and it seems that something of time has finally come to an end.

It is then, finally, that he turns to me, and only then that I realize my unavoidable fate. How could I have been so stupid? His movement my way, long minutes ago, (his conspiratorial wink), was undoubtedly that of an artist's. I would smile at him this instant, were it not that I am now like a statue, frozen on the outside, if churning, churning stone within. A smile could shatter me. But relax, Paul seems to be saying with his eyes, and so I settle

back, within myself: to await the
making of me.

Whole generations seem to pass by as I
watch myself grow before my eyes.

Oblivious to everything, tourists toss
coins into Paul's collection bowl. I
wonder though, do I really look like
that? A woman with every appearance of
life but no reality within?

Finally I am done. Still I daren't
move, for fear, again, of collapsing
into a million grains of sand.

My coin-less pockets gnaw at my sides.

I have nothing to give the artist for

this my portrait. No matter. I am
Pauline to his Paul, eternally.

And we are both, he in blue and I in
black, eternally in the shadow of the
cathedral.

Eternally, still not really. For in the
end – as midnight's shadows bear down –
I am the only one left crouching there,
for God's dogged winds to endlessly
scatter.

Dr Patrick West is an Associate Professor in Writing and Literature in Deakin University's School of Communication and Creative Arts. He was the Higher Degree Research Coordinator in the school from 2016 to 2019. Patrick's most recent creative-arts publication is the short story 'An Aura Nothing Out of the Ordinary,' published in Prosopisia (XIII, 2, 2019). With Eleni Bastéa he co-edited a Special Issue of TEXT on Writing | Architecture in 2019 (No 55) available at <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue55/content.htm>



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TEXT prose

Laura Grace Simpkins

Vanilla

The mind has its needs, just as the body does. The latter are the foundations of society; the former make it pleasing. While government and laws take care of the security and wellbeing of men in groups, the sciences, letters, and the arts, less despotic and perhaps more powerful, spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains which weigh men down, snuffing out in them the feeling of that original liberty for which they appear to have been born, and make them love their servitude by turning them into what we call civilized people.

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Discourse on the Arts and Sciences (1750)

There's a famous market near where I live. My favourite time to go is early in the morning, before the crowds of overeager tourists and jaded office-workers get there, just as the stalls are being set up. The market itself has an indoor part, an outdoor part, and an indoor-outdoor part, and is housed in a tastefully decrepit old corn exchange built out of a warm, golden limestone. The site has been used as a market, I understand from the signs put up everywhere, since 1734.

In the mornings, as the sun rises, wisps of steam are caught by the glass ceiling which covers the indoor-outdoor part and are whirled about by the cool breeze

into a thousand layers of gossamer ruffles and chiffon pleats. As the marketers set up their stalls, the smell of falafel being deep-fried and spicy beans being stewed is enough to unsettle the stomach at such an unconventional hour. There are clangs and clashes as entire shopfronts are re-erected and screams and shouts as business proceedings begin, not with the public, but with one another. A representative from each stall queues up at the cafe in the indoor-outdoor part with multiple mugs in hand, waiting their turn in line for discounted traders' tea or coffee. Pigeons stalk the undergrowth confidently, searching for scraps of any kind; in the market they are top of the food chain and, unperturbed by the stomping feet of the browsers and the feigned kicks of the stallholders, they merely scurry or limp along leisurely, having lost all ability or desire to fly. The stalls in the indoor-outdoor part flank either side of the main walkway and are allowed no higher than the ground floor of the surrounding three-storey buildings. Above, the windows are boarded up out of disuse (the dilapidated structures having been abandoned long ago), yet I often experience the remarkable sensation of being watched, although, of course, there is not a soul there. It still remains, however, the undoubtable feeling of being viewed from all sides by unseen eyes; it is like standing in the middle of a panopticon.

I loved the market so much that I decided to get a job there. I found employment in the cafe which had its home in the indoor-outdoor part. I had to serve cakes, make teas and coffees and do all the washing up. I found great solace in mundanity and repetition: in slicing, scraping, boxing; pouring, spilling, sprinkling; rinsing-out, drying-up, falling over. After years of intense academic study, I had finally and rather unsurprisingly (to everyone but me) burnt out.

'Two slices of the vegan ginger, please darling,' came a voice from the window. I went to cut them their slices.

'Oh no, not that one,' they said and then pointed, 'it's this one here.'

'Sorry,' I said, blushing slightly, 'I'm new.'

I picked up the correct cake and took it back to the counter. As I destroyed it, I imagined creating it. I saw myself applying the chocolate mirror glaze to the stacked sponges in a seamless pouring motion. After doing that, I would scatter the top with a cornucopia of grapes, strawberries, blueberries and physalis, weaving a vanitas garland out of edible detritus. In my head, I pictured myself like an apprentice in a renaissance workshop. I was content to a certain extent, perfecting these arts, but I wasn't exactly sure why I was still

here. I had completed my postgraduate degree – just, by the skin of my teeth – the previous year but now all I could aspire to be in life was a master of cake-slicing. You’re figuring out what matters to you and what you want to do with yourself, I thought as I boxed up the portions, you’re working in a cake shop and writing at the same time. You’re taking care of yourself and trying not to push yourself to breaking point, like all those times before.

‘Could I have my cake please?’ the customer asked, leaning through the window.

It was mid-afternoon and I needed something to eat because my sugar levels had dropped and I was getting dehydrated. I hadn’t had a break all day, I’d been so busy. I was noticing the lithium-induced shakes in my hands, which I found doubly worrying when holding a sharpened, steam-blasted knife. I crammed a peanut-butter cookie sandwich into my mouth. It was unbearably sweet on such an empty stomach. I chomped and chomped and felt my teeth dissolve in their gums. My enamel was corroding away, as if it were an orange being peeled.

The nerve in the root of my bottom left incisor started playing up again. It presented a sour kind of impression, at once attractive, at once repulsive. To distract myself from it I started on the crumby plates and coffee-ringed cups piled high in the stainless-steel sink – it was time to start closing down. Life has the structure of a three-tiered cake, I thought profoundly, squirting in fairy liquid before turning on the hot tap. It’s made of thin layers of too-sugary icing, pasted in between massive hunks of dried-out sponge. There’s more watery white goo on the top and then there’s a dusting of crystallised ginger cubes, toasted almond flakes, dried rose petals and other overpriced crap on top of that. I’m strapped on, above it all, exhibiting myself like a lonely bride on the circular precipice of a sadomasochistic wedding cake. The bindings holding me down are out of sight, concealed by vegan vanilla buttercream and grated chocolate swirls. I reckoned I must have come to like it up there though, splishing and splashing in and amongst the glucose ejaculate. Burying my head in butter, eggs and cream, I had been able to temporarily forget my current failure at making something of myself, able to ignore the embarrassment palpable in my defensiveness when an acquaintance from a past life asked me what I am doing now and expected so much more than the answer: ‘What am I doing now? I’m a cafe assistant and I do a writing club once a week.’

I’ve put myself up there though, I admitted to no one in particular, on top of that ostentatious confectionary monstrosity. I realised suddenly that I had tied

myself up in undoable knots, out of ropes hidden underneath shiny swathes of ganache, and that I had become unable or unwilling to escape from my own captivity. Doing the drying-up, I pictured myself wrestling erotically out of my plastic wedding dress, not because I would be trying to escape, but because I would truly revel in the public humiliation of such nakedness, akin to the wicked pleasure that came from having disappointed everyone, including myself. The sheer release of being demonstrably as useless, as defeated and as unsuccessful as I had known myself to be was basically orgasmic. Wasn't this indignity what I had always fantasied about – being viewed from all sides by unseen eyes and teased, tickled, spanked; criticised, shamed, degraded; hit, bruised, bitten into? If I'm asked 'Two slices of the vegan ginger, please darling' one more time I will instead offer myself on a chintzy china plate – two chunks out of my trembling arms dripping neon-pink slime (I can almost smell its strawberry scent). I will regard the consumption of my body with a kind of cannibalistic ecstasy; at least it will give me something to write about. Am I here, in this panopticon, because I want to be punished, or because I don't know how not to want to be? I ponder, as I put everything washed and dried back in its place. Maybe I have just lost all ability or desire to fly.

The stone of the indoor-outdoor part of the market glows brighter in the evenings when the sun comes down and I'm finishing locking up. I often close my eyes and bask in the glorious light which streams through the glass roof, or at least where it can, in between the artful splattering of marbled pigeon shit.

Laura Grace Simpkins is a creative nonfiction writer whose personal essays describe her mental health using colours, shapes, and patterns. Her writing has been published by The Guardian and has been broadcast on BBC Radio Bristol. Simpkins is currently collaborating with the Wellcome Collection on a research project about medication and the environment, and is developing her first book, Lithification. Her website is at lauragsimpkins.com.



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TEXT prose

Phillip Edmonds

Giving it away

Warwick didn't realize at the time that he was participating in the end of an era. He was being typically feisty, priding himself on his larrikin behaviour by chasing injustices and in his own words, 'having a crack', even if he was sometimes prone to exaggeration. It was after all, so he was led to believe, part of the Australian characteristic of pride in the underdog, that old chestnut trotted out when there are bushfires and other natural calamities, containing mateship and good humour. But things were changing rapidly he would soon discover.

He had for years been involved in publishing a magazine that contained fiction by mainly local writers, but it had a limited circulation because it wasn't about celebrities and royal gossip, popular cultural things, and the latest overseas trends. *Manic* was a beautifully designed print magazine which had a good circulation prior to the digital onslaught around 2012, when newspapers were under siege and the media became more fragmented and individualized. *Manic* was sold in bookshops, some newsagents and by subscription, and was relatively typical of attempts to suggest that Australians weren't all the same.

But prior to 2012 Warwick had a great time 'having a crack' around the country, boasting how he'd seen his magazine in newsagents in country towns, miles from the inner city where it was assumed the usual cultural consumers

lived. How he joyfully left it in coffee shops where many proprietors wanted to establish a ‘community’ environment with raffish colours and suggestions of a more intimate experience than chain stores and fast-food outlets. He’d had of course somewhat of a religious upbringing so proselytising wasn’t all that difficult for him. Because the story got to be so typically anecdotal, he regaled work colleagues with yarns about how proud *Manic* looked on coffee tables in groovy North Fitzroy and Glebe, and also in Ocean Grove and Victor Harbour, and the day he saw it face out in the railway kiosk in Adelaide Central Station. In fact, the distributor had a map on their website marked by red buttons wherever *Manic* went which Warwick refreshed constantly.

He’d had long talks with Derrick the distributor in Sydney about the ‘problem’ of airport bookshops, that they only stocked highly promoted books such as romance novels, a few bestsellers, the latest non-fiction and anything by cricketers and people famous for things other than writing. Derrick though was philosophical as he sold what he called specialist magazines, that had niche markets and that the managers of airport bookshops needed to see a market. He had tried with all the major outlets but with no success.

The mantra was that they ‘were trying’. And Warwick didn’t mind all that much as he imagined that he might be a typical Aussie battler, as we were being told that was a good thing. He didn’t mind climbing that mountain as he felt it was a useful thing to do. Australians he hoped weren’t just lemmings; things had changed after the 1970s and they, he imagined, were now more sophisticated than their masters. But, of course, he shouldn’t have taken it so personally, but he had to – mountains aren’t mountains if only scaled by machines, and it really pissed him off that multinational publishers were really the only firms promoted in those bookshops.

Quite often Warwick had to go interstate from his work in Adelaide and he’d always be early for his flights so he, after studying the flight information, sat sullenly within sight of the bookshops, observing the long queues at the cash registers, people buying lollies for their flights, magazines that one could only really flick at, and the self-satisfied look of the more educated traveller with the latest novel by the winner of the Booker Prize under his or her arm. Why can’t my story and that of people he admired also be featured? he fumed. Airport terminals were by then private spaces, the public had to be organized, as the whole idea of ‘community’ had been overtaken by ‘the market’, people were encouraged into buying lifestyles, and there were no notice boards where messages could be left – they had phones for that by then. Why had we become so timid? Why aren’t we rebellious anymore?

For a year or two he was well behaved, even though he could be heard muttering under his breath about ‘cultural imperialism’. He didn’t make it audible as some of the customers would have said, ‘We like that – as it is our way of finding out what is happening in the rest of the world’. They might have even have said, with a knowing smile, that, ‘It’s not an issue, Australia isn’t parochial anymore, you know.’

But the day came when he decided that something needed to happen. Armed with a bundle of *Manics* in his bag, he decided to be forceful; after all, he’d been polite and professional through the early years of social media by providing free of charge widespread publicity on the net. Opposite where he was sitting was a long magazine rack containing copious quantities of *Cosmopolitan*, *Women’s Weekly*, and assorted business magazines. He was nervous, after checking out whether the nearest CCTV camera could possibly catch him, so he strode across to the stand, and in what seemed like a grand gesture, shifted the magazines sideways, and then arranged his *Manics* in the new space. He tried to be nonchalant and flicked at the remaining magazines, before buying a chocolate bar at the cash register. There it was, he’d donated free stock to the airport bookshop, and walking away to his flight he felt like a cultural guerrilla, and he smiled along the concourse, but was slightly worried that he could be followed by security guards for behaving strangely, yet concluding that the *Manics* might sell, given they had a working barcode.

The flight to Melbourne was typically short and merciful providing plenty of time to get to his academic conference close to the city centre. But, of course, he couldn’t help himself so he left a few magazines on the seats in his row on the plane, and in the terminal book shop before he left the airport, in case some of his fellow travellers might pick them up. Maybe there was a cleaner who wrote stories and might appreciate a free copy, and on the airport bus into the city he felt slightly crazy.

The university where the conference was being held prided itself on housing a Chair in Australian literature, somewhere up in the bowels of the English Department, a place away from the vicious world of airport departure lounges. Warwick had been invited to talk about the topic ‘Is small press publishing the grass roots of local writing?’ by a professor who saw him as a kind of larrikin, someone who spoke his mind. The conference theme was basically how Australian literature had become global, indeed respectable, since the 1980s and because Warwick was feeling feral, he was tempted to tell the delegates about his activities in the departure lounges but didn’t, as that might be a bit funny, and sad, for that kind of audience. The excitement of earlier in the day had worn off.

The professor had the clipped tones of a sensitive literary critic, a well-fed cultivated shyness, but he had no fight in him. Warwick wanted to like him but he couldn't because he knew that the professor was watching only and not participating. Some universities were teaching creative writing but they were increasingly retreating into 'theory' while waiting to see whether any of their investments would pay off.

Warwick found it hard to settle as he was aware that there was a new magazine outlet in the city which he wanted to check out. So he nicked off down Elizabeth Street as it was only a ten minute walk away and he was pleased to see that Derrick (the distributor) had managed to legally get *Manic* into the shop, this time resplendent in the window.

Returning to the conference he tried to settle again into the session. The chair of the session was so earnest, the world outside seemed to stop as everyone concentrated on key concepts and what someone had said about someone else. Warwick was asked to speak but he couldn't find a prose that wasn't a pastiche of some sort, and there was a very undemocratic moment when the editor of a prestigious journal surreptitiously suggested that encouraging unknown, theoretically uninformed writers only led to shades of crass 'realism'. Another panellist joyfully announced that before long all the print magazines would go on-line, and become even more irrelevant because no one would really want to invest and they would be too easy to obtain. But by this time Warwick was drifting off, studying the program to determine when he could run away and continue magazine drops.

His trip was also about a few family events such as his nephew's wedding in Sydney, and then a period of time in Queensland, so he was anxious to get moving. Flying to Sydney he thought he saw opportunities for distribution through low cloud above some of the larger towns down below, the pity was that he didn't have a drone to drop copies and there was no permission to speak of.

He repeated his Adelaide move at Sydney airport. This time it was busier, and no one seemed to notice he was there. After shifting the *Weeklies* and the *Cosmopolitans* from clear sight, and installing the colourful covers of *Manic*, he settled down to watch whether anyone might notice the change. A few student types picked up the magazine, and then two young girls dressed in the uniform of the book chain started consulting their clip boards and checking stock. They found the *Manics* sitting like aliens, occupying a place without an invitation, so they placed them in a large dump bin behind the main counter.

Later, at Coolangatta airport, there was no stress; people seemed as if they were always on holiday, so the *Manics* stayed on display after he left to catch the bus.

Back in Adelaide he regaled friends about the trip, noting hysterically the contradictions of all of it, hoping deep down that they would see again that he hadn't been blunted by common sense. Then the phone rang at work. Derrick said that he'd been contacted by the manager of the shop in Adelaide. That she was upset someone had been illegally putting stock into her shop without permission. 'Was it you? Could you speak to her about it – perhaps apologize please?' he said. His co-editor also got in touch and sternly suggested, 'Don't do it again', because she knew it was hard for him to take no for an answer.

He rang Carol, the Adelaide bookshop manager, hoping that she'd changed her mind and might have taken pity by then over such a pathetic act. But she was stropic and haughty. 'How dare you come into my shop and play around with my stock. It is a business, you know, and *we* will decide what people read.' But inside her bluster there was a hint of anxiety, as if she knew that writers and readers sometimes come from nowhere.

Phillip Edmonds published several magazines including Wet ink (2004-2012) and wrote Tilting at Windmills: The literary magazine in Australia 1968-2012 (University of Adelaide Press, 2018). He taught creative writing at Griffith and Adelaide Universities after working in publishing in Melbourne.



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TEXT prose

Rosanna Licari

Fiona and the fish

Madeleine had arranged to meet her cousin at the beach. When a pink-haired woman waved at her across the sand, Madeleine was startled. Fiona? She had put on weight and that hair! Wasn't she a bit past that? It did nothing for her. She wasn't fifteen anymore. More like double that!

Madeleine set up the umbrella and Fiona went for a swim. Fiona was covered in goose bumps after her dip and she smelt of patchouli oil. She knelt on her faded sarong and then lay down on her stomach. She brushed the sand from her thighs then blew her nose. Madeleine noticed that Fiona's legs were covered in sand fly bites. Madeleine couldn't help thinking that while she was only a few years older than Fiona, her cousin had the maturity of a ten-year-old.

That morning, Madeleine had made sure she kept to her writing schedule. She always started her day with yoga and meditation. And of course, she dressed. She wouldn't wander around her uncle's house all day in her silk pyjamas. That was what her mentor, Dolores Moore, one of the queens of light romantic fiction, had impressed on her. 'You must look your best, so you feel your best and, hence, you write your best.' Dear Dolores, she smiled. Old school. She remembered when she'd visit Dolores at her home, she always wore makeup and was neatly dressed even when digging in the garden. A workhorse by nature, she'd made a mint from her writing while more so-called literary

writers disapproved of her work and supplemented their income with teaching grotty undergrads.

All morning, Madeleine had sat in front of the computer in her makeup and turquoise kaftan. She was stuck. She needed to find a suitable crisis for her heroine, Lady Sarah, but nothing came to mind. She leaned back in her chair and sighed. She needed some inspiration. Dolores would say that at this point one had to venture into the real world to find it.

A lizard scampered into the room from the inner courtyard. It probably lived near the pond edged with ornamental grasses. It was a water dragon. Grey-green and banded. Harmless. Not some hideous snake. Madeleine clapped her hands together and it sped outside. Then she decided to text Fiona and arrange to meet her at the beach around one thirty. Going on her past work record, Madeleine guessed she'd be free.

Her uncle had asked Madeleine to water the garden and feed his tropical fish while he was holidaying in Italy. 'Fiona would probably kill my little darlings,' he'd said of his daughter. 'And do keep an eye on her while you're at it,' he added. The things one has to do for family, she thought. There were no free lunches, that's for sure. And she would probably have to pay for Fiona's as she hardly ever had any money. A bit of bar work here, a bit of waitressing there. The bit of this and a bit of that ended up in being a whole lot of nothing much. She was constantly starting and not finishing a course. Anything from pottery to gardening for beginners to basic computer skills. How did her uncle cope with his flaky daughter? she thought. The man was a saint.

Madeleine looked at the collection of fish swimming in the aquarium. Her gaze shifted to an ornament at the back of the tank. A jade Chinese dragon. She figured that as well as checking up on Fiona, she could use her to fire up her imagination. Ideas would flash around her brain like the iridescent fish she was babysitting. Fiona wasn't heroine material but perhaps a minor character in an inn or even a brothel.

At the beach, a breeze brushed Madeleine's fringe off her face. Fiona looked up as she was doodling in the sand. 'Maddie, I'm getting hungry. How about you come to my place and I'll make lunch?'

This was a surprise. 'Why, yes. If it's not too much trouble,' she replied.

'I'm doing a course in vegetarian cooking.'

Madeleine smiled. Fiona might even have a talent for cooking and get herself a proper job at the tender age of thirty, she thought. If lunch was awful, she could pick up something at the delicatessen afterwards.

Fiona shook the sand from her sarong then wrapped it around her. It stuck to her skin and so did some of the wet sand. Madeleine realised her clean car would be soiled. 'I've got a couple of towels you can use, so the seat and floor mat don't get dirty,' she said.

'Okay.'

Madeleine noticed Fiona had got a dolphin tattoo on the inside of her forearm. Fiona caught her looking. 'Do you like it?' she asked.

Madeleine hated tattoos. 'Dolphins are such amazing creatures,' she replied.

Madeleine parked her BMW under the huge eucalypt outside Fiona's wooden cottage. She rented it very cheaply.

Fiona led the way up the three rickety steps to the front door where they were met by the dog and cat. Rex, a grey mongrel, and Spooky, a black cat, had been adopted from the animal shelter. Madeleine bent over to pat the cat, but it moved away quickly. Rex rubbed himself against her leg, so she patted him instead.

They walked down the hall. The house smelt of dog and incense. The worn sofa in the living room was covered with an old Indian bedspread and there were bamboo blinds on the windows. Madeleine followed Fiona into the old kitchen and peeked outside the kitchen door. A barbecue stood in the corner of a paved area covered by a pergola weighed down by a choko vine. Under the pergola there were a couple of chairs and an old table with a candle and a mosquito coil on it. Apparently the latter hadn't worked, judging by the state of Fiona's legs, Madeleine thought.

She went outside and pulled out one of the chairs from under the table. She wiped it with a tissue then sat down. The pets congregated near her and were looking at the barbecue. 'Do you need any help, Fiona?'

'No. But I'll use the barbecue to cook the vegetables and haloumi.'

‘Perhaps I could set the table,’ Madeleine said, after she’d run her finger along the wood and found it was filthy.

‘If you want to.’

Madeleine went to the kitchen, the animals followed, and she got a sponge and soapy water to get the table to an acceptable standard. The animals seemed interested in what she was doing as they stayed close. Perhaps they’d never seen anyone clean before? she thought.

When Madeleine passed Fiona in the kitchen, she was slowly chopping the vegetables on the bench. Madeleine went into the bathroom to wash her hands. There were old, stained towels and crumpled newspaper in the bathtub, and clothes on the floor, and the hand basin was streaked in bright pink gel.

‘Oh, forgot to tell you, Maddie,’ Fiona called. ‘There’s food dye in the basin. I did my hair this morning and didn’t have time to clean up.’

Madeleine walked out of the bathroom. ‘Food dye?’

‘Yes. I looked it up on wikiHow. It was so much fun to do.’

That explained the mess. Madeleine knew this was not the time for a lecture. She wondered for a moment what Fiona’s bedroom was like.

‘Do you want me to clean it up?’ Fiona asked.

At this rate she would die of hunger, Madeleine thought. At least it wasn’t poison. ‘Don’t worry. You finish the vegetables. I’ll sort it.’

Madeleine rinsed off the food colouring from the basin, and washed her hands. She was happy that her red nails were bearing up under the strain. No chips or cracks in sight. She looked in the mirror. Her makeup was also bearing up. The spirit of Dolores must be watching over her.

At the kitchen sink, Madeleine peered over Fiona’s shoulder. She had finished cutting up the haloumi and zucchinis into neat length-wise pieces. If only she were able to transfer such meticulousness to keeping the bathroom in an acceptable state, Madeleine mused. She looked at her watch. ‘Do you want some help?’ she asked.

‘No. Making this lunch is really homework from our teacher. We have to report back.’

‘Right. Have you got some kindling?’ she asked. ‘I can prepare the barbecue.’ She was an expert when it came to lighting fires. Her family regularly went camping in summer when she was young.

‘It’s in the laundry next to the tubs.’

Madeleine carried the cardboard box to the barbecue which was one of those old-fashioned creations made of brick with a hotplate and a shelf for the firewood. Some old beer cans, newspaper and chopped wood were stacked next to it. Rex and Spooky didn’t follow, but went under the table.

She bent down to see the state of the wood shelf. She stepped back with a start. Two shining eyes were staring at her from under the hotplate.

A python.

‘Bloody hell!’ she shouted. It was coiled like a huge spring. It’s body as thick as her wrist.

‘Oh, you’ve met Sally?’ Fiona called from the window. ‘I thought she’d found a better place for her eggs.’

‘Eggs? I wish you’d told me earlier!’

‘Honest, I didn’t know, Maddie. It’s no problem. I’ll fry the food on the stove. I’ll let Sally have her space.’

Madeleine bit her bottom lip and looked at the pets.

While Fiona cooked and placed stuffed vine leaves and flat bread on a platter, Madeleine took several sips of Fiona’s cheap chardonnay. She decided that she felt sorry for Rex and Spooky. No wonder they went nowhere near the barbecue. At times like these Madeleine thought she liked animals better than people. Animals were uncomplicated. One knew what to expect from them. Like now. All the animals involved knew their roles like in a Greek tragedy. Rex and Spooky knew if they weren’t careful they would end up as lunch. The python knew they could be lunch. The only person who didn’t was her cousin, Fiona. What a dreamer!

Fiona lit the candle and mosquito coil as it was late afternoon. ‘I guess a late lunch has ended up being an early dinner.’ She laughed. ‘Alberto, our cooking teacher, says that a light, early dinner is always preferable for the digestion.’

Madeleine slapped an insect that had landed on her skin. ‘Really?’

‘Yes. And he says olive oil is good for the skin.’

‘So he wants people to put it on their skin?’ Madeleine replied.

‘You could.’ Fiona took a bite of the stuffed vine leaf.

Madeleine heard the beer cans clatter onto the ground. She looked around but could only see Rex. He was scampering away.

*

After Madeleine had fed the fish, she sat at the computer and began her draft:

Lady Sarah strode up to the back entrance of the inn and was met by one of the maids whose chemise was so low it revealed most of her ample bosom. Lady Sarah was dressed in black, befitting a woman in mourning.

“The mistress is out the back in the kitchen.”

“Thank you.”

Lady Sarah followed her into the stifling, hot kitchen. She saw her Aunt Mary scolding one of the kitchen boys. He could not have been more than ten and was as slight as a bird. Aunt Mary smiled when she saw her and began walking towards her.

What had her aunt done to her brown hair? Lady Sarah wondered. It was now a coppery colour and she had become very buxom. Maybe because she was constantly surrounded by food. Aunt Mary walked up to Lady Sarah and embraced her. She smelt of garlic and onions.

“I’m sorry to hear about your father’s death. I loved you father very much. He was a such good brother to me. It will be a difficult time for us both, Sarah. It was very difficult when I lost my husband.”

Madeleine stopped typing. Her own husband leaving was the best thing that had happened to her. What a bludger! A work-shy musician and composer who turned down any commercial offer that came his way. He’d told her he was an artist, not a jingle writer. She took a sip of water and continued typing.

Aunt Mary led Lady Sarah to a small table and chairs in a cool corner of the room near an open window. "You can stay with me until you make arrangements," her aunt assured her. "Don't be concerned about anything."

Was that ever going to be possible after all she had been through? Lady Sarah wondered. She thanked her aunt and suppressed her desire to cry. Her aunt had become a different woman since her husband had died. She never remarried and she supported herself by way of her inn.

The maid brought them some wine, cheese and bread, and Aunt Mary continued, "When my husband died, your father helped me in every way possible, Sarah. He made me welcome in his home and put me in contact with the merchants he knew from the East India Company. I was able to sell paisley fabric and tea in a store he gave me for a very low rent in High Street. Then, he even gave me some money to buy this inn. My brother, George, was a very generous man."

And Madeleine's real life uncle was the same. He'd helped Madeleine when her marriage fell apart and the bills began to pile in. He'd helped her set up her online professional and technical writing services for small businesses and corporations, so she didn't have to put up with the little grubs at uni.

Lady Sarah looked at the black cat sitting by the fire while turning the emerald and gold ring on her finger. "He loved adventure, Aunt Mary. That was his life."

"True."

As her aunt took a sip of wine, Lady Sarah stared momentarily at her hair.

"Oh, and what do you think of my hair, Sarah? I bought this powder from an Indian trader who stayed here a month ago. Henna, it's called. The Indian ladies even use it to paint designs on their skin. See." Her Aunt pushed back her sleeve and showed her a design of petals and leaves.

Then her aunt recognised the ring on Sarah's hand. "If you don't mind me asking, Sarah, how did you get the ring?"

"It was found in the belly of the crocodile that took Father while he was trading in northern Australia." She put her handkerchief to her mouth to suppress her sobs.

"I'm so sorry, Sarah. He didn't deserve this end."

Aunt Mary put her arm around her niece. "There, there, my love."

Madeleine leaned back in her chair and smiled. Dolores would have been so proud of her.

The phone pinged. It was a text from Fiona. ‘Can’t find Spooky anywhere. Hope she hasn’t been run over.’

Madeleine didn’t have the heart to tell her that Spooky probably hadn’t been, and that Sally would be undoubtedly digesting a feline meal for the next few days.

‘I’m sure she’ll show up,’ Madeleine replied, then looked in the mirror. Her lipstick was perfect.

Rosanna Licari’s work has appeared in various journals and anthologies including FourW: New Writing, Idiom 23, e:ratio (US), Shearsman (UK), Wild Court (King’s College, UK), Silence: The University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor Poetry Prize anthology, Scar: anthology of microlit (Spineless Wonders, 2020) and The Anthology of Australian Prose Poetry (MUP, 2020). She is the poetry editor of online journal, StylusLit.



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TEXT prose

Georgia Rose Phillips

On the Obfuscations of Language

Grandma taught me vocabulary. She arranged the scrabble tiles in a neat constellation across the table, carefully. Ensuring no letters were revealed prematurely. No peeking. Tiles belly-down, she'd say, pressing the pearly squares into the glossed timber. Don't you even think about touching them, my dear, I can see you contemplating it. Her disciplinary phrases were always followed by an endearment. Your hands are filthy, my dear. She exhaled in sharp drafts of exhaustion. The world is getting heavier, she'd said. It's hard work being a matriarch. Hard work being the boss of this family. Then, she'd scowl at her lack of vowels. Even matriarchs don't get vowels, sometimes. Like Queen Elizabeth I? I asked. Queen Elizabeth I was alive a long time before scrabble, my dear. Your humble grandmother invented scrabble back in the 1930s. That's why I am so good at this game. But Queen Elizabeth I married England and never got vowels, I said. Anyway, who do you think you will marry now Grandpa's gone? A country or another person? That's a different type of vowel, she said, and I am not in a hurry to marry anyone. I am an *independent woman*, she warned. From her intonation I knew this was something to be feared. Then, she'd continued, The English language is fraught with complications, as she rearranged her tiles. What is marriage about, if it's not about vowels then? It's about *winning*, she said, as her eyes focused into slits behind her oversized glasses. She peered down over her small populace of letters. What am I going to do with this ghastly assortment

of tiles? she asked. You should probably know what to do grandma, as you invented scrabble, I said, as I noticed she had a special inflection for children. A certain way of animating the words. They were charades in the beginning. Their delivery tempered with meanings and obfuscations.

Georgia is a teacher and a PhD candidate in the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Creative Writing Program. She holds a BA English Literature with a first-class Honours in Creative Writing also from UNSW. In 2018, her creative non-fiction novella, Holocene, was shortlisted and then highly commended for the Scribe Nonfiction Literary Prize. Alongside her research, teaching and creative practice, Georgia works as a literary critic for the Historical Novels Review.



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TEXT prose

Diane Stubbings

From Variation for three voices on a letter to nature

The case has been made – catalogue of cells – words on a page – thirty-seven trillion of them, I kid you not – maps of human history caught between the lines – immortal beloved – not a machine, but a fabric – death certificates for foetuses written into law while four hundred and eighty-five thousand starve – describe it, this dead thing, this lump of flesh, describe it down to its very last cell, let it live in the records – no beginning, just becoming, no ending, just dying – stupidity the next evolutionary step – new species grown from cancers, no wait, they're here already – memories passed down like eye-colour, I remember the massacre, I remember the exile, I remember the conflagration, I remember the child sliding out of me, it all written here, G-C-T-A-A-T-C-G-T, and on and on, a wall of books, a linen sheet, a coagulant mesh, a whirling masquerade – not a fabric, but a field – absolute beauty – truth is beauty is truth is – more than just a segment of genes, more than just words on a page – more than – interconnection, context, post-truth truthiness – fruit flies, you see, were the first models of life, I kid you not, first animal in space – blind-white noise – merchants of doubt – people are dying who have never died before – in the beginning, no beginning, just the possibility of an ending, in the end, no end, just the trace of some beginning – and the detritus of life, there on the ground, wanting to be – not a field, but a library – rats eating corpses, dismembered and rotting on the donation room floor, the bins overspilling, the garbage bags ripped, a severed head mouldering under the coffee table – cell fate, cell fragility, cell evolution – growing brains, not brains, just layers of

cells, but we say 'brain' to explain it and in explaining it misrepresent it – hearts beating that have never beat before – hearts beating that are nothing like hearts, brains churning that are nothing like brains – does anyone see my hand shaking? – no thinking, no feeling, no history – carrying inside you all the instructions for a past, a future, a beginning, an end, a terrifying present – and you try to get yourself out of the storm and into the shelter, pushing through the outfall, it rampant and seething, and all the scraps of all the pasts rushing down from the mountain towards you, rushing so thick and rough you fear you'll never get through them, not without the scores, the abrasions – a soul, once lacerated, bleeds through to forever – does anyone see my hand shaking? – not a library, but a web – this is not a living brain, rather it is a cellularly active brain – the dirt under God's fingernails, all of us – somewhere in this buzzing world there is a single genome that will change the face of – put a crown on its head and call it king – a single genome – in this introduction to human development we will be examining the first fourteen days of life – the first fourteen days and one hour, the first fourteen days and one minute, the first fourteen days and one breath – on which day, sir, did life begin? – there is a difference, my boy, between life as a process and life as it pertains to an individual – we walk on cells that could have been used for thinking had they been in a different part of the embryo – the soul placed inside on the third day – those drains in Ireland, all those babies – how many more little corpses buried, little bundles of history – unravel the genome and out it comes, the history, the plague, the smothering, the life, the death, the death – death: the totality of functions that resist life – writing poetry on a virus – etching *Ulysses* in a gene – can anyone see my hand shaking? – and the creation so beautiful even God must have felt a little sick in the stomach on the seventh day, a little fearful of it all, of the thing that would Jack-in-the-box out of it all at the end of the long unravelling – babies dying who have never died before – rewriting life – brains not brains, hearts not hearts – my hands – thoughts not thoughts, truth not truth – and the words rushing out of the storm, rushing still from the top of the mountains, I kid you not – monkey hearts in pig brains and dog brains in pig hearts – *Frankenstein* – am I not a man? – it's not clear what forces hold the structure together – walk softly, carry a big stick, black suit and red bow tie – the second violin concerto – immortal beloved – could do worse – the tide, its slow about face – soul's laceration – my hands under my head and him revealing the want beneath – the case has been made to push the boundary of life from fourteen days to twenty-one days – massacres and revolutionary songs – nothing to catch your heart when you wash them down the proverbial – to infinity and beyond – viruses, you see, would rather jump to new hosts than evolve with them – who owns a life? answer for ten – who owns a death? answer for twenty – when is it science and when is it something else – when is it life and when is it, sun blazing down, what does it mean to be

human, hot as all get out, what does it mean to be, shaking, a bit of a breeze, coming and going, being and becoming, DOES ANYONE SEE MY HAND SHAKING? not a web but a system, a broken river, an endless torrent, eddying steams, feeding in and feeding out, cluttered junk and leaves and lives and wishes and faiths and disease and hatred and failure and failure and hopeless failure and all the while thinking it's you shaping the embankment, it's you pushing you on, hurtling you towards, stew of souls, clag of dreams, delta of death, does anyone see? bathed, new dress, pushed out into the, drifted, lifeless clumps of bleeding hope circling down and down, and pretending my hand is steady, and pretending that my life, its course, its consequence, is not a river, not a river, not a river, but an ocean.

Diane Stubbings is a playwright based in Melbourne, Australia. Her plays have been staged in Sydney, Melbourne and New Zealand, and she has been shortlisted for a number of awards including the Patrick White Playwrights' Award, the Griffin Award, and the Rodney Seaborn Playwriting Award. Diane is currently undertaking doctoral research at the University of Melbourne (VCA), investigating biological dramaturgies. This creative work has been supported by a Research Training Program Scholarship provided by the Australian Government and the University of Melbourne.



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TEXT prose

Anne Rutherford

An open letter to Jay Swan

Jay Swan is the Indigenous detective in the acclaimed Australian film and TV series Mystery Road. This piece is written as an intervention into the work of the writers' room as it develops the script for the program's third season.

Dear Jay [1]

May I call you by that name, even though you are many people? May I give you agency in your own creation, in the composite of writers, actor, cinematographers, directors, editors and producers that have crafted you, shaped you over time through many outings? Would it be presumptuous to claim that I know you well, intimately even? Indeed, I have followed you closely since you emerged, already fully-formed, after what was, on all accounts, a long gestation. For it is you, your character, that concern me. The well-worn tracks you have trodden, the paths you have forged through uncharted territory, and the paths not taken. How you started out as a new detective, green but driven, battling through hostile territory in a white police force full of rot. How you've got tougher, the clench of your jaw set more tightly as you follow the never-ending trail of drugs, corruption and police duplicity. How you keep squandering every opportunity to pick up the pieces of your broken life.

From the beginning you were up against it, pitting the force of your will against men who have more power, more guns, more allies, more recognition. You have hardened, Jay, seasoned into a force to be reckoned with, a man of steel, more sure in your authority, the set of your jaw ever grimmer. That much is a familiar story. It's the standard stock in trade of a detective like you brought in to investigate a homicide deeply embedded in the corruption, complicity and compromise that wrap their tentacles around crooked cops and drug cartels. There is the mystery and thrill of the chase here, the clues, the risk, the showdowns that follow you from town to town, all the battles that pitch the force of one man against another, against the many, and plant your roots deeply in the soil of genre. These roots make you a safe bet, an anchor to hold onto when, as an Indigenous detective, you take us into territory that for some audiences is unexplored. You are our guide, a stable and known presence leading us into worlds riven with struggles over family, culture, gender and power that enmesh the Indigenous communities in the regional towns you're called to.

There is much that could be said, Jay, about the fight for justice that you make your own. At first what drove you was the death of a young black girl and it was the quest for justice that drew you inextricably into the ruthless underworld of meth labs and racketeering cops. Now your focus has shifted. What drives you now is the quest to find the kingpins of the drug cartel and eliminate them. But this fight is not my concern here. It is you that concern me, what has happened to you. You've changed.

You were always taciturn, a man of few words, always more articulate with your eyes, your face, but when you started out you let us see more layers of yourself. You were there for us as a person with many sides, multifaceted. You were more flexible too. You could draw on different parts of yourself to find your way between the layers of the community to seek out connection and information, and that was part of what drew me to you. Sure, you started out in your own home town, and you knew the protocols, how to talk to people – you were sensitive to the grief of the dead girl's mother because you felt that loss, you knew how to engage your conspiratorial old uncle in friendly gossip because you already knew his measure and could meet him on his terms, you knew the give-and-take of getting information from the kids, knew how to find the local girls who might talk, you knew the town, the families and how to behave in that world. That was your home town, but even in *Goldstone*, far from home, you knew how to listen to old Jimmy, to learn what he had to teach you, and not just to speak. But now you're on the outside, in new territory where local knowledge can't get you an entrée. Those soft edges – the

way you were able to mould your approach to match the situations you meet – have become rigid. Now you charge into encounters with people full of bluster and rage, pushing into the world all guns blazing, all force, no yield, and we don't see that rawness any more. You've hidden away that sensitivity, that understanding of social protocols that was a bridge between you and the community, and, dare I say it, between you and us. Have you finally 'gone rogue' as Senior Constable Muller says? [2]

As you move closer to your goal, more forcefully, the complex person we came to know in your moments alone, when you let down the mask and were left face-to-face with all the things that you can't control, all your insecurity, loneliness and failure – has gone underground. Still we read your face and body language but your face gives us less – the same desperation, the same anger, but the pain well hidden, suppressed under the ruthless, relentlessly focused, well-oiled, work-addicted detective. But the tougher your outside gets, the more unmanageable the inside. Yes, I know that is part of your drama, the scars that never heal, the words that can never be fully articulated. But that is also what keeps you re-grooving the same path of self-destruction, missing every chance to grow as a person.

You have found your power and you know how to use it. I feel hesitant to say this, because I know you are a role model and I can see the struggle you've been through to get to this place, but you can't stop there. Is it your destiny to be entrapped by genre? By the rule that says a detective is married to the job, can't allow themselves to feel anything or the enormity of what they have seen will flood in. But you have always been a rule breaker. You can't let yourself be locked in by the precedents set by other detectives.

For some, for sure, recognising your familiar role as a tough detective with rare chinks in the armour that show your soft underbelly is a pleasure in itself and I confess to having shared that pleasure. I too have enjoyed meeting you as someone I feel I've met before, albeit in another guise, and loved seeing how you will surprise me, take me to new places, new contexts. As an Indigenous detective, your investigations have drawn you and us into the tangled skeins of complex cultural worlds that are unknown to many of us who are not Indigenous. This is where your genre has served you – always a mix of the old and the new, the familiar forging a pathway into the unexpected. You've given the old platitudes a run for their money, laid bare the whitewash, exposed the complacency and reinvented, single-handed, what the role of a detective can be. I can see that, faced with almost insurmountable odds, you have had to keep going, to be a warrior. But even warriors eventually come home. Where is home for you, Jay? Where is the place that you live with all your

unmanageable feelings, all that loss, all that grief and shame, that longing and the hurt that keeps you coming back but stops you from ever actually going where you need to go?

You could say that the one who knows you best, the one who is in your flesh and sees the world from behind your eyes, is your avatar, Aaron. But how well do you really know yourself, after so many years of running? It's failure you're running from, isn't it? Mary [3]. The family you made with Mary and then abandoned but can't let go of. Mary is the one who really knows you through and through, who can hit you straight where it hurts most. She is the one who gets under your skin, who can fire bullets that pierce you to the core because she aims straight at the soft parts of yourself that you've tried to stitch up, seal over. Your failure as a father to Crystal [4], as a husband. Your abandonment. All the wreckage of your personal life, the ghosts that haunt you, the places that make you feel powerless, where you can't control other people by force and tenacity. Mary will never accept the compromise you've made for yourself – to bury anything that opens you up, to mask hurt with anger, to run riot with your rage.

There are other people confronting you, telling you that you've gone off the rails, like the furious Senior Sergeant Emma James yelling 'You're a fucken idiot' [5]. But it is Mary who really hits home, leaves you hanging your head in shame, with no comeback, when she says, 'You won't let anyone in, Jay. You gave up on us because we got too hard for you. You even gave up on your own daughter.' Very few words are spoken between you and her, and when they are it's usually tit-for-tat barbs – abuse and accusation, derision, judgement and the hurt barely hidden under the surface. Mary tells it like it is: 'You're the big man, the big hero, you saved the day. And we're left with six dead fellas and their six angry families looking at us. You get a pat on the back. Crystal, she gets a punch in the head... You only care about Big Jay Swan.'

But underneath those words are threads that bind you together, never spoken but seething underneath every interaction. Even though there's a suggestion that you've found a new partner, you're reeled back in with Mary over and over. She follows you, you follow her. I can see that this raw wound you keep scraping keeps the two of you bound. And that ferocious ambivalence is a potent dramatic force, a scarring that never heals. For yours must be one of the most unveiled and corrosive relationships to hit the screen. It's not that I want a soap opera – to get you back together – but I want you to take on your ghosts, to grow. You are still in there but you won't go there.

Mary has grown, cleaned up her act, started a new life, but where is your character arc, Jay? You are stuck in the Faustian deal you've inherited from your generic roots, the one that says you have to sacrifice yourself in the interests of justice and law. But that is changing and you are so much more than that. In *Goldstone*, you took us with you into a world – the world of your ancestors – that has the power to leave you overwhelmed with reverence and emotion, to break you free from the shackles of that old genre stuff and reveal you as a searcher and not just a fighter.

Genre is a hook but your heritage is much bigger than what your genre gives you. You have many more stories than that to tell. And that is your appeal – you are a bearer of complex, deep and powerful stories that are laden with significance for our contemporary world. And I want you to stay on track, to come back to us as a nuanced, layered and empowered character who can carry these stories freighted with unruly fractures, twisted strands of land, history and culture, gender and violence, oppression, resistance and collaboration – the whole messy business of destruction and survival that riddles the colonial enterprise from its inception right through to its ongoing encroachments.

Jay, the answer is there staring you in the face. It's all about your women: Mary and your daughter Crystal. It's with your women that your future lies, the only future that can release you from this path of self-annihilation. It's time to face the hard stuff.

Notes

[1] Jay Swan, is the Indigenous detective and lead character played by Aaron Pedersen in the 2013 film, *Mystery Road*, directed by Ivan Sen, its spin-off, *Goldstone* (2015), also directed by Sen, and the two *Mystery Road* TV series, directed by Rachel Perkins (2019) and Warwick Thornton and Wayne Blair (2020). Both films and television series were produced by Bunya Productions. The television series were broadcast on ABC TV.

[2] Sergeant Muller is played by Anthony Hayes in series 1.

[3] Mary is played by Tasma Walton in the film and TV series.

[4] Crystal is played by Madeleine Madden in both series.

[5] Emma James is played by Judy Davis in series 1.

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TEXT prose

Ariel Riveros

Planetary Nephology Calendar App

Within half a block I charge myself to remember meetings and appointments, paperwork and issues. It's a cloud calendar. No more flipping office stationery dates.

Some clouds are stormers. All on different days of the past. The ones that keep making appearances are yet to be exactly quantised. Words are long. Numbers are neater.

The appointment bits are rolling. My molar diary of the storm clouds is being filled in with the molecules and its clammy motion. Tiqqun said if you catch a cloud you have defeated it.

I walk past the pub and a bit of compressed gas shooshes out exactly as I walk past. Surprise.

If consciousness is relational and not unitary (cf Dave T) then relating to a sudden gasp from pub pipes is a surprise whose grassy moisture

evaporates to a cloud forming. Human relating comes second but not because I want it that way.

Inside the cloud are offices and people and procedures and plastic cards swiped and receipts offered and getting lifts in cars and any intrusion that might be just dark outward electric humidity from me don't enter the descriptions. It's like sketching a downpour while in it. You can draw yourself in the storm drawing the storm first person.

Catching the precipitate, the precursor is usually the explainy bit under the sketch hanging. The first person direct rainstorm sketch is dry. The second person is drenched. The explainy I-approached-my-work-by is same size in triptych.

I so want to fold the process in. The walking around in the art space, in the rain, to appointments. Those shoe steps on different days a few of us take. Not a parchment covered in footprints but a Chinese lantern or hanging gardens.

Ariel Riveros is an award-winning writer based in Sydney. His literary works have appeared in various publications including Southerly, FourW, Contrappasso, Journal of Postcolonial Text and anthologies including Hunger (Verity La) and Tree Stone Sky Stream (Munart, Sweden). Ariel has also performed his work at various events including Queensland Poetry Festival and Wollongong Writers Festival. He has two chapbooks Commoning (Vagabond Press 2018) and Self Imposed House Arrest (Blank Rune Press).



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TEXT prose

Dean Kerrison

2 stories

Empty Space

Pot-plants with daisies run alongside the hotel's red balcony rail. It's March 26 but Istanbul reveals no other clues of spring. The streets – zapped of people – are no less grey than the sky. Leaves have migrated to some other planet where the season of growth is eternal, with no promise of a return. I'm dreaming of the 'fish bread' sandwich I got near Galata Bridge one time here years ago.

I'm walking to Sultanahmet Square. McDonald's is closed and the mosques' doors bolted – the corporate overlords laughing their Adam's apples out on Caribbean golf courses and the fire-breathing dragon Evren returning thousands of years later to climb the minarets, leaving a blaze trailing down and spreading across the city.

The Blue Mosque's muezzin must be in his house, practising his vocal cords for his Friday prayers alone in the mosque tomorrow. I imagine he wonders if the ghosts he'll call out to will open their windows and ears and hearts. If they'll bow in hope from home. If the haze above the Strait of Bosphorus will blow over to Russia.

The square is barricaded. I walk through anyway, no one else between the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia. The group of guards – just one face-masked –

doesn't seem to mind. This area got blocked off too the last time I was here in 2016, remnants of a bombing some sporadic spots of blood. This fencing makes me wonder if cross-cultural understanding is even possible – you can enter another society and even sit there a while but there's always barriers, ones that are detachable, movable, visible or not, but forever lingering.

Following the deserted tram tracks brings me to the Golden Horn inlet. Fishermen. *This virus that's killed only a few people in Turkey? We still got mouths to feed and ourselves to entertain – and these fish ain't hooking themselves.* After crossing the Galata I turn to the promenade where the pop-up fish bread stall should be. Empty space.

A man tosses crumbs from the rocks to the seagulls splashing on the edge of the Bosphorus. Down the promenade is a seafood market with a few adventurous customers and eventually a restaurant selling takeaway fish bread. As my kebab is being prepared, it's unclear whether the tension in the air is from the silence of the roads gasping incessantly without the usual pounding of wheels, or because I haven't eaten in hours and the teasing barbecued seafood is testing my patience. A restaurant worker offers me a handful of calamari from the plate he takes down the strip.

In an alley towards the main street, only two young women are passing. As the expanse between us narrows, the empty space enlarges – no eye contact, no salutations, just distance.

Still hungry, I find an indoor restaurant. Chairs are atop the tables. Some people waiting for takeaway and one man walking upstairs. The waiter takes my order of lentil soup and tea and, turning away from me first, says, 'This way, mister' and escorts me up. A group at a round table makes conversation only through the varying intensity of cutlery hitting plates – a man carelessly cutting his meal, sounds reverberating through the empty space of the room, his wife responding by progressing from a meticulously quiet scratching to a sudden knife thump to get his attention. I wait for forks to scrape down plates like fingernails on a chalkboard – *Why won't you listen to me? Why are you so selfish? Why don't you care?* – but it doesn't come.

Through the window is a road that'd lead me to Taksim Square. The idea all along was I'd come here for a week before flying out of the region. I'd hit up the Spoken Word Istanbul events. Which story would I read out? Something humorous or sad or possibly triggering? I'd meet writers and poets and musicians from all over. Over wine glasses that'd keep refilling, we'd try making sense of the mess of the world and life and each other – almost getting

there. Until the glasses deplete. Till the hangover kicks in. When I'd again navigate the empty space of a foreign place whose people I'll never truly know.

The waiter places a chair on top of my table-for-four, somewhat obstructing the view inside from street passers-by. He mutters something about police but I think the blocking chair makes no difference. Downstairs I go to pay. While I'm pulling out all my lira coins and handing them to the man, a young guy close at my side directly faces me. I'm about to abruptly ask what the hell he wants. Wallet back in my pocket and turn to the lad. He holds out a bottle. 'Sanitise?'

Up the hill. Who cares about a story I might've rambled about in a microphone in an alternative timeline? My migration is easy – jumping on a plane to Australia tomorrow. What about all the refugees here, in congested and unhygienic spaces, or trying to burst into Europe?

In the hotel I drink black tea near a man and woman who speak in Spanish. After she leaves, I make eye contact with the middle-aged guy with a thick moustache. Reminds me of how my dad looked.

'Hola,' I say.

'Hola. ¿Cómo estás?'

'Bien, bien. ¿Y tú?'

'Muy bien. ¿Hablas español?' He grins.

'Solamente un poco.' I search my brain for the words. 'No recuerdo mucho español... ¿De donde eres?'

'Bolivia.'

Our conversation in his mother tongue doesn't get much further. I refill our tea glasses. We talk in English.

Citadel Eyes

People sipping cold drinks crowd a Tehran café – an airconditioned haven from the forty-degree cocktail of heat from the sky and exhausts. No vehicle's horns are heard from up these three levels though, only the cheery chatter of women's groups, and young lovers romancing, and men in lengthy dialogues.

I wonder what all their stories are: if the ladies are gossiping about neighbours or discussing literature; whether the couples look at ease because they've been together a long time or superbly hiding the tension, clutching onto the next topic like free-climbers to outstretched rocks; if the gents are talking about the country's progress in allowing women to attend men's national soccer matches, or some other business or politics I know nothing about.

But my main motivation for coming to this café isn't to contemplate strangers' private narratives. I open my laptop to start writing about my past six weeks in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Unsure where to start. Chronologically? No. Throw dot points or fragments into a pool of chance and wait till something floats? Also no, the daily journaling I should've done but rarely seem to – the stuff of *real* writers, whatever that is.

The waitress hands over my iced chocolate mocha, garnishing my dead-blank Word document. I gaze at a smiling couple again, twirling their straws that collide ice against the glasses like rafts in rocky rapids, a wild ride they might not know they've signed up to yet.

Entering the open-air part of the citadel in Shiraz, two guys and I check the sign detailing the fortress' history. 18th century. Behind us are two young women. I look at the one with chocolate hair trailing from her blue hijab and now I forget what year this place was built in. I say hello as we walk off but she doesn't realise I'm speaking to her, probably.

The interior between the walls. Geometric patterns on stain-glassed windows. Bright orange and green flowers. Red. Blue like the hijab. The girls have caught up. I walk over.

'Hey, how are you?'

'I'm fine.'

I look at her white dress with a blue pattern. ‘You matched your hijab with your dress.’

‘Yeah, I did.’ She smiles.

‘Intentional?’

She nods and says yes.

I smirk. ‘Cool. You look good. Visiting from Tehran?’

‘No, I’m from Shiraz.’

‘Really? A tourist in your own city.’

‘I go to university in Kerman but I’m home for the week.’

After introducing myself, I take Ava’s Instagram which is full of her origami.

Outside a cafe later in the day. Already a date with a stunning Persian. I don’t know if hugging in public is appropriate so I stand still as she approaches. She holds out her fist to bump. Inside at a table. At her university the guys are shy or scared of girls, apparently. One classmate, faced with the terrifying prospect of having to sit at the only vacant desk, next to Ava, went to the extent of picking up the desk and moving it across the room to avert such danger. The ice in my iced latte is melting. The rattling fan above is futile and she’s nineteen and never been with a guy before.

What would you do if you had ten million dollars tomorrow?

Open an institution to educate poor kids.

Make some origami with this serviette.

A butterfly.

What would you do if you were a butterfly?

What kind of question is that?

Fuck, that was dumb. Her nights spent watching Korean drama.

No! Not Korean drama.

My hand on hers on the table. If somebody says they like something belonging to someone else, it's supposedly a Persian saying to have 'jealous eyes.' She liked her friends watch, who then gave Ava the watch, and asked for it back the next day. Don't have jealous eyes. But hers aren't jealous. I don't know what they are. Wary yet innocent. Not the kind of innocence that some men project onto women without understanding the complexity of female sexuality. But citadel eyes, protected from the world's dark forces. From me.

The same cafe the next day. Having two identical first dates is dumb. How to move our dance forward? We're sitting outside. Watermelon juice. An hour or two.

Ava takes me to her mum's shop. Her mum wears bright colours and round hanging earrings. I say Ava got her fashion sense from her. Ava translates my words into Persian and her mum giggles. Black tea. Selfies. Her mum gifts me two soft toys of an elderly man and woman. The man looks like the character in the animated film *Up*, the old man who lives in a flying house held up by a hot air balloon. What's the symbolism? She wants me to marry her daughter and grow old together in a hot air balloon and fly off into the stratosphere? I'm reading into this too much.

We walk around the city. The sun in the bare blue sky traps heat under my black jeans. Taking photos with a statue of a photographer-explorer, we look natural and happy and her loose headscarf has fallen off.

'I feel like I've known you for two years,' she says. 'But it's only been two days.'

She wraps her arms around the statue, leans her head on his shoulder, melting into him and I imagine her cheering me up after a bad day.

In an old bathhouse, now a museum, lifelike-sized human figurines line the room's perimeter. These workers, masseurs, barbers and clients give an impression of the bathhouse before the time of post-history and museums. Once every minute, through a speaker sounds a man screaming with descending volume as if spiralling down a black hole. How this relates to the bathhouse escapes me. My arm is around Ava's lower back and I tell her to scream when the sound plays next. Shy, she asks me to do it together. We scream.

Ahhh!

I smile and look straight ahead, while she looks right to a middle-aged lady peering at us with disapproval. We giggle. In another room the walls create some privacy. We sit on a ledge, embracing one another.

Would you like company in Kerman next week?

Sure, why not?

Lips that may never have been kissed. They stay that way as she tilts her head to my chin. I kiss her forehead.

Through the bustling bazaar she grabs my sweaty hand, and speeding past vendors of spices and clothing and manchester, I want to wipe my hand on my pants or change sides but she moves with the swiftness of a hawk, so I try to stay slightly ahead as I don't want her leading me, but she grips tighter, a woman who wouldn't take any of your shit, weaving around customers and passers-by and children playing as we emerge through a gate to a brightly lit square, stopping to hug goodbye she says she's proud to meet me, and to tell her when I'll be in Kerman, then she kisses the corner of my lips and nervously skips away into the crowd.

Having moved to the café's courtyard, I've ordered a second chocolate mocha, evaporating fast like the collective perspiration blown by heavy-duty fans. I scroll through the story about Ava and me. Ending it there seems fitting, when our rafts are still tethered, before I cut the rope and the rapids drift us to disparate fates. I shut my laptop.

A showreel of thoughts.

In Yazd a traveller asking why I'm leaving for Kerman after only one day.

More glee on Ava's face to see me than anyone I can ever recall, waving from a taxi backseat, picking me up for dinner.

Our secret magic powers, gesturing our hands out like the rising sun to open the restaurant's (automatic) doors.

A fifteen-minute goodbye hug making her arrive home past her university's curfew.

Colouring her hair red during school and classmates calling her the cartoon character Anne Shirley.

Intertwined fingers walking through the contemporary art museum. A painting of a red-haired woman. 'Anne Shirley, there's you!'

After a dinner date Ava withholding her prized lips and refusing my taxi money.

A walk through the bazaar.

My first and only Persian language lesson, in an underground café with live music, Ava strict against my inattentiveness but it's not my fault how beautiful she looks with glasses.

Her origami boat earrings.

The green stone ring I buy but don't present to her, realising she already has the same one or similar.

Sharing my idea of living in Shiraz for six months next year. Ava willing to transfer university and city to be together, but afraid people 'would start to ask questions' of me as a foreigner.

The origami crane on a card she gives me; inside it, '*La vie est belle!*' Life is beautiful.

The five-dollar Australian note as a souvenir for her that I paid five euros to some other Australian to obtain.

Sending her a photo of butterfly wall-graffiti.

Lying on the lawn of a central roundabout park, staring at the stars, Ava confiding how her brother's aloofness breaks her heart, asking if I still love my ex. But love isn't so fixed like the stars, a torrent whose itinerary is guided by the ineffable.

‘Seventeen days later’ she’ll be finished her exams and we’ll rendezvous in Shiraz.

But I don’t go back.

In Tehran I meet others with more interest in the moment than romance. Sin.

Ava’s waiting till marriage for sex, otherwise how could she be sure the guy really loves her and not just her body?

Five more years of her studies in Iran. At least five trips of touching wood and finding a god to pray to.

Asking me why I want to end this relationship. Relationship. Shit.

I want her citadel eyes to stay intact.

A serviette is on my table, I wonder what Ava might transform it into if she were here, and what we would turn into. The napkin soaks up the dark liquid mess, I pay the cashier, and the couple’s empty chairs are left at outward angles.

Dean Kerrison’s work often focuses on the (dis)connection of the outsider in a foreign place. He’s had a playscript, fiction, nonfiction and poetry published in TEXT Journal, Meniscus, The Bangalore Review, Allegory Ridge, Global Hobo, and more. He’s working on his first novel in 2020 as part of a PhD at Griffith University.



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TEXT prose

Lachie Rhodes

THE SILVER LOCKET

Walking at a steady pace, I felt the subtle pain of my locket clasp catching on the hair of my chest. I winced slightly, but continued on my walk. I was restless, excited, and could find no outlet for my mania. I climbed to the top of a hill, and settled into the grass, seeking out my notebook, aware of the warm metal against my chest.

The locket was of a fine silver, oval-shaped, with delicate etchings of wildflowers on its surface. Inside was the sepia-toned photograph of a young man. His eyes were full, dark and deep. His head, recently shorn of its hair, was cocked slightly

sideways, inquisitive. He'd been caught, by the camera, as if in a moment of wonderous dreaming.



Mac lived with a girl named Eva, in a big house which swayed on its old cement stilts. Cream coloured timber exterior with dark olive-green awnings: a good, stock-standard Australian home. Inside, there were walls of the purest white, frosted ceilings like an elaborate wedding cake, many water plants growing in jugs, a Turkish rug smelling of goat, and a print of Van Gogh's sunflowers tacked in a skewwhiff fashion above the kitchen sink. As in every Queensland backyard of a certain age, a huge mango tree draped over the clothesline. At night, bats argued over fruit, soiling the drying towels and napkins below.

It was in this house that these two friends made a home, like eager hares, burrowing into their new-found warren.

Eva had a fascination with all things religious. At thirteen, singing in the church choir, she felt that the Virgin Mary was beside her. She sobbed through her hymns, sure that she, among women, was blessed. She had been Head Girl at her high school. She worried that she'd peaked at seventeen. Longing to be a mother, she dropped out of the Socialist Alliance and started wearing cotton sundresses. Her friends shunned her for 'betraying the revolution'.

Mac was quick, short-tempered, loving and lithe. He was always on the move, washing the dishes with one hand while using the other to animate whatever exciting tale he was telling. He could hold court like nobody else, and had, despite his slim stature, an air of ultimate authority about him. He had a head of very closely cropped hair, with longer wisps at the back, where his shears couldn't reach – he did not believe in paying for haircuts – and wore dark greens and yellows with dirty shoes of cracked brown leather. On the weekends, he polished his antique furniture with a torn old cloth.

On our first date, he'd lifted himself up on a horizontal pole, quickly smashing-out pull-ups. I marvelled that his arms were so strong. *There he is*, I thought, *That's the guy for me*. His hair was long then, tied loosely at the nape of his neck.

We are the lucky ones. We get to change side-by-side.



The train swam on past backyards littered and overgrown. I spied compost piles and hammocks, crisp sheets drying on clotheslines with pegs scattered below.

‘Gosh,’ I remarked, ‘I pity the inanimate. I’d give them a bit of my consciousness if I could. I don’t *think* I’d mind sharing – would I?’

I waited for Mac, thinking that, by this point, he probably knew me better than I knew myself.

‘You’d mind,’ he nodded. ‘You like the idea of splitting up your consciousness, spreading it around, but really it’s like your church. You’re not as selfless as all that.’

Eva looked out the window. Her hair was cut in a rushed, jagged bob. Her eyes were ever-so-slightly wandering, cast outward, like a young goat.

‘I think that I’d truly be okay with sacrificing some of my consciousness for someone else,’ she said. ‘I mean, that’s sort of motherhood, I think?’

I was full of childlike excitement. Mac watched me with interest. He’d slipped with ease into my life, both of us eager, to a certain desperate degree, for adventure, love, intelligence. I wanted to talk to him about everything.

Just how much could I write of you, my boy, before I break trust, before I misremember or embellish? Is it a curse, loving a writer? Of course, I don’t ask this of *you*, so scared am I of your answer. I ask it of a notebook page. Would it be ridiculous to expect a reply?

I’ve fallen in love with the ridiculous. I want to carve puppets out of soap and wood. My mother is sewing herself a clown costume. I’m in love, and I hope to be forever.

So, then, I suppose I’m already leaning into the ridiculous. Why not lean a little more?

As the year changed, I felt myself folding inwards. My mornings felt dull and delayed, my joie de vivre seemingly in hibernation. I noted in myself a streak of numbness, mean-spiritedness, which I was eager to kill. For the first time in my

young life, I resisted people's attempts at friendship, dodged acquaintances in the streets, started fights with Mac. He would look at me with what I'd, for whatever reason, decided was not-quite-enough-love in his gaze and I'd cry. His taxi driver tried to seduce him, and I felt a misguided fury, a deeply irrational jealousy which I held onto with a masochistic, self-pitying fervour.

These things pass, wash over one, usually leaving one refreshed. I prayed to be cleared of my torpor.

I spoke to my mother about my agitated state. She cautioned me, 'Your dad was like that, he could never just *be happy*. He always had to have an enemy, always had to be battling something.'

Rarely, no, *never*, did she speak ill of my dad, aware that he wasn't around to defend himself.

My mother believed in the afterlife. When a *Gone with the Wind* statuette fell from a high shelf, she said my dad's ghost was responsible.

I'd grown to brush his death off with a certain casualness, yet had dreams where I finally hugged him again, as tightly as was possible.

'Daddy,' I would cry, 'I knew that you were coming back, I knew you wouldn't leave me!'

He would smile, hold onto me. We would be together for a little while.



After a fight with Mac, Eva and I lay on the Turkish rug, both a bit crabby.

‘You know,’ she said, ‘you can tell the two of you are really *in love* because of the way you talk to each other. You’re *awful* to one another, and yet you, you’re always *here*, you don’t leave, so something must be working.’

I turned to her and felt something like horror rise up in me. I snapped at her, regretting it instantly.

‘It could work a hell of a lot better though, couldn’t it.’

She shrugged, lifted herself up, and was gone.

Like a smoker, I went outside, propped the door open with my foot, and devoured an orange. Mac peeked his head around the corner, wary, like a cowboy throwing his hat into the saloon before him, waiting to see if it is shot at. I tried to ignore him and hold onto my grudge, yet I smiled. He too smiled. Eyes all crinkled around the edges, a face completely transformed in joy.

I feel something near my spine set alight when he smiles at me like that. It reminds me of the tale my mum tells about the first time she saw my dad. A spotlight of some sort shone on him. Not sentimental or romantic, almost *eerie*. A premonition.

She speaks, also, of feeling as if she's been punched in the shoulder before she hears of the death of a loved one.

What can I say – she's half Irish. I'm a quarter Irish and can never feel a *thing* coming.

Well then. Back on our delicate track, clearing the way before us.



Each day of the winter, walking up the hill to Mac and Eva's, I passed a great fig tree. In a nook a scarf was hanged, suspended, woollen and of a black and cream check. I would sidle past, eyeing it off, shaking my head. 'One day,' I thought,

'I'll take you down from your peg and show you the care you deserve.'

This went on for three months.

On a Sunday, after coffee, I'd had it. Invigorated by a recording I'd found of a bald priestess singing *Danny Boy* by a lighted candle, I stomped down to the great fig, pulled the fraying scarf from its branch, and ran as fast as I could. No one chased me, no one saw me. I had done no wrong and yet sped down the hill, cold wind biting my cheeks, free and happy. I draped the length of wool around my neck and imagined that I was in a café full of poets.

Mac, Eva and I played games in the kitchen, taking turns wearing the scarf. She danced around like a lady in a burlesque, he tied it around his head and pretended he'd suffered a serious yet vaguely comic head-injury.



The gentle yellow light of early morning awoke us, and the linen was crisp against our backs. Mac was always so vulnerable in the morning, as if his defences were donned as clothes in a daily ritual. Not quite ready to wake, and with squinting eyes, he looked across the pillow and took my hand.

‘One day, we will have a massive collection of books. We won’t remember which are yours and which are mine. I’ll have a beautiful collection of silver jewellery! We will live in the country!’

He favoured silver rings and dark green clothes. I favoured gold rings and clothes of pale blue. ‘Oh God,’ I thought, ‘don’t let these only be fancies.’

—

Sometimes a whole day is spent *in waiting*, for nothing in particular. Maybe just for fun, inspiration, a lovely sunset. I lay in bed, recently awoken from an afternoon nap. I picked up a book absentmindedly, trying to ease the pressure on my mind to recall my dreams. Like a shroud of mist, they came back! I welcomed them!

A herd of goats all wandering on a hill. They were featureless, smooth, carved of silky-oak. Wooden friends, making gentle creaking sounds as they flexed their wooden limbs. I watched after them as they trod, and longed to touch their smooth, polished bodies.

I put on a pot of coffee and waited for it to climb to a boil. Small, grey textile fibres clung to the soles of my feet and I cursed them. Be gone, fibres, and stay in your weft.

Not even my little curse could stop the disintegration of my bedsheets, which were old and battered, and so, in spite of it, I smiled.

Mac was away at work. I danced around the house in my broad-brimmed straw hat, pretending I was in Arles, Paris, Charleville – somewhere of poetic significance, in the French countryside. My silver locket swayed as I moved, gliding like a skimmed stone.

Soon, Mac would come home and take off his work clothes. He would throw his bags down, sigh, see me dancing and, reluctantly, join in.

Little wheels spin on and on, forcing us to smile, to make a mess, to eat, tidy the kitchen, and finally, to drift into a beautiful *rest*.

Lachie Rhodes (b.1999) is an artist and writer from Brisbane. In his practice – which marries photography with the written word – Rhodes uses a mixture of antiquated and modern processes to build narratives, personal mythologies and contemporary folklores. With a focus on memory and sentimentality, Rhodes considers the fraught role of the contemporary Australian artist.



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TEXT prose

Tara East

Story Monster

A story monster is huddled inside my chest. She dangles in the centre of my sternum, her tentacles woven between my ribs so that she can spin and swing like a spider dropping from a branch. She wraps her purple hydrostats around my heart in a firm hug and squeezes in time to my pulse: clench, release, clench, release. The meaning behind her action is obvious, *you're onto something*. I reach for the pen, open a notebook, find the familiar thread.

Story Monster is a hungry beast. She is a cannibal, but the type of cannibal that gives as well as takes. She has integrity, ethics, good karma, and is careful with her resources; experience has taught her the cost of inattention. *You cannot run a well dry*, she told me, *and then expect to drink*.

Story Monster snuck inside me one night when I was younger and participating in a magic trick. I was curled beneath the bright flora print of my doona, but I was also walking through another world made real by words on a page. In this place, I was disguised as another, a person who could do things I could never do, who knew things I had previously not known, and who lived somewhere I could never visit. Story Monster got inside because I was distracted living someone else's life. Story Monster is a skilled hunter: she knows when to strike.

Story Monster is food-driven. She is as hungry for a good tale as a stray dog is for bone, but she is not wholly self-interested.

Story Monster is a generous cook. She loves to feed me and be fed.

Story Monster stands before a six-burner stove; she likes to show off the delicacy and precision of her many arms and legs as she tends to the bubbling pots. She uses all the burners, but only one is on high heat. This pot demands her attention with its bubbling aroma, full of potential, but her keen skills mean the others are not forgotten. Whenever there is a moment to spare, she tosses bones, scraps, or spices into the simmering pots, adjusts the temperature, stirs up the dregs. She seasons the pots on the backburner with extra salt, preserving them until it is their turn. When the stew is finally ready, the flavour all infused, Story Monster feeds me and the food is good. Ideas bloom in my mind, images previously unknown, snippets of conversation between strangers. My fingers itch for inky pens and thirsty paper.

But Story Monster lacks patience and half way through my dinner she turns on me and her fattest tentacle curls into a fist, demanding payment.

Stories must be paid with stories.

I am not a crook, on the take, or ungrateful. I am familiar with the terms of our agreement. From the knapsack by my feet I produce three fresh novels: they are not new releases, only new to her. Story Monster's eyes widen at my offering. Like a hawk she snaps the books up in her beak, rips them apart, pulls out the meat, and pushes aside the gristle.

Bloated and satisfied, she slumps in her chair. A candle cracks between us. *Finish your meal*, she says, lazily.

Sometimes Story Monster leaves me.

She releases her grip on my heart, rolls away, and slumbers; she abandons her story stove and me. I watch on as the pots of fine ingredients are left to spoil, grow cold, and rot. I hate when Story Monster sleeps. The world becomes dull, predictable, and blasé in her absence. Life is richer, fuller in her company and I long for the night when we will break bread together again.

Sometimes I cannot wait for her to wake.

In my impatience, I become cunning and tempt her with all her favourite treats, ‘last meal’ stories, books she’s wolfed down in a single sitting and then dragged her papery tongue over the covers to clean up the crumbs. Books prepared in a style she adores, and tales that offer a fresh take on an old familiar recipe rejuvenated with an unexpected element or subverted trope. Eventually, as always, Story Monster stirs. She is intrigued by the bounty I’ve presented.

I’ve taken great care in decorating the table with candles, flowers, fresh linen and un-intrusive music. Story Monster taught me that a pleasing environment is conducive to good work and that ambience can heighten the culinary experience.

Story Monsters stirs, drawn from her rest by the smell of aged paper and conflict. She unfurls her tentacles, slops onto the floor, and slithers toward my offering. At first, she is cautious, nibbling at the edges of the stories; uncertain if this is the dish her heart truly desires. Her stomach grumbles, awakens. With growing confidence, she gathers the books up and holds them high overhead so their contents can drip into her open maw. In moments, the table is empty. The banquet complete.

I raise my glass to the monster, ‘Stories must be paid with stories’.

Her returning grin is loose and drunken; several teeth are missing. I shiver. With great exaggeration, Story Monster slides from her chair and slithers towards the stove. She reaches up with one purple tentacle and turns on the gas. My stomach rumbles at the scent of her abandoned pots growing warm with life. Promise. Potential.

Tara East is a doctoral candidate and sessional academic at University of Southern Queensland with degrees in Journalism, Editing and Publishing and Creative Writing. Her articles on writing, literature, gender and culture have appeared in Writing from Below, Queensland Writers Centre, The Huffington Post and The Artifice and her fiction has appeared in TEXT and October Hill Magazine among others.



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TEXT prose

Ned Brooks

This is Not a Film

(This Film is Not Yet Rated)

‘And Now For Something Completely Different, Get Out!’

Pilgrim Freaks At the Circus. Meet Dave, The Thin Man, At Ground Zero.
This is Where I Leave You. The Thin Man Goes Home, Above the Mountains,
Scared. Why He Gave Up, It’s Kind of a Funny Story About Last Night... This
Boy’s Life, This Girl’s Life, This is Not A Love Song. This is Cinerama. They
Died with Their Boots On, Why Get Married the Day the World Ends? Dave,
With Broken Wings, At War With the Army. ‘I Am a Hero, I am David!’ He
Died with a Felafel in His Hand.

‘I’m no Angel, I’m not scared, I Hate Valentine’s Day.’ She Done Him
Wrong, She Dies Tomorrow. The Night Before the Night Before Christmas.
He Was a Quiet Man, The Bachelor Cry-Baby Obsessed Without A Clue
About Cherry. This is the Night When Strangers Marry, There will be Blood.

‘Boo!’ How Stella got Her Groove Back, She Remembers, He Forgets. I Woke
Up Early the Day I Died, The Last Time I Committed Suicide. You’re Nobody
‘til Somebody Kills You. ‘Casual Sex?’ They all Laughed. He Knows You’re
Alone, He Ran All The Way.

‘There’s a Girl in my Soup.’ There’s No Business Like Show Business.

'I Could Never Be Your Woman. I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang, At Midnight I'll Take Your Soul. I Am the Law. This is My Father, This Man Must Die, He Named Me Malala, I'll do Anything. I'll Be Home for Christmas. A Quiet Little Neighborhood, A Perfect Little Murder. I Am Love, I Am Not What You Want. I Never Sang for My Father, When Father Was Away on Business.'

'And When Did You Last See Your Father?'

'There Was a Father, There Was a Crooked Man... Thicker Than Water, There is a Secret in my Soup.'

The Thing About My Folks, The Thing With Two Heads, They Came Back When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth. This Christmas, They Call Me Bruce? The Englishman who went Up a Hill but came Down a Mountain, As Good as it Gets. I Think We're Alone Now. 'I Am Trying to Break Your Heart. I Am a Sex Addict, I Belonged to You, I Can Do Bad All by Myself.'

'I Confess, I'll Cry Tomorrow, I Died a Thousand Times. That Was Then... This Is Now. I Could Go On Singing.' They're a Weird Mob, Thick as Thieves. Them! They, These Are the Damned.

The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane, She Shoulda Said 'No'! She Was an Acrobat's Daughter; She Stoops to Conquer. He's a Woman, She's a Man. I Remember Mama, I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus. They Knew What They Wanted, The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom. It's Better to Be Wanted for Murder Than Not to Be Wanted at All. I Wake Up Screaming.

'I Dreamed of Africa. They Shoot Horses, Don't They? They Were Expendable.' I Am an American Soldier. I Bury the Living. I Dream Too Much. 'And You Thought Your Parents Were Weird.' Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You.

'Me and You and Everyone We Know, Everybody's Fine And Everything is Going Fine. Ordinary People, Riding the Bus with My Sister.' There's Always Vanilla.

'Onward!' She Twitches Suddenly, The Birds Nightscream Echo Through the Olive Trees. They Live by Night, Drive by Night. 'I Know Where I'm Going! I Haven't Got a Hat!' I Am Omega At the Edge of Law. I saw the Devil, I

Trapped the Devil. I Even Met Happy Gypsies. I Live in Fear, I Live My Life. He Who Gets Slapped, I Accuse My Parents. And God Created Woman, America's Sweethearts, The Babysitters. I Can't Go Home, I Come in Peace.

I a Woman, I Know Who Killed Me. I Hired a Contract Killer, I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell, ...And Justice for All. I Sell the Dead, I Spit on Your Grave. I Still Hide To Smoke, Head in the Clouds. I Drink Your Blood, I Eat Your Skin. Blood, Guts, Bullets and Octane. I Can Hear the Sea, At Home Among Strangers. Two Hands Spiral, Hellbent Enchanted Flashback. The Cement Garden, The Shipping News, The Secret Lives of Dentists. Gaslight Sisters, Deliverance Bloodmoon Atonement. At Eternity's Gate, The Constant Gardener. I Was Born But... I Want to Live!

I Don't Know How She Does It. She's All That, She's the One. She's Out of Control, She's Gotta Have It. She's Out of my League. She's So Lovely, She Hate Me. Calendar Girl, American Beauty, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon. Bewitched Misery, Cellular Firewall. Cruel Intentions Sucker Punch The Town Thief, The Man Who Wasn't There. The Ranger, the Cook and a Hole in the Sky Head Suck The Hot Chick. I Kiss Your Hand, Madame. This is Me, I Am Cuba, I Am Sam, I Am Dina, I Am Jonas, I Am Kalam, I Am Nezha, I Am Number Four, I am Legend, I Am Josh Polonski's Brother.

I Love You, I Love You Not. He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not. He's Just Not That Into You, He's Way More Famous Than You. I Want What I Want. I Hate Luv Storys, I Want Someone To Eat Cheese With. I Am She Creature Psycho, Maniac, Paranoid Chaos Frozen Inferno! At Café 6, Are We Done Yet? Heartstopper Virus, The Whispering Eye, I Walk Alone I Stand Alone... I Think I do. Deadline Identity May Solo Labyrinth, I as in Icarus, I The I Inside. I Never Promised You a Rose Garden, I Love You, Man I Want a Dog.

Area 51. This Must be the Place; This Property is Condemned. This Sporting Life, This Is Spinal Tap, This is the Army. They Still Call Me Bruce. This Means War.

'Shoot First and Pray You Live (Because Luck Has Nothing to Do with It.)'

'I Was a Communist for the FBI, Went to Coney Island on a Mission from God... Be Back by Five.' I Got the Hook Up, I Capture the Castle. At First Sight, At Any Price, As It Is in Heaven.

'I Can Get It for You Wholesale.' Bride Wars, Baadasssss! This Island Earth, This Happy Breed, This Land is Mine.

'The Thing from Another World, They Came Back. As You Like It, Blow-Up My Dinner with Andre. This Gun for Hire, They Go Boom, Cleaner 9 At the Max!' Click! Walkabout Boyhood Barnyard Scarecrow, Tangled Gothic Twilight Stripes Hideaway Crawlspace, The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit. Unbreakable, Invincible. Shocker? Central Intelligence Child's Play Cop Out.

'She Gods of Shark Reef, She's Having a Baby, She's Too Young.' Be Cool Parasite Madman, Snatch Scrooged Cabin Fever Baby Mama.

'Surf's Up, Dreamchild Mermaids!' I Cover the Waterfront.

'I, Me Aur Main.' I Love Your Work Devil. Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself, About Time. Milk?

I See You, I Saw What You Did, I Was Here. And the Spring Comes, And the Ship Sails On, And the Sea Will Tell, And the Band Played On, And Then There Were None. At Close Range, As Tears Go By, As In Heaven At the Earth's Core. Cool World Chaos Theory, A Series of Unfortunate Events. The Man who Knew too Much Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead. Broken Arrow, Blue Chips, Brown Sugar. Blank Check, Blue Valentine Boogie Nights. The Boss, The Babe, The 'Burbs, The Birdcage, The Box, The Bodyguard. Country Strong City Slickers, Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood. Black Sheep, Black Swan, Cast Away Blue Crush Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song In the Name of Love.

'I Have Something Important to Tell You,' With All Her Heart, 'I Love You, I Love You Again, I Love You Baby, I Love You to Death, I Love You Phillip Morris, I Love You, Alice B. Toklas, I Love You, Beth Cooper, I Love Beijing, I Love a Man in Uniform, I Love Wolffy, I Love Trouble, I Love That Crazy Little Thing, I Wanna Hold Your Hand.' She's the Man, I Met Him in Paris. 'I Me Wed? Definitely, Maybe. I Like You, I Like You Very Much.'

'I Love You Too.'

He Said, She Said, At Long Last Love. I Give It a Year.

He Walked by Night, He Got Game. These Three, They Might Be Giants, They Came to Cordura. There Will Be No Leave Today. The First \$20 Million is Always the Hardest, Magic Mama Spellbound Scavenger Hunt. I Stole a Million, Goodfellas Haven. Memories Limelight Alien Wings, Gravity Slash Skyfall Hook Planes. Waxwork Willow Scream Salt Suspicion, Lifeboat Clue

Fear Scared Dreamcatcher Sneakers. Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture.
Valentine Firestarter, Serendipity? I Married a Communist, I Married a Witch,
I Married a Monster from Outer Space, I Married an Angel. I Married a
Strange Person! I Was a Male War Bride. I Think I Love My Wife. I
Remember You Now... And Now... Ladies and Gentlemen...

This is The End.

Cliffhanger?

They Live

Note

List of movie titles used

...And Justice for All (1979)
9 (2009)
A Quiet Little Neighborhood, a Perfect Little Murder (1990)
A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004)
About Cherry (2012)
About Time (2013)
Alien (1979)
America's Sweethearts (2001)
American Beauty (1999)
And Everything is Going Fine (2010)
And God Created Woman (1956; 1988)
And Now for Something Completely Different (1971)
And Now... Ladies and Gentlemen (2002)
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And You Thought Your Parents Were Weird (1991)
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As Good as It Gets (1997)
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As You Like It (2006)
At Any Price (2013)
At Cafe 6 (2016)
At Close Range (1986)
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Salt (2010)
Scarecrow (1973)
Scared (2005)
Scavenger Hunt (1979)
Scream (1996)
Scrooged (1988)
Serendipity (2001)

She (1965)
She Creature (2001)
She Dies Tomorrow (2020)
She Done Him Wrong (1933)
She Gods of Shark Reef (1958)
She Hate Me (2004)
She Remembers, He Forgets (2015)
She Shoulda Said 'No'! (1949)
She Stoops to Conquer (1914)
She Was an Acrobat's Daughter (1937)
She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949)
She's All That (1999)
She's Gotta Have It (1986)
She's Having a Baby (1988)
She's Out of Control (1989)
She's Out of My League (2010)
She's So Lovely (1997)
She's the Man (2006)
She's the One (1996)
She's Too Young (2004)
Shocker (1989)
Shoot First and Pray You Live (Because Luck Has Nothing to Do with It) (2008)
Sisters (1972)
Skyfall (2012)
Slash (2003)
Snatch (2000)
Sneakers (1992)
Solo (2017)
Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture (1990)
Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You (2011)
Spellbound (1945)
Spiral (2019)
Stripes (1981)
Suck (2009)
Sucker Punch (2011)
Suddenly (1954)
Surf's Up (2007)
Suspicion (1941)
Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song (1971)
Tangled (2010)
That Was Then... This Is Now (1985)
The 'Burbs (1989)
The Babe (1992)
The Babysitters (2007)
The Bachelor (1999)
The Birdcage (1996)

The Birds (1963)
The Bodyguard (1992)
The Boss (2016)
The Box (2009)
The Cement Garden (1993)
The Constant Gardener (2005)
The Englishman who went Up a Hill but came Down a Mountain (1995)
The First \$20 Million is Always the Hardest (2002)
The Hot Chick (2002)
The I Inside (2004)
The Last Time I Committed Suicide (1997)
The Little Girl Who Lives Down the Lane (1976)
The Man who Knew too Much (1956)
The Man Who Wasn't There (2001)
The Night Before the Night Before Christmas (2010)
The Positively True Adventures of the Alleged Texas Cheerleader-Murdering Mom (1993)
The Ranger, the Cook and a Hole in the Sky (1995)
The Secret Lives of Dentists (2002)
The Shipping News (2001)
The Thin Man (1934)
The Thin Man Goes Home (1945)
The Thing About My Folks (2005)
The Thing from Another World (1951)
The Thing with Two Heads (1972)
The Town (2010)
The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit (1998)
Them! (1954)
There is a Secret in my Soup (2001)
There Was a Crooked Man... (1970)
There Was a Father (1942)
There Will Be Blood (2007)
There Will Be No Leave Today (1959)
There's a Girl in My Soup (1970)
There's Always Vanilla (1971)
There's No Business Like Show Business (1954)
These Are the Damned (1963)
These Three (1936)
They (2002)
They All Laughed (1981)
They Call Me Bruce? (1982)
They Came Back (2004)
They Came to Cordura (1959)
They Died with Their Boots On (1941)
They Drive by Night (1940)
They Go Boom (1929)

They Knew What They Wanted (1940)
They Live (1988)
They Live by Night (1949)
They Might Be Giants (1972)
They Shoot Horses, Don't They? (1969)
They Still Call Me Bruce (1987)
They Were Expendable (1945)
They're a Weird Mob (1966)
Thick as Thieves (2009)
Thicker than Water: (1935, 1999, 2000, 2005 & 2006)
Thief (1981)
Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead (1995)
This Boy's Life (1993)
This Christmas (2007)
This Film Is Not Yet Rated (2006)
This Girl's Life (2003)
This Gun for Hire (1942)
This Happy Breed (1944)
This Is Cinerama (1952)
This Is Me (2015)
This Is My Father (1999)
This Is Not a Film (2011)
This is Not a Love Song (2003)
This Is Spinal Tap (1984)
This Is the Army (1943)
This Is the End (2013)
This Is the Night (1932)
This Is Where I Leave You (2014)
This Island Earth (1955)
This Land Is Mine (1943)
This Man Must Die (1969)
This Means War (2012)
This Must Be the Place (2011)
This Property Is Condemned (1966)
This Sporting Life (1963)
Twilight (2008)
Twitches (2005)
Two Hands (1999)
Unbreakable (2000)
Valentine (2001)
Virus (2019)
Walkabout (1971)
Waxwork (1988)
Went to Coney Island on a Mission from God... Be Back by Five (1998)
Why Get Married the Day the World Ends? (Pourquoi Se Marier Le Jour De La Fin Du Monde?) (2000)

Why He Gave Up (1911)
Wilbur Wants to Kill Himself (2002)
Willow (1988)
Wings (1927)
With All Her Heart (1920)
Without A Clue (1988)
You're Nobody 'til Somebody Kills You (2011)

Ned Brooks studies Creative Writing at Griffith University and is interested in cento prose and Oulipo constraints.