62.2 | New Writing from Western Australia

Fiction Poetry Essays Reviews In this Issue

Ouyang Yu Sampurna Chattarji Christopher Kelen Josephine Wilson Huang Yuanshen

Westerly



'to a poet, my peer' Zhou Zan (trans. Iris FAN Xing) today, we have a destination
you want to take me to a place,
and if I choose to follow

Westerly

Volume 62 Number 2, 2017

Notice of Intention

Westerly has converted the full backfile of Westerly (1956-) to electronic text, available to readers and researchers on the Westerly website, www.westerlymag.com.au. This work has been supported by a grant from the Cultural Fund of the Copyright Agency

All creative works, articles and reviews converted to electronic format will be correctly attributed and will appear as published. Copyright will remain with the authors, and the material cannot be further republished without authorial permission. Westerly will honour any requests to withdraw material from electronic publication. If any author does not wish their work to appear in this format, please contact Westerly immediately and your material will be withdrawn.

Contact: westerly@uwa.edu.au

Westerly acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Australians. We celebrate the continuous living cultures of Indigenous people and their vital contributions within Australian society.

Westerly's office, at the University of Western Australia, is located on Whadjak Noongar land. We recognise the Noongar people as the spiritual and cultural custodians of this land.





This project has also been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.



Publisher

Westerly Centre, The University of Western Australia, Australia

General Editor

Catherine Noske

Associate Editor

Josephine Taylor

Editorial Advisors

Cassandra Atherton (poetry) Rachel Robertson (prose)

Elfie Shiosaki (Indigenous writing)

Editorial Consultants

Delys Bird (The University of Western Australia)

Barbara Bynder

Caterina Colomba (Università del Salento)

Tanya Dalziell (The University of Western Australia)

Paul Genoni (Curtin University)

Dennis Haskell (The University of Western Australia)

John Kinsella (Curtin University)

Ambelin Kwaymullina (The University of Western Australia)

Susan Lever (Hon. Associate, The University of Sydney)

Tracy Ryan (The University of Western Australia)

Andrew Taylor (Edith Cowan University)

Corey Wakeling (Kobe College, Japan)

David Whish-Wilson (Curtin University)

Terri-ann White (The University of Western Australia Publishing)

Administrator

Asha Ryan

Commissioning Editor

Lucy Dougan

Web Editor

Chris Arnold

Production

Design: Chil3

Typesetting: Lasertype

Print: UniPrint, The University of Western Australia

Front cover: I Dewa Putu Mokoh, The Antique Shop, 1991. Chinese ink and acrylic on canvas, 80 × 60 cm. Courtesy of Mary Hill and the late Chris Hill. Image by Brad Coleman/John Curtin Gallery.

All academic work published in Westerly is peer-reviewed. Copyright of each piece belongs to the author; copyright of the collection belongs to the Westerly Centre. Republication is permitted on request to author and editor.

Westerly is published biannually with assistance from the State Government of WA by an investment in this project through the Department of Culture and the Arts and from the Literature Board of the Australia Council. The opinions expressed in Westerly are those of individual contributors and not of the Editors or Editorial Advisors.

62.2 New Writing from Western Australia

> Fiction Poetry Interview Essay

Westerly

Poetry

From the Editor 7

Creative Non-Fiction

Ella Jeffery A Mirror in the Dark 9

Caitlin Prince Sitting on My Grandmother's Skirts 112

Isabelle Li

The Aristotelian Questions 231

Rachel Watts Insha'Allah **296**

Gay Lynch

If You Hear a Baby Crying 318

Christina Lloyd Dimples Whiskey 21

Mark Floyer Post Tropical 22

Sampurna Chattarji The Dictation Test: I **61** 2 sunken islands. 3 kinds of rock. **63** Reneé Pettitt-Schipp

Pinggir **76**

Weaving Ketupat on Pulu Cheplok **77**

Ross Jackson

Oceania as I imagined it 86

Sanna Peden keunggulan **110** Timmah Ball

Peeling 155

Ouyang Yu

8.31am, 4.13pm **164**

Christopher Kelen how the hundred schools contend 166

Shane McCauley Gion Shimu in Snow (Hiroshige) 168

Mike Heald

On the Theft of My New TV, or Watching with Ryokan 175

Elaine Barker The Finger **204**

Shane Strange River **205**

Dennis Haskell

Days without end 215

Mona Zahra Attamimi

Scent 228

Liang Yujing Call Me Eugene **230**

Rose van Son

Remembering Singapore 295

Shey Marque Alligatorwood **328**

Contemporary Japanese Poets in Translation

Misumi Mizuki The Gift 177

Ishikawa Itsuko Soles— **183**

Kawaguchi Harumi Welcome Home 187

Kono Satoko Head Ache **191** Misaki Takako

Into White Darkness 195

The China– Australia Writing Centre

Cer

Essays | John Mateer

Invisible Genres, or on the Virtual and the Actual 23

Siti Sarah Ridhuan

Bahasa Indonesia/Melayu & Yolngu-Matha—recognising familiar words in unfamiliar

contexts 49

Fiona Morrison

'A transfiguration of my local patriotism' **87**

Dennis Haskell

Fay Zwicky and 'the riddle of the self's existence' **217**

Yingjie M. Cheng

Modernism En Route 304

Lucy Dougan Introduction 242

Huang Yuanshen

A Passion for Australian Literary

Studies 244

Zhou Xiaojin

A Critical Survey of Chinese Journal Articles on Australian Literature in China 1979–2016

25

Translated by Iris FAN Xing A Selection of Four Poems by Chinese Women 265

Josephine Wilson Umbilicus **270**

Fan Dai

Saturday Evenings 274

Elizabeth Tan A Life, Passing 291

Reviews

Jen Bowden

A Review of *The Permanent*Resident by Roanna Gonsalves 334

Rebecca Harris

A Review of Billy Sing by Ouyang Yu

337

Fiction

Agustinus Wibowo The Sea **53**

Mohammed Massoud Morsi The Home of Lost Angels **65**

Mark Fabiano

Homecoming in the Garden of the Full Moon 78

Katinka Smit

Roanna Gonsalves George Jarvis, Black Hindoo

Servant, Port Jackson, 1809 (Preparatory Study) **150**

Parvati Angana God Willing 159

Bethany Rawson Goji no Chaimu

(The Five O'Clock Bell) 169

Jen Banyard Footprints **198**

Ann Dombroski Siem Reap **206**

Belinda Hermawan Xié xie 329

Mangwon-dong 140

'Coffin Bay' 142

Dan Disney that winter, these protests 143

Dan Disney, Jessica L. Wilkinson

and Cassandra Atherton

directions everywhere':

eidólonging of poets. 121

a juddering, glimpsing,

'bending in all

Lisa Gorton

Yeonhui 134

Ghostin 136

Shields 137

Bo-Seon Shim

Mangwon 138

So-Yeon Kim

Bonny Cassidy

The

Seoul

Poetry

Exchange

Melbourne-

Intercultural

spring, Hannam-dong 144

Kent MacCarter

 $\begin{array}{ll} \text{Mujeongwiundong Mangwondong} \ (\text{North Korean blanket} \end{array}$

remix) **145**

Yideum Kim Ugg Boots 146

'Face Made of Steel' 147

Jessica L. Wilkinson Reflected 148 Submissions **342**Subscriptions **343**

From the Editor

Since its infancy, *Westerly* has had a long interest in the literatures and cultures of the Indian Ocean, southern and eastern Asia. Poised on the west coast, we are constantly looking out, facing away from mainland Australia. This space is not an empty one. It is rich with a history of movement and exchange, going back (as Sarah Ridhuan's essay in this issue reminds us) well beyond Australia's colonisation.

Curated with a special focus, this issue continues the Magazine's exploration of Australia's geographic and cultural position within the Asian and Indian Ocean region. It was imagined first with the concept of opening a creative space to foster these diverse cultural networks, and explore the connections embodied by that fluid space of ocean. It collects the work of both Australian and international authors and translators. Their writing is marked by the conditions of exchange—it operates across complex negotiations of language and cultural positioning, it draws in implicit histories and traditions from a myriad of different places, it emerges through conversation, at moments in dual languages. In all of these ways, this is a collection which (I hope) will be read as conveying too the unique dynamic of transnational connection.

There is a purpose in making space for this sensation. Reminding ourselves of our involvement in these currents of connection and exchange is part of remembering the universality of the human experience, even while it points simultaneously to difference. The tension in this experience is seemingly productive, in a creative sense—many of the submissions we received for this issue pushed at the boundaries of expression. The work featured from specific projects (Japanese poetry in translation, work from the China-Australia Writing Centre and a Korean-Australian writing exchange) shows this again and again as a common feature of the work produced regardless of the cultural connections sustaining it.

I am grateful for the involvement of all these writers, and for the vast range of cultural connections which were demonstrated in the submissions we received. I am grateful too for the wonderful team of people who have helped bring the issue together. The contribution and energy of Josephine Taylor as our new Associate Editor has been exciting as a marker of the Magazine's continued growth; while the insight and dedication of Lucy Dougan, Chris Arnold, Asha Ryan in the office, and Cassandra Atherton, Rachel Robertson and Elfie Shiosaki beyond, has been generous beyond expectations in taking up the challenge of an international scope and range of focus.

The reading for this issue left a strong impression of the Australian nation as oceanic. In her essay, Fiona Morrison points out that, according to Christina Stead, to be Australian is always already to be a citizen of the sea. Perhaps immersion in the fluid spaces of the writing here has changed my view of land.

Catherine Noske, November 2017

A Mirror in the Dark Ella Jeffery

Ella Jeffery's poetry, essays, reviews and fiction have appeared in Meanjin, Westerly, Best Australian Poems and elsewhere. In 2017 she won the CAL Award for Best Poetry, was shortlisted for the Val Vallis Award for Poetry and completed a residency at Varuna, the National Writers' House. She is based in Brisbane.

People always used to tell me 'Shanghai's not *real* China'. I heard it from locals, from expats like myself, from visitors who had spent a week or two in Xi'an or Chongqing or Lijiang and thought they should advise me that I wasn't getting the real deal. What they wanted me to know was that Shanghai, a hub of foreign trade and business, with some of its central districts full of stores like Nike and H&M, was not enough. It was too much like home and not enough like what a foreigner should experience in China.

Most days Shanghai felt searingly real. But sometimes I felt the 'not real' part rise up, although not in the way the overly earnest people meant when they said it to me. The American novelist Don DeLillo says we use the word surreal when something is *too* real, too much. In that sense, the surreal city and my life there did not seem to exist in the same register as my previous, static life. Occasionally I would spend a few days unmoored, unsure of how long I had been there and when, or whether, I might go back. Part of that had to do with my shaky grip on language. Part of it had to do with my lifestyle: I spent part of the year in Shanghai, part of the year in Brisbane. I would leave after a few months and forget everything I knew. I still wake up some days and catch myself wondering when I need to start packing my suitcase.

I moved back and forth between the two cities for four years and in 2016 I flew out for a semester of teaching in Australia, as I usually did. I left my heavy winter coat and boots, I left my name on the lease, half my books and clothes, one t-shirt I especially loved that had a shooting star on the front with the words SHUTTING UP printed in the star's tail. A few months later I wrote a poem that I titled 'scaffolding', in which I tried to blend Shanghai's undeniable concreteness, its textural qualities, with the surreal sense of being in between two homes for years. Its final stanza reads:

8 | Westerly 62.2 9 | Ella Jeffery

shanghai is a dream city I left some things there I might not go back for them

And I didn't go back. That *real* China was something I could never be sure of getting to, but since that time a China of a different kind has appeared in my writing. Sometimes it is so familiar I think about returning. Sometimes it is so unfamiliar I am not sure where it has come from or what made it appear.

This essay is not about finding a real China. It's about who occupies the places between real, remembered and imagined. I'm interested in and unsettled by Shanghai's uncanny reappearances in the lyric poetry I have been writing and publishing. So I want to examine what I see as a fundamental sense of unhomeliness embedded in lyric poetry's slippery or suspect constructions of a *real* self, a person at the core of the poem, and how it navigates and complicates the fallible spaces of memory and language.

Many poets and critics have explored similar terrain—Claire Nashar, Paul Hetherington, Bonny Cassidy, Michelle Cahill, among others—and have posed questions similar to mine. In this article, though, my methods are introspective: I explore some of these questions by approaching my work from an auto-ethnographic perspective. Maybe writing and reflecting are two other ways to separate the surreal from the real. I suspect it's equally possible that separating them is not possible, or necessary. Throughout this essay I explore some of the slippages and fabrications in my lyric poems in which the self is an unhomely presence.

Where we so frequently read the lyric speaker as a recognisable or reachable self, this 'I' is always slipping away or appearing in fragments, an uneasy exile from lyric and Romantic traditions. Who is the person I see in my own writing? To untangle this, I have selected several poems I've written during and after that time, as well as a series of poems from Australian poets whose work also engages with problematic representations of home and exile, self and silence.

Shanghai was an unhomely mix of the familiar and unfamiliar, a place where this kind of binary—what is known, recognisable, legible and what is not—reveals its collapsible, fallible nature. Perhaps the writing helps reveal not what was real, which is both impossible and unnecessary, but how unhomeliness registers in the quotidian. Seeing reflections of remembered places in my poems and in other poets' work is like seeing my own face in a mirror in a dark room: familiar, but strange—I find myself in two places at once.

Unhomeliness

I hate the heat in this city. I don't sleep or eat for months. I used to pack my bags in November and finish my marking on the plane while below me Queensland melted into the Pacific. I liked always being in transit to winter, leaving Shanghai in May or June when the plum rains came and the humidity started to rise. Now I sweat in bed while I watch myself try to fall asleep in the mirror.

At least I have things to think about. I'm writing a collection of poems that I want to call *split/level*. I want it to articulate experiences of dissolution, dismantlement, estrangement, exile and incompletion. The poems are set in Brisbane and Shanghai—writing them, I encounter familiar places that have changed slightly, so that what I expect is never what I find. I like the element of the confessional, lyric vulnerability embedded in this. Sometimes I glimpse myself in the poems, but more often I am not sure who I've seen.

When I'm discussing these overlapping images of the self I like to use Foucault's mirror metaphor from his essay 'Of Other Spaces'. He introduces a particular category of spaces that he called 'heterotopias', spaces that are 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible' (25). I love this idea of highly charged, differential space. The mirror, he says, is one such space: 'In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface' (24). You can see yourself in the mirror but what you see is not *really* you and is not where you are.

It's a nice metaphor for attempting to represent some version of my experience of these places in poetry, which is a fundamentally estranging, unhomely experience. The unhomely is often described in terms of glimpsing something very familiar in a completely unfamiliar context—other names for it include 'uncanny' or 'unheimlich'. I like 'unhomely' because it is more clearly linked to the idea of home, and the experience of home as place that is at times uncertain or unfamiliar is crucial to my work. Freud (630) characterises the unhomely as an experience of inescapable circularity. He describes finding himself lost in a particular area of an unknown city and, after walking for a great deal of time, he discovers that he has returned to the same street, now oddly familiar because he had been there before.

So the negotiation of tensions between the lyric voice and the self, between the writing and the real, is an ongoing unhomely process. It suggests a movement towards clarity through an attempt at recognising an unfamiliar image of the self. Foucault puts it like this: 'I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and

reconstitute myself there where I am' (24). In the mirror, the self is visible and recognisable, but entirely elsewhere. You can get close, but you can't ever actually get there. In this short poem, 'Storage', I see myself there where I am not:

Every few years
I find myself crisped
to a mothwing
in a garage
or in the whiteblue carapace
of a dress stippled with tiny holes.

Who eats these pieces? What hunger am I seeing through, held up to the light, after all these years?

Auto-ethnography, this process of revisiting and interrogating myself and my creative choices, seems to me to be vital to the creative and critical process. As narcissistic as it sometimes feels, this uncomfortable method is one of the few ways available to critically engage with these unexpected encounters in creative practice, which otherwise seem to lack order and meaning. That act of self-recognition has a place in lyric poetry as well, although how it operates is far more suspect and opaque. Paul Hetherington argues that 'no matter how one looks at it, autobiographical memory is often not what it seems to be' (109). In this sense, the poem above is a poem in which I can recognise myself. It articulates a real experience and in doing so allows me to pose questions, shaped by image and form, about the experience of leaving and returning. What do we find when we get home? How do we come back, after a long absence? What does a place become when you live in two places?

Lyric

As a lyric poet, perhaps I'll always find myself in two places at once. I like to develop poems out of fragments of experience, so the self at the centre of my lyric poems always seems like me. Lyric poetry inevitably involves the construction of a self at the centre of a poem, it's part of the craft. It follows, then, that the 'I' is a discoverable, legible presence in the poem. We are taught—I have spent many classes teaching students this—that the 'I' in the poem is *not* the poet, but that the lyric is a mode which expresses deeply personal, subjective emotions. Mark Jeffreys argues that 'one

reason that lyrics can be inviting is because they seem to have a vacancy, an available absence at their cores' (66). This inviting emptiness is what draws us in as readers—lyric poetry is so frequently associated with expressiveness, emotion, personal reflection. We can fall right into that endlessly available 'I'. Whether it's correct to do so or not, we can believe it to be whoever we want.

So many of my poems are formed through this lyrical intensity. When I look at them, I see reflections of myself, but I am surprised by how warped and unfamiliar these reflections are. The lyric, with its focus on the personal and the subjective, is also a place in which we confront exile and estrangement: the lyric 'I' creates ambiguity and blurs the boundaries between intimacy and distance, self and selves. As Jeffreys goes on to say, the lyric becomes a kind of delusion of wholeness and completion: 'Lyric sanctuary can also be read as a kind of bitter delusion, its vacancy the image of an empty promise of "a safe place" that no longer exists and perhaps never did' (67). The lyric 'I' in my work is an unhomely presence and the act of reflection, of auto-ethnography, adds an extra level of unhomeliness: I have to admit I don't recognise myself, even though I can see someone there where I once was.

I saw a flash of this unhomely vacancy in Ouyang Yu's poem 'Escape' from his collection Fainting with Freedom (2015). In this poem the speaker is conversing with a poet in a room overlooking the 'winter-like early / Summer of Shang / Hai' (86). This distorted weather, which we tend to think of as strictly cyclical, summer and winter never without the buffers of spring and autumn. But here, for the speaker, the two collide, as they do when you travel from Australia to China and Yu's adjective warps our sense of temporal structure. In the final lines the speaker turns away from the poet and fixes his gaze instead on Shanghai:

...nearby, a plane is cruising
With a red tail that looks slightly Aussie
But that turns out to feature a flower
In the shape of Hong
Kong, an escape that
In the history of a private mind
Resembles two dangling feet
Walking the sky (87)

The moment of mis-recognition in which the speaker mistakes the red symbol of Hong Kong Airlines for Qantas is emblematic of many moments in which Yu's work confronts the distorting effects of living between two places. Line and repetition work to estrange language from meaning: the

poem's opening lines read: 'Not landscape or seascape or skyscape / Or even mindscape or landscape / But escape' (86). The multitude of 'scapes', a series of locations in which the speaker might be expected to situate himself, have their differences elided and instead register as undifferentiated spaces, stripped of any heterogeneity.

Twice in the poem Yu enjambs in the middle of place names—Shang / Hai, Hong / Kong—which again produces a disorienting effect, the flicker of uncertainty, like seeing the red tail of the plane, in which the reader encounters the unfamiliar (for anglophone readers) 'Shang' before recognising it as the familiar 'Shanghai'. For the speaker in 'Escape', fragments of the familiar and unfamiliar merge at the end of the poem and are resolved into a single, unsettling image of 'two dangling feet / walking the sky' (87). The simile has an uncanny resonance—the image of a human walking in the sky literalises the speaker's feeling of placelessness and disconnection. Yu ends this poem in the air, ungrounded space where signs are fluid and can't easily be named, articulated or translated.

Language

For some time I couldn't speak or be spoken to. In my poems, language-lessness is a major part of the recurring feeling of unhomeliness. As comfortable as I got, I could never be fully at-home. I look back over these poems and see my speechless self. Again, it's not useful to designate two opposing categories like language and silence, which tempts us to think of language as good and silence as bad. But I have to admit something I find shameful: I never properly learned Mandarin. I could speak. I liked to practise. Strangers would sit beside me in the park in a way I had never experienced in Australian cities and try out their English on me. I would test my scratchy Mandarin. But in my life I have always preferred to be silent. I just scraped together enough language to survive.

David Musgrave, writing for *Southerly* about returning from three months in Beijing, notes that:

after returning to Australia my life was divided into before and after Beijing: things I had done, read or seen before going to Beijing seemed as if they belonged to another life, if I could remember them at all.'

Such immersion in a place always has to do with language and Musgrave connects his 'subtly changed' world with poetry—he refers specifically to a daily exercise in his language class, which involved translating passages from Li Bai. It's an unavoidably autobiographical part of writing: the

inability to speak always returns. I can't write myself into a place where I don't have language.

I never properly learned Mandarin because, among other reasons, I could afford silence. As a white woman in China, my privilege registered in a variety of extreme and subtle ways, lack of language being one of the most overt. It's important to acknowledge this. In upmarket districts of Shanghai, where there are lots of foreigners like me, this languagelessness was unremarkable. (Is it *real* China?) I didn't have to go into the world unless I wanted to and though much of my life in Shanghai was spent in parks and on my bike and with friends, it was never a necessity. The money I saved bought me time. Some of the poems I have published since I've been back were first written in Shanghai, but there I made little money and I didn't need to. Brisbane was work and talk. Shanghai was silence and writing. I wrote in deep silence like I'd never felt before.

I feel guilty, whenever I speak about Shanghai, for the privilege associated with my choosing not to properly learn the language. I lived in a silence I bought for myself. I could afford to be overcharged for my fruit and vegetables if I mixed up basic phrases and numbers. I could afford to get a cab rather than ask for directions. There were signs in English for people like me. When I crashed around in my half-formed Mandarin, I sometimes thought of the hostility of Australian culture towards unfamiliar languages and anyone speaking English with particular accents. As an Australian in China, I was an other, but not an openly despised other. Not having to integrate into the society around me was deeply problematic for so many reasons. One is that it meant I never had the experience of needing to communicate with others—whereas for those whose relocation is involuntary this silence is at first unavoidable and language can be a recurring barrier to establishing a sense of homeliness in any new place.

In BeiBei Chen's 'Here, There' the speaker is confronted with the archetypal symbol of uncertainty: two roads diverging. The slipperiness of language in this poem is central to the invocation of unhomeliness.

I dreamed of a long street last night, Crowded with multi-cultural pedestrians in the rain. It is supposed to be Sydney, Australia, Only except all store ads in mandarin. (42)

The poem's phrasing positions English as an unfamiliar space, but this does not enter the language of the poem until the end of the opening stanza. Chen plays with our expectations of English as a familiar

structure in which stability and clarity are always inscribed. The speaker's phrasing carries the slipperiness of language when it is encountered as an unfamiliar space. The 'There' and 'Here' of the poem offer two conflicting versions of home, neither of which is represented as idealised or wholly satisfying to the speaker. The poem operates with an awareness that both homes are flawed and in some ways unwelcoming, and Chen does not provide a resolution—we never find out where the speaker decides to go. We are left in a state of uncertainty, with the possibility that 'Here' could be 'the sweet home / or Hell'.

My poem 'Language immersion program' explores the relationship between language, silence, self and memory. In this poem, the speaker is throwing out old objects left behind by the previous tenants of her house—all she keeps are

the bible in Mandarin and guidebooks in French as if I could flip through the years and get back one language or learn the other

Books—containers for language—are what she clings to, though she seems aware of the futility of the gesture: while books can symbolise language, they are not entry points into language itself, and instead they serve as reminders that neither Mandarin nor French are accessible in this way. The sprawling and complex nature of language is connected in this stanza to time—the speaker berates herself for the smallness of her movement towards language: 'as if I could flip through the years' translates the enormous and complex structure of time into something as tangible as the pages in a book. In the final stanza the speaker wonders

What will I ask them when I stumble into speech—how did they scour that barnacled wok and what might still happen to us all, in this building matted with scaffolding, their kitchen hung open like a mouth—

The final image of the kitchen as an open mouth is one of stunned speechlessness. Larger structures appear again as analogies for language: here the building in which the speaker lives is itself a metaphor for the inability to speak. Further, the speaker is uncertain of what to say when speech becomes possible: while language, like the books she keeps, can

be possessed, it is never a certain measure of communication and never a sure route to meaning.

I only have my poems as a record of what has happened and am using them in this essay for that reason. What do I know about China? Very little. About Shanghai? Some. I know some things about how foreigners live in that particular part of that particular city. I only know what I have read and what I remember. Sometimes I look at writing from that time and can't say for sure what I meant.

Exile

I felt for years like I was always leaving home. I kept losing my belongings, confusing friends' names. I wanted to write villanelles because they're poems that feel circular. Wherever I was felt most homely and when I got where I was going I found myself facing untranslatable things. The existence of a single *real* China is a myth. Home sometimes felt very much like a myth. Depending on who you are and what you write the boundary between real and not real is a blurry one. We fabricate and we also draw many of our ideas from real life so that, arguably, truth and fabrication on some level come to coexist in every piece of writing.

Poetry, especially lyric poetry, is edged with uncertainty because of its slippery grasp on what's authentic. And so the lyric is a place of exile and slippage. The written self is one who is unfamiliar to me. As is the self who wrote this. As a researcher, how do I interpret this practice? When I look at this poem, 'Fragment: Tuesday Evening, Waitan', I know I wasn't there where I place myself:

Just looking, I say
to the man selling cups and cutlery
from a pushcart parked
by the Huangpu.
He says it back: just looking,
rolls out the vowels like a spare mattress,
a foreigner's hazy phrase.
We hassle each other over prices
and I take the two cups I chose
for their colour. Behind us,
white light scrapes the river
where a coal boat
murmurs to the coast
like a child with half
her face in the water.

In many poems I describe things that are, in a strictly autobiographical sense, untrue. I did see the man who sold cups and cutlery from a pushcart most days while I was out, but I never bought anything from him like the speaker in the poem above. I did ride my bike through Yu Garden but I didn't stop to buy satin dresses like I do in the poem. I did sit in the courtyard and play with the little boy who lived next door while his mother ran errands, but I wrote a poem about the courtyard, not the child.

Of course it doesn't matter what really happened in the situations that appear in any of my poems; the world is full of books that would be far worse if their authors had rendered events exactly as they occurred. There are plenty of real Chinas. This is just one account of the warping, distorting effects of movement between places and ways of being and it is an undeniably privileged one, in which all decisions were made in relative comfort. I knew that if I wanted I could go back. Home was not gone in any physical or political sense and I moved freely, with a confidence that only comes from Western privilege, between two countries as much as I wanted. Sometimes my poetry reflects that unselfconsciousness. Self-reflection puts pressure on it, draws it into question.

In the poem above, the exchange between the speaker and the vendor is commercial. Both characters in the poem draw attention to the speaker's foreignness through language. Here is what really happened: I saw that man, sometimes, but I did not approach his cart. I was too shy. I didn't know what to say. So the poem can be read as a fantasy of the encounter, in which my concerns about my linguistic inferiority are played out in action as well as in imagery. The final image of a coal boat like a child with half her face in the water leaves the reader with an unhomely sense of languagelessness—a child, already unpractised in language, is rendered doubly incomprehensible by murmuring underwater.

I want to mention another poem from Ouyang Yu's *Fainting with Freedom*. His work interests me because it frequently interrogates movements and clashes between selves and places. The language play in his poems speaks to the defamiliarising effects generated by any attempts to articulate the self via a lyric persona and engage with the unhomely lyric persona. In this case it is someone conscious of an enforced exile from language. Many of Yu's speakers actively invite misinterpretation; they are lyric personae who are inherently suspicious of language, self-hood and acts of lyric self-expression.

In his poem '50', which opens the collection, Yu begins with the line 'you are your own alter-ego'. Yu introduces ideas about the unrecogniseability of the self, and speaks about the warping effects of moving between two languages:

in your language, alter-ego

is the opposite of the alter-ego, not the mirror image but the reverse side

of the mirror. it requires a strange translation to make sense (11)

Yu constantly draws attention to the presence of a self in the poem—a conflicted, suspicious, playful self, aware of and often wilfully creating potential for misreadings and misinterpretations. This is a lyric persona that shows an unsettling awareness of the unstable place it occupies in the mechanisms of the poem, and, more broadly, the world about which the poem is speaking. Tse Hao Guang has pointed out many of the overlapping meanings at work in this poem, which investigates the strange contrasts in the contrasting ideas embedded in English and Mandarin words for 'alter-ego'.

The poem's last lines read: 'Incidentally, though, the alter-ego is / the other self, the enemy of the self'. Although the adverb 'incidentally' introduces the idea as a casual addition, the final image is a deeply unhomely reflection that presents the alter-ego, the other side of the self, as one wholly separate and at odds with the self in the poem. Many of Yu's poems, Guang says, 'read like internal conversations, passionately idiosyncratic, where the speaker talks past or over different versions of itself'. We can see that at work in this poem, in which the speaker's tone is conversational and the lack of conventional punctuation, enjambment and spacing deliberately complicates the reader's ability to untangle the meaning of each line.

So again we see lyric poetry negotiating the unstable terrain of self-recognition and, in the case of Yu's poetry, this is always mediated by the fallible, unreliable spaces of language. Yu's alter-ego is a haunting image—although the tone of his poem is characteristically playful and sarcastic, I find it a deeply unsettling idea. Perhaps those other selves in my poems are unhomely alter-egos, always encountering the familiar in the unfamiliar.

A Mirror in the Dark

My poems may be the more authentic record of my lived experience than any anecdote I could tell. The unhomeliness that underscores the languageless or self-conscious speakers in my poetry isn't always limited to writing. I feel restless and uncomfortable, not at-home in this skin where I draw conclusions or attempt to explain myself. This version of my writing self sits somewhere on the cusp of the familiar—the mirror in the dark, reflecting me back at myself.

When I think of my last apartment in Shanghai I think of the fridge where I'd pinned postcards and notes, words I'd learned, fragments of poems. There was also a photograph of the house I grew up in, where my parents still live, where I leave my belongings and sleep in my childhood bedroom whenever I return from China into placeless limbo. In 2016, when I got back for the last time, my parents had renovated the house in the months I'd been away. The red brick façade was gone, the balcony updated, front door reslotted in a different part of the house so that it felt like entering an altogether unfamiliar place. The house from the photo I had been looking at for months in Shanghai hadn't been there at all.

The Shanghai I have talked about here is probably also gone. Cities never stay the same. I come back to one place or another, I come home and find myself in unfamiliar territory. I like to check the weather in Shanghai and read *China Daily* every week or so. Shanghai is two hours behind Brisbane time. This hour and everything in it hasn't happened yet. Nothing has been said or done that can't be changed.

Works Cited

Chen, BeiBei. 'Here, There', Southerly, vol. 73, no. 3, 2013, p. 42.

Foucault, Michel. 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias.' *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 22–27. Translated by Jay Miskowiec. Sourced at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/464648

Freud, Sigmund, et al. 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche (The 'Uncanny').' New Literary History, vol. 7, no. 3, 1976, pp. 525–548, 619–645. doi: 10.2307/468561

Guang, Tse Hao. 'Not the mirror image but the reverse side of the mirror.' Review of Fainting with Freedom by Ouyang Yu in TEXT Journal, vol. 20, no. 1, 2016. Sourced at: http://www.textjournal.com.au/april16/haoguang_rev.htm

Hetherington, Paul. 'The Past Ahead: Understanding Memory in Contemporary Poetry.' New Writing, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, pp. 102–117. doi: 10.1080/14790726.2011.615937

Jeffery, Ella. 'Language immersion program.' *foam:e*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2017. Sourced at: http://www.foame.org/

—. 'Fragment: Tuesday evening: Waitan.' *Tincture Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2016. Jeffreys, Mark. 'Anecdotes of a Jar: The Dominion of Spatial Tropes in Recent Criticism of the Lyric.' *Criticism*, vol. 40, no. 1, 1998, pp. 55–74. Sourced at: http://

www.jstor.org/stable/23118139 Musgrave, David. 'On Smokeflowers and Hawaiian Pizza', *Southerly Blog*, 22 July, 2017. Sourced at: http://southerlyjournal.com.au/2017/07/22/ on-smokeflowers-and-hawaiian-pizza/

Yu, Ouyang. Fainting with Freedom. Melbourne: Five Islands Press, 2015.

Dimples Whiskey Christina Lloyd

Christina Lloyd holds a Master's in Creative Writing from Lancaster University and a master's in Hispanic Languages and Literatures from UC Berkeley. Her work appears in various journals, including Meniscus and The North. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing from Lancaster.

Dad starred in a Hong Kongese advert in the seventies, well before I was born.

Some ad exec had spotted him midpunchline over drinks at the FCC

and asked him to be a good sport, so he donned a Santa suit.

sat in a leather armchair and lifted a tumbler to his lips to sip the dram.

Maybe he nailed it after two takes.

The air con on full blast

prevented sweat from beading on his flushed face.

I don't know how long it ran for. I imagine the camera zoomed in

seconds after the aftertaste settled to capture his slow, dimpling smile.

20 | Westerly 62.2 21 | Christina Lloyd

Post Tropical Mark Floyer

Mark Floyer is a retired teacher living in the West Country in England. He holds a PhD on Anglophone Indian Literature. His latest collection of poetry about his childhood spent in Calcutta is entitled *Crow Dusk* and will be published by Paekakariki Press in 2017.

I remember the way curtains of brackish monsoon rain slapped the swimming pool surface

and curlicues of rebounding steam swirled through a rainbow prism of tropical midday heat—

such ease of absorption such violence of contact seemed to tauten young skin.

Now the flesh bruises on impact haemorrhaging purple marshlands Inwards,

like an overripe fruit lacking a centre to resist the onset of autumn blasts.

I recline in a warm bath and feel my sun mottled flesh loosen on the bone.

Invisible Genres, or on the Virtual and the Actual John Mateer

John Mateer curated
'In Confidence: Reorientations
in Recent Art' for the Perth
Institute of Contemporary Arts,
and for 'spaced2: future recall'
he developed *The Quiet Slave*with the Malay communities
of Katanning and the Cocos
Islands. The exhibition 'Invisible
Genres' was at the John Curtin
Gallery in 2016.

Johannes Molanus De Picturis et Imaginibus Sacris (Treatise of Sacred Images) 1570 What is forbidden in books is also forbidden in paintings, which are the books of the illiterate.

To curate an exhibition commemorating the accidental landing of a Dutch ship in Australia four centuries before is inevitably to unite the past and the present, to memorialise that moment. 'Invisible Genres' uses the event of Dirk Hartog's landing in the north-west of Australia in 1616 to reframe both the ideas about art that were current at the time of his landing and those ideas as they apply to later art. Taking the landing as a point of orientation, the exhibition reflects on its virtual implications. Through 'Invisible Genres' it may be in a certain, metaphoric sense possible to envision the kind of Indian Ocean world that would have evolved had the recently wealthy and democratised 17th-century Dutch chosen to make Australia their principal colony in this part of the globe. Looking back from Australia's Anglo-American influenced present, looking back at another possible past in this region, we may regard the normality of this country today, with its socio-economic connections with Indonesia, South Africa and the distant Netherlands, as virtual, as one possibility among many others, as part of histories that might have been. After all, the continent could have been settled by the Portuguese, the Spanish, the French, the Malays or the Chinese...

•••

The Italian philosopher Paolo Virno writes: 'The virtual is simultaneous to the actual *because* memory is simultaneous to perception' (17). Virno's concern with the Virtual has a radical political motive. By regarding present social circumstances as virtual, Virno is able to propose that changes to collective memory can enable the transformation of sociocultural perception. Thanks to the process of memory, the Virtual transforms the Actual.

• • •

The issues implicit in the relationship between the Virtual and the Actual are central to 'Invisible Genres' and are dramatised in the Dutch video artist Wendelien van Oldeborgh's work No False Echoes (2008)1. The video is set in a modernist building called The Cathedral by locals and architectural scholars alike. It was the former headquarters of Radio Kootwijk, the company which in the first half of the 20th century produced radio programmes for broadcast throughout the Dutch East Indies². The Cathedral is resonant, literally, with associations. Seen from outside and against its surrounding semi-rural landscape in the western Netherlands, it is ominous, like an anti-aircraft tower left standing abandoned after a war. It serves as the theatre in which the work's protagonists read and discuss the Indonesian nationalist Soewardi Soerjaningrat's famous text 'Als ik eens Nederlander was' ('If I were a Dutchman'). For much of the video, they contemplate the text and the role radio played in the development of Indonesian politics from a high balcony overlooking the building's large hall. The hall is evocative of empty cathedrals of the great tradition of post-Reformation church-painting, that almost premodernist, proto-minimalist tradition with its emphasis on the bareness of the whitewashed interiors of the newly emptied churches. The work of Pieter Jansz epitomises this tradition. Soerjaningrat's text is read aloud by the controversial Dutch-Morrocan rapper Salah Edin. In contrast with the other discussants, Edin is first seen on a balcony outside the building, as if he were a political leader rallying the crowds. His reading connects the bitterly ironic theorising of Soerjaningrat, a colonial subaltern of an Indies of the past, to his own role as a figure of an equally politicised present. Crucial to the politics of van Oldenborgh's work, as well as to the rhetoric of Soerjaningrat's polemical essay, is the grammatical virtuality: 'If I were...'

• • •

More than fifty years before Hartog's landing, many of the Catholic churches of north-western Europe were pillaged during the Beeldenstorm, the Protestant reformers' politically destablising attacks on Catholic and, by extension, Spanish power. At that time, Philip the Second's Spain was occupying the region. The preachers who inspired the rioters were, of course, in agreement with Martin Luther's famous and wideranging criticism of the Catholic Church and were inspired by the theological questioning of image-making that had been theorised during the preceding decades under the term bildenfrage³. Indeed, there were theological issues at stake. Nevertheless, the nationalist realpolitik of the anti-Catholic movement should not be underestimated. Some of the most dramatic iconoclastic attacks in the Lowlands were initiated on the 10th of August 1566, on the eve of the feast-day of Saint Lawrence, the patron saint of Philip the Second. It was then that his almost completed palace in Madrid was to be dedicated to the Saint. This particular outbreak of violence continued in various places until the end of August 1566, and is regarded as having created sufficient political instability in the region to have prepared the occupied lands for the revolt proper which began in earnest in 1568. From the texts of the bildenfrage, it is evident that the veneration of saints and their imagery was an important point of contention in the disputes. This was principally because the worshippers' prayers to the Saints for intercession were dedicated to or through images and relics. As the Protestants saw it, it was this causality implicit in much Catholic imagery, this instability between the profane and the sacred, between the Visible and Invisible, that made the worship sacrilegious.

• • •

Hartog marked his fleeting visit to Australia with what is now called the Hartog Plate, a makeshift plaque fashioned by flattening a dish—a pewter plate of the kind which might in his home country have been painted as a still life—and inscribing it with information about the voyage. It was then nailed to a wooden pole to stand as evidence of their visit for later ships. Today, the Hartog Plate is housed among the artworks and historical artefacts at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Unlike the Portuguese explorers whose stone *padrões* (small cenotaphs) were prepared by masons prior to being shipped to unexplored lands, in its amateurishness and fragility the Hartog Plate remains testament to the insignificant role Australia would play in the Dutch colonial imagination. Being a small script that was abandoned under the vast, overarching space of a southern sky, the Hartog Plate is strangely akin to those texts hidden-in-plain-sight in Dutch church paintings of the 17th century. Those

apparently unremarkable texts in the paintings subtly and cryptically indicate sacred presence. Even small religious texts, remnants of images removed during the acts of iconoclasm, or the near-invisible graffiti, make articulate the blank walls and spaces of the recently cleared out and thus politicised post-Reformation churches⁴.

• • •

In 'Invisible Genres', those two historical moments—Hartog's landing and the Beeldenstorm—each mark a turning point, a turning from the Virtual to the Actual. For Hartog, this was a turning away from the newly discovered Australian coast and towards the highly lucrative commercial colonies of the Indies. As an employee of the Dutch East India Company, Hartog saw little to be gained from Australia, so he simply gave it the name of his ship, then sailed north for Bantam in Java. The iconoclasts turned away from the virtuality of Catholic imagery towards a reformed and, in theory, imageless Church. By attacking religious imagery they had forced a great number of their artists, artists who had been previously predominately employed making religious works for guilds and churches, to immigrate to the Protestant north where many of them would settle in Amsterdam. Due to the growing affluence of the Dutch Republic, over the subsequent century an active art industry developed, becoming in effect the origin of today's global art market. The booming market encouraged the artists to specialise, fostering the development of secular painting, with the result that there was a proliferation of genres. Were they to have continued painting religious works, they would have been vulnerable to a range of political and religious charges. The allied genre of history painting was similarly risky and so also in decline. The visible and invisible genres of this exhibition are the ghosts of the four principle types that came to predominate later Western art: the portrait, the still life, the landscape and 'genre', or art depicting the everyday.

• • •

Looking at the European art of the centuries after those post-iconoclastic transformations, with an awareness of later art's proliferation of practices and the vast number of works produced, it may be proposed that two elements of the market derived from the 17th century are shared across the centuries: the increasingly secular nature of art, and that the genres dominate as categories. While it might seem that looking at contemporary art by means of these four genres (and by implication through a specifically Dutch tradition) is retrospective, or perhaps Eurocentric, it is

nevertheless a strategy by means of which we can question the actuality and virtuality of our present visual circumstance.

• • •

With Virno, we may regard memory as 'simultaneous to perception' (17). If we are to see the present and future with clarity, perhaps we should consider how we are already, now, in the Virtual. And the past was—or is?—virtual, too.

• • •

The majority of the works in the exhibition are by artists who work in Australia today. Their artworks are exhibited in relation to Wendelien van Oldenborgh's major video work No False Echoes, and alongside a tapestry and series of sculptures of William Kentridge, a video from the series *Factum* (2009) by Candice Breitz, and a selection of paintings by the Balinese master I Dewa Putu Mokoh, (including *The Antiques Shop* (1991), on the cover of this issue). That these contrasting works are by artists from countries connected by Dirk Hartog's voyage, countries affected in significant ways by Dutch influence, allows the exhibition to establish several points of orientation radiating out from the moment and from the site of his landing. 'Invisible Genres' refers, retrospectively, both to an unintentional history and an international geography. The dynamic between these two realities, this retrospectivity, is between the paired concepts of the present/visible (Actual) and the past/invisible (Virtual). But perhaps the terms are reversible? Perhaps the present should be regarded as virtual, as one kind of illusion, while the past may be definite, actual, in its assured political and historical reality? Memory always vacillates between these polarities, between inner and outer worlds. Not incidentally, we could also suggest that the British colonisation of Australia could be regarded as an act of post-Enlightenment violence, with its pogroms and mysterious contagions preparing the way for the iconoclastic religion of industrial progress. The violence implicit in the term 'terra nullius' was, in practice, the invocation of the virtual—not actual—absence of Australia's legal owners, its Indigenous peoples.

• • •

'The desecration of ancient idols is only performed in the name of other, more recent gods,' writes the media-theorist Boris Groys (2008b, 68).

• •

If the Cathedral of van Oldenborgh's No False Echoes may be seen as reminiscent of the whitewashed churches of post-Reformation painting, of the particular kind of public space the churches became, then the three works of Tony Nathan's series *Meat* (2015), displayed as a triptych, are in a sense Catholic, revealing the Invisible made tangible, calling to mind the corpse of the crucified Christ, and thus evoking an absent altar. After the 1578 Alteratie, during which churches in the Protestant north were given over to either Calvinist or Lutheran congregations, the Calvinists placed civic memorial tombs where the Catholic altars had been to prevent the physical return of the altar should power change hands again. Nathan's central panel in this triptych is undoubtedly a reference to Rembrandt's famous *Slaughtered Ox* (1655). While it may be regarded as a still life, Rembrandt's work is actually an unusual work for the genre and an anomaly in Golden Age painting. It would return to haunt the art of the 20th century, reappearing in the work of Chäime Soutine and, even more spectrally, in the British painter Francis Bacon's disturbingly existential art.

• • •

Other works in the exhibition that may be categorised as still lifes suggest other physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. As works of art, they refer to the Actual, to things in the visible world, even while they can imply that which is imminent or virtual: ghostly impressions, after-images of hopes and memories. Gregory Pryor's Herbario Nojciano (Black) (2002–2010) is a series of studies of specimens of western Australian plants. Originally drawings made on white paper in Vienna's Natural History Museum, Herbario is a work in which dead, natural objects are studied with an attention of the kind that might be devoted to the image of a lost loved one. On completion of the drawings Pryor photographed them, printing them with their colour reversed so that the white paper was now black and the drawn lines rendered white, the blankness of the page animating the image of the emaciated plants with a dark, full emptiness. *Herbario* is a registering of the spirit of the dead plants, a cataloguing of the after-images of their past lives. It is as if the artist were longing, through this kind of still life or vanitas, to revive the plants by means of the animate virtuality of his attention and memory. Pryor later pursued this logic of inversion in a series of works which were presented under the title *Lacunae* (2014). In this body of work he used his extensive knowledge of western Australian flora, a knowledge well advanced since his initial work in the Vienna Natural History Museum, to produce from his imagination a series of watercolour landscapes. Key to this turn in

his practice is the process of internalisation. Over the years of drawing plants from life, he had made the flora part of his inner world. This allowed him to convincingly depict natural, imagined places. This is an instance of the Virtual being used to ethically transform the Actual. In a similar way, William Kentridge's *Procession* (1999–2000), a set of seven small figurative bronzes cast from household objects, is here not important for what it is as a collection of figures, nor for the animated shadows they cast, but rather for their calling to mind a landscape absent from the work; the implied, industrial Johannesburg landscape through which the figures seem determined to pass as if on pilgrimage—or, at least, on the long, dogged march to a better life. In using a map of the Holy Land taken from an antique book as the background for a horse-mounted figure, a figure in his characteristically graphic style, Kentridge's large woven tapestry *Promised Land* (2008) is in effect a collaged enlargement of an image of a battlefield. Where the figures of *Procession* evoke a landscape, Promised Land presents us with a Christian terrain consecrated and traversed by a giant conquistador-like figure, the suggestion being that colonial power is a kind of Absurdism. That *Promised Land* is as large as a processional banner could also allow us to wonder what an equivalent of that equestrian, historical warrior would be today: a knight on his own Crusade, journeying to Jerusalem to participate in a beeldenstorm against the Muslims? A soldier in the armies of the Coalition of the Willing, ready to return the democracy of images to lands pillaged by an iconoclastic Taliban?

• • •

To consider images today, in the digital era, is to conceive of them in relation to the systems in which they are held and circulated, to conceive of the image not as a thing, but as an event that is made manifest out of data. Reflecting on how what he calls 'iconoclastic religions' have conceptualised the image in relation to an invisible (virtual?) God, Groys writes: 'According to these religions the Invisible shows itself in the world not through any specific individual image but through the whole history of its appearances and interventions' (2008a, 84). This may be why the excessive proliferation of electronic images has led to the dramatic commercial and moral devaluation of the image. With the Invisible no longer a metaphysic, the image must become a commonplace, a commerce, a banal transaction. However, we should go further than Groys, because it could be that the digital era is in fact foremost a time of accelerating, widespread iconoclasm.

• • •



Wendelien van Oldenborgh, No False Echoes (video still), 2008, video installation, 30 mins.

Courtesy of the Artists and Wilfried Lentz Rotterdam.



Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *No False Echoes* (video still), 2008, video installation, 30 mins.

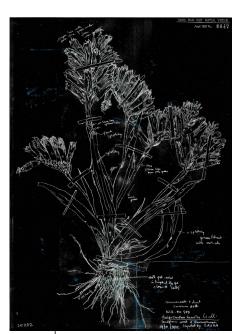
Courtesy of the Artists and Wilfried Lentz Rotterdam.



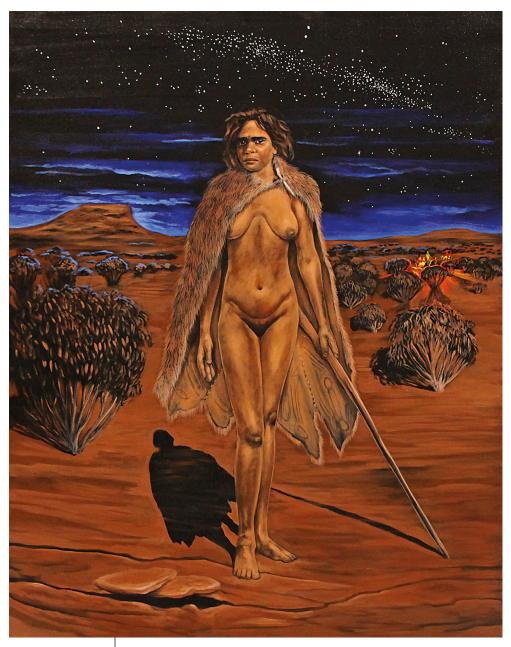
William Kentridge, *Horse Series* (*Promised Land*), 2008, handwoven mohair tapestry, 3.8 × 4.16 m. Private Collection.



Tony Nathan, Untitled, from Meat series, 2015, photograph, 155×120 cm. Courtesy of the Artist.



Gregory Pryor, Herbario Nojciano (Black) (detail), 2002–2010, 35 digital inkjet prints, 42×30 cm each. Courtesy of the Artist.



Julie Dowling, Warridah Melburra Ngupi, 2004, acrylic and red ochre on canvas, 150 × 120 cm. Cruthers Collection of Women's Art, The University of Western Australia, CCWA 777: Image by Brad Coleman/John Curtin Gallery.

In her desire to retain a sense of object-hood in her photographic practice, Jacqueline Ball seems to be wrestling with the digital image's elusiveness, its persistent, inevitable return to the Invisible or Virtual. Whether by photographing the smartphone that presents images sent to her from her father who decided to leave Australia for South Africa in 6 hour difference (2016), or by manipulating and rephotographing framed prints of her own and past partners' works in the series Room Service (2015), Ball is involved in the reversal of a beeldenstorm, in a struggle between the invisible world of memory and the virtuality of an Australian present. Ball's experimenting with abstraction and with the insertion of figures alternatively sentimental and fetishistic reveals the particular instability brought about by this new digital realm. Where 6 hour difference conveys the interplay between the haptic presence of the images arriving on her smartphone's screen in her Australian life, as a series and as an installation *Room Service* functions like a deconstructed book, the pages separated out, placed in expectation of being held in relation to one another in a forthcoming, final layout. In both cases there is a disquieting relationship between the single image and the larger sequence, as if the subjects of the pictures only have a relationship to one another by means of their materiality. In this kind of digital association/dissociation, it is the viewer's subjectivity that is rendered virtual, becoming an experience in which the 'thing' of the image is the only Actual. Ball's work can be seen as drawing on various genres—portraiture, landscape, still life, the everyday—and yet more important in all her imagery is the attention to the thing, the object, the actual that every photograph, by the technology's very nature, can only seem to 'fix'.

• • •

We should not conflate the Virtual, as Virno uses the term, with how it is used in today's digital culture. Increasingly a digital, virtual reality is forced on us as Contemporary: as the everyday and its presence. In contrast, Virno's Virtual is in concert with a possible, politicised Actual through the mediation of memory.

• •

In 2011, at Munich's Haus der Kunst, the site of the Nazi's infamous *Entartete Kunst* ('Degenerate Art') exhibition of 1937, the work of the Dutch artist Marlene Dumas was exhibited alongside paintings by minor 17th-century Dutch Masters such as Michael Sweerts—a student of Rembrandt—and Nicolaes Maes. Titled 'Tronies: Marlene Dumas and the Old Masters', the show was named after a recently recovered category of

painting which was used to characterise both the works by Dumas and those by the Masters. The term was as much intended to suggest a new, elevated status for her work as it was to draw attention to her long-term interest in the practice and genre of the *tronie*. Until recently not well studied, the *tronie* is generally described as the depiction of a face not attributable to a particular person and therefore not a portrait, or the face of a figure without a narrative context. Research over the past decade has revealed that there are also other aspects to the tronie: they are pictures of faces that were not attributable to actual sitters, making the works attractive to the widest range of prospective buyers; they show characteristic personality types exemplified by their physiognomy; and they were made by master painters to be used by assistants to save the artist time in a manner akin to cut-and-paste⁵. When seen as *tronies*, Dumas' works are examples of how a sub-genre of portrait painting can be reclaimed to recontextualise current image-making. As an exhibition, 'Tronies' illustrates how art-historical vestige can be used to revivify the historicity of a postcolonial painting practice. Further, Dumas politicises the genre. Some of the works in the show depicted figures of various races from the mass media, among them the face of a young man named 'Osama', which could not but be seen as a portrait of Osama bin Laden. Provocatively, Dumas makes the viewer aware of the parallel between the stereotyping of the *tronie* and the process of today's racial profiling, its specifically visual politics.

• • •

In a manner that parallels Dumas' method, painter Julie Dowling refers back to a range of European painting techniques and traditions in her process of recovering an anti-colonial history. From her 2015 depiction of the Elder Richard Walley, in that most patriarchal of mode, the stately formal portrait, to the starry and expressive Warridah Melburra Ngupi (2004) and Everlasting Mollie (1998), both portraits of her maternal forebears, her great-grandmother and her grandmother respectively, Dowling adopts elements of past painting traditions to present her view of a repressed history of violence, dispossession and alienation. Always central to Dowling's work is the face, the Indigenous person's face, and the practice of portraiture. Her project is the presentation of the Indigenous individual, as person and as presence. The figures in her portraits look out into the present, its partiality, from their place in actual, true history. Dowling uses every method available to her—life studies, photographs, images found in books and on the internet—and yet she often paints from memory, that ancient virtuality of the Imagination. Dowling's

Gardanganda—Waking Up (2014) is very much a work of the imagination, being largely based on her visualisation of the moments before the first encounter between her ancestors and the British explorers who were to be the forerunners of the region's Squattocracy. In a sense, the figures are not individuals but types. This work differs from the *tronie* in that it does depict a specific, historical moment. The couple who are waiting expectantly on the edge of the dry salt lake have been sent there to tell the explorers that they are not welcome in that country, and the columns of smoke in the background also indicate this unwelcome. Dowling's depiction of an historical scene that was never before visually recorded is an evocation of the Virtual as the Actual. It is an assertion of the reality of Indigenous rights and boundaries that were invisible to—or, if visible, ignored by—the arriving British colonisers. In the case of Warridah Melburra Ngupi, a picture which depicts the artist's greatgrandmother who was exhibited as an Aboriginal type in late 19th-century England, Melburra is individuated, proudly confident, her eyes gentle and introspective. Dowling believes that there may be yet undiscovered photographs of her great-grandmother in British archives. As if in a dream-memory, she is placed at the centre of the painting, powerfully present in her world, looming out from her country. More akin to Dumas' use of the tronie, if contradicting its being the presentation of a figure without narrative context, is Dowling's Marlabaya—Becoming Dead (Is Condemned to Die) (2015). This painting of an Indigenous man in currentissue US-made prison handcuffs, has a dual other-worldliness: he is one of the multitude of Indigenous people today incarcerated throughout Australia, and yet the halo makes of him a hallowed Christ-figure. With his large, calm eyes this local Christ personifies the Catholic transcendence of the Actual by the Virtual. Although akin to the tronie, with this work Dowling opposes the secularisation that has been normalised in Western culture by centuries of post-Reformation art. Through a powerfully and distinctly Christian image, Dowling announces the depth of her people's autochthonous spirituality.

• • •

Perhaps due to their being in the digital media of photography and video, the portrait works of Candice Breitz and Tony Nathan tend less towards the narrative decontextualisation of the *tronie* than to the overdetermination of the serial and its possibility of infinite replication. The selection from Nathan's series *Kawah Ijen* (2011) conveys the relationship between the sulphur collectors of East Java and the volcano in which they labour. Having photographed, in the portrait part of the series,

34 | Westerly 62.2 35 | John Mateer

the labourers from both front and back in an identical stance. Nathan establishes a tension between the collectors as persons (portraits) and as types (*tronies*). The formality of the composition vis-à-vis their being depictions of persons gives the work a particular, modern pathos. It is as if these men, close to being depersonalised, are revealed as trapped, mere links in the chain of global industrial production. Having those images in mind and then seeing those same men made minuscule in the large photograph of the volcano that is the focus of Kawah Ijen, and almost German Romantic in style, reverses the logic of the sublime, making these men present, actual and placed in the midst of the unreality of their dangerous and vast landscape. The idea that a digital reversal of the sublime might be possible is tantalisingly suggested, too, by the dramatic stasis of the breaking waves works from his *Waves* series (2015) which are shown in the exhibition as twinned nocturnes. Slightly differently, Breitz's Factum Tremblay (from the series Factum, 2009) inverts the digital imperative to the serial by literally presenting the irony of human duplication: identical twins. As with all the other works in this series, these twins are presented on two screens suspended longways beside each other. The twins appear identical, dressed the same, hair also styled to be identical. As we listen to them speak, they start to self-differentiate, unintentionally, principally through the discrepancies between their increasingly diverging accounts of each other and of their shared experiences. The viewer is left with the strange feeling, not of seeing double, something that might be expected from digital serialisation, but rather of seeing the singular and hearing presence doubled. Bearing in mind Virno's notion that the Virtual is 'simultaneous to the actual because memory is simultaneous to perception' (17), Factum Tremblay illustrates his notion of memory as action. Through their diverging narratives, the viewer is able to distinguish between the twins' actual, physical reality as individuals and their self-evident, deceptive sameness.

• • •

The principal narrator in van Oldenborgh's *No False Echoes*—the rapper Salah Edin, whose real name is Abid Tounssi—is also present as a doubly significant, twinned face, as both the stereotype akin to that of the *tronie* and as a portrait of himself, the outspoken, political performer. Although his image is widely recognised in the Netherlands, in the anti-Islamic short film *Fitna* (2008), a film written by the right-wing politician Geert Wilders, his photograph was used as if it were that of Mohammed Bouyeri, the murderer of the liberal filmmaker Theo van Gogh. Van Gogh, a prominent Dutch cultural figure, was in a sense also a double, being the

great-grandson of his namesake, the brother of that icon of Dutch culture, Vincent van Gogh. Theo van Gogh had himself collaborated on a short film with the Somali-born Ayaan Hirsil Ali in which they criticised Islam's treatment of women in the Netherlands. It is that film that is thought to have inflamed the anger of the killer. If Salah Edin's image was not used in error, its conflation of the *tronie* and the portrait is even more sinister, being implicitly an incitement to violence.

• • •

The work of Big John Dodo and the Karadjeri sculptors associated with him, among them Ian and Matthew Gilbert and Teddy and Darcy Hunter, are an insight into how a milieu, a practice and genre, can evolve, flourish, then decline so rapidly as to disappear almost without a trace. The sculptural works of Big John Dodo originated in his being asked to carve two spirit figures by an Elder. In a dream, the Spirit Walkarurra had appeared to the Elder and taught him a series of songs with accompanying dances. To have himself represented in the future ritual, the Spirit had instructed the Elder to commission someone carve the wooden figures. At the conclusion of the ritual performance, the figures would be presented to the community who had witnessed or participated in the performance. Big John Dodo later made other figures and human or spirit heads. He then began regularly producing the kind of stone heads for which he is now known. It seems that a decade after their initial creation, these works were being made solely for sale, and most were collected by the British property developer Lord Alistair McAlpine. After Dodo's success, many other members of the Karadjeri community started sculpting stone heads. The earliest existent work by Big John Dodo is dated 1968 and is now in the Berndt Museum at the University of Western Australia. The collection records show that it was given as a gift to the German anthropologist Helmut Petri who from the 1930s until the 1980s had at various times worked in northern Australia. The next earliest work by Dodo in the collection was bought in 1975 by Ronald Berndt, the anthropologist and founder of the collection, from a curio shop in the centre of the city of Perth. The almost unknown minor art movement sparked by Dodo's work can be regarded as a microcosm of art production in general, almost an allegory, and as a parallel to that of the art industry in the Netherlands of the 16th and 17th centuries: beginning with a sacred encounter, the commission for a sacred performance, and the artist's own fascination with his creations, and then thanks to patronage the artist is able to pursue the commercialisation of his art; on seeing this, others imitate him, creating a small production line to supply the patron;

36 | Westerly 62.2 37 | John Mateer

until, finally, this process of producing secular objects derived from an encounter with the Sacred leads inevitably to the devolution of the works' original significance. As with those painters who after the events of the *Beeldenstorm* specialised in producing works focused in a genre, the Kimberley sculptors were led to specialise, with each manufacturing stone heads in their own distinctive personal style. There was sufficient diversity to allow the artists to stay within the genre of their own type of *tronie* while making good use of the enthusiasm of their patron. As with any industry that loses its financial base, it seems that when McAlpine ceased purchasing the works, production came to a sudden halt. The consequence of this is that the movement is now poorly known even among historians of Indigenous art. Despite its flourishing and decline as a commercial enterprise, it is important to not forget that the entire venture was precipitated by a visitation from the Invisible.

• • •

Virno again: 'Memory is the mechanism that confers a potential (incomplete, contingent) character on reality by throwing it back into the past...' (16–17) Might not the Spirit or the Invisible be substituted for the word memory?

• • •

Abdul-Rahman Abdullah's work is concerned with the liminal, the world that exists at the edges of attention and consciousness. His *The Day that Night was Day* (2014) and *The Day that Night Stood Still* (2015) are two cats sculpted of wood, one asleep and the other well hidden in the gallery, each like an emissary of other worlds, haunting domestic, human-occupied space. Another work, *The Bucket* (2015), presents a snake in its hiding place inside that everyday article of gardening and housework. Neither entirely part of a genre scene nor a shadowy presence slipping away beyond the frame of a still life, these creatures are reminders of the non-human worlds in the midst of which we live our day-to-day lives. In quite a different way, *Al Falaq* (2013), a near-relief sculptural portrait of the artist's father made with white resin, refers by its title to that *sura* in the *Quran* related to dawn. It is a prayer of protection which, after the invocation of the name of Allah, reads:

Say, 'I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak, from the evil of what He has created; and from the evil of the night when it cometh on; and from the evil of the blowers upon knots; and from the evil of the envious when he envies.' (566)

Abdullah's actual, symbolic patriarchal figure leaning out from the wall, perhaps being mid-prayer and halfway to lowering his head to the prayer mat, with his mind on the numinous and so distant from the everyday, is a person in an intermediate state. *Al Falaq* goes far beyond being a portrait as it is an image of a man close to prayer and nearing the Invisible.

• • •

PVI Collective is a group of artists who use performance as a way of intervening in the habits of the everyday, thereby questioning the way in which today's street and suburban life is controlled and—in the recent coinage—'surveilled'. PVI asserts the importance of the exchange of personal experience and emphasises the role of the individual's subjectivity, often using irony and humour to query the way citizens internalise and enact the politics of their nation. Although foremost an interventionist performance work, PVI Collective's *Transformer* (2016) is represented in the exhibition through photographic documentation and an installation of the board game that is the catalyst for the performances. *Transformer* was devised to be played in public with the aim of bringing together people who might otherwise choose not to be in close proximity. It was developed during a two-week laboratory with theatre students from the University of the Orange Free State in South Africa. The images document the playing of the game in a public square in the centre of Bloemfontein, the capital of that former republic. The Orange Free State, one of the Afrikaner republics established in the 19th century, was modelled on the first Dutch Republic. The various steps of the board game require the players to become both performer and director. In the case of the step in the game called 'Poser', a player is requested to temporarily transform her opponent into a living statue by requesting him to stand on a plastic crate in a pose directed by the opponent: what would inevitably be a symbolic pose. The director then reads out the short accompanying text which, in part, states: 'We do not need colonial symbols of the past, we need symbols of the future, this person here is one such future, please join me for one minute in admiration.' In effect, at this point in the game, through personal reflection, the two players together produce a hopeful portrait of a virtual and actual Other. Through playing the game in a public place they bring the dream of a hopeful future, that kind of virtuality, into an urban post-apartheid present, if only briefly, as a tiny historic event.

• •



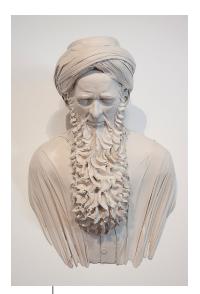
Tony Nathan, *Untitled*, from *Kawah Ijen* series, 2011, photograph, 900 × 600 mm. Courtesy of the Artist.



Jacqueline Ball, 6 hour difference (detail), 2016, 79 photographic prints on matte paper, 15.2 \times 22.8 cm. Courtesy of the Artist.



Candice Breitz, Factum Tremblay (from the series Factum), 2009, dual channel installation, 78:08 mins. State Art Collection, Art Gallery of Western Australia. Purchased through the TomorrowFund, Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2011.



Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *Al Falaq*, 2013, tinted resin, 750 × 450 × 420 mm.

Courtesy of the Artist and This Is No Fantasy + Dianne Tanzer Gallery.



Big John Dodo, Untitled, undated, carved stone with earth pigments and paint, $38 \times 15 \times 18$ cm. Collection of Dan and Diane Mossenson. Image by Brad Coleman/John Curtin Gallery.



I Dewa Putu Mokoh, *Bom Bali*, 2006, Chinese ink and acrylic on canvas, 63 × 82 cm (framed). Charles Darwin University Art Collection CDU2993.



pvi collective, transformer # 6: power, 2016, colour photograph with oversized playing card. Courtesy of the Artist. Image by pvi collective.



Joanna Lamb, Suburban House #6, 2014, acrylic on paper, 380 \times 650 mm. Courtesy of Helen Yu.



Gregory Pryor, Lacunae Series—Hose, 2014, watercolour on paper, 28.5×38.3 cm. Courtesy of the Artist.



Julie Dowling, Murlabaya—Becoming Dead (Is Condemned to Die), 2015, acrylic, red ochre, mica gold and plastic on canvas, 1310 × 755 mm. Courtesy of the Uniting Church in Western Australia. Image by Brad Coleman/John Curtin Gallery.

In 'Invisible Genres', architectural painting is regarded as a sub-genre of the art of the everyday. An awareness of this is helpful in the interpretation of the work by van Oldenborgh's No False Echoes and in the appreciation of the paintings of Joanna Lamb. While Lamb's paintings can be seen to fit the Dutch tradition, with its emphasis on the whitewashed inside of the emptied, post-Reformation church, her work differs from it in that the visual emptiness she focuses on is not the building's interior but instead its exterior, modernist surface. The modernity of her work parallels that of the Dutch church painters in that they both share a dependence on blankness, on the flat, cleared surface8. Lamb's paintings and collages are deceptive in that they appear photographic, in a lineage of late modernist art that would include Pop Art and Hyperrealism. They are, however, the result of Lamb's careful study of actual buildings which she draws freehand, subtly adjusting the design. In her work, formal flatness is key, making the buildings appear as if on a virtual screen, appearing out of what the suburban, everyday, unseeing eye can become blind to. By contrast, her flatland airport figure (a) (2006) evokes the Dutch tradition of seaport and market paintings, and her large painting Sculpture Garden (2008), while seemingly a scene of a park in Sydney with a stately monument at its centre, an urban landscape, may prompt the question of whether or not it should be regarded, not as landscape or streetscape, but foremost as a portrait. The sculpture appears to be of Captain James Cook, the Englishman whose arrival on the continent marks the beginning of British colonisation and the Australian nation.

• • •

More conventionally an art of the everyday, if with a particular interest in portraiture, is the work of the painter I Dewa Putu Mokoh (known as Mokoh) which gives a sense of the art of a small number of post-war painters who transformed Balinese art. Unlike the so-called traditional Balinese painters who, while themselves influenced by aspects of 20th-century Western art, largely worked within village- or family-styles, Mokoh developed a personal style suited to conveying his impressions of everyday life, recording his own personal and emotional experiences. If it can be said that a personal, modern art is one in which life is presented as it is actually experienced, as opposed to how it should be lived according to the dictates of society, then Mokoh's art is definitely individualist and modern. A miniature painting of frogs, an eccentric group portrait of family pictured inside a head, paintings of lovers and of friends relaxing, realistic and mythical landscapes scenes, the nostalgic sights of a village festival, all capture minor and charming moments of Balinese everyday

life. Dramatically different is Mokoh's extraordinary memorial painting, Bom Bali (2006), a work thought to be the only Balinese painting about the 2002 bombing at Kuta in which 202 people were killed and 209 were injured. Bom Bali presents us with an image of actual, horrific violence. With its strange, cartoon-like figures, their limbs severed, their limp tongues loose and hanging out of their mouths, and with its use of the Balinese sacred symbols for fire—small, star-like signs slowly rotating in the midst of the burned cars and corpses—the painting records the horror of a specific, historic encounter with violence and death. By means of those traditional symbols of fire, Mokoh seems to be suggesting, in keeping with the Balinese people's interpretation of the event, that the bombing was a sign that the local gods were angry with them. Accordingly, Mokoh's painting indicates that the violence can only be countered by spiritual consolation. The Balinese religion is not simply the means by which the event is explained but it is also the means by which the Islamic fundamentalists'—iconoclastic?—crimes are overcome.

• • •

We should not forget that after the iconoclasm and the political upheavals of the Dutch Revolt, while many painters from the southern regions then occupied by the Protestants moved north, Catholics remaining in Protestant lands took up the practice of secret worship. There were hidden churches, and, in Amsterdam, the clandestine continuation of a local procession that for centuries had commemorated events related to the 1345 Miracle of Amsterdam (Vanhaelen 97-99). Known as Stille Omgang ('Silent Procession'), this ritual, although covert, was not completely hidden. It was practised until Catholicism was again allowed in the 19th century. Today it is openly commemorated. Reflected on in Australia where the coexistence of Native Title and Common Law are key to the undoing of the violence implicit in 'terra nullius', where Indigenous visual culture is used to re-invoke the ownership of land, the notion of an invisible rite that acknowledges the sanctity of a place is clear as parallel and precedent. Dowling's recourse to Christian imagery, Nathan's evoking of the Holy Trinity in the triptych from his *Meat* series and Mokoh's *Bom* Bali, with its references to Balinese symbols of sacred fire, all reveal in their own way the extent that violence, even the most explicitly political and terroristic, cannot annihilate the powerful virtuality of the Invisible.

•••

44 | Westerly 62.2 **45** | John Mateer

This persistence of an effacement in the midst of everyday life is an instance of how, following Virno, memory 'confers a potential... character on actual reality by throwing it back into the past.'

• • •

While history painting was regarded by the later French Academy as the highest of the genres, in 17th-century Netherlands the genre was in continuous decline. Nonetheless, the Dutch Republic's democracy and its largely secularised visual culture led to the encoding of historical themes in subtle, often near-invisible ways. If van Oldenborgh's No False Echoes causes us to recall the discussion of history and politics in the opened-out, newly public space of the post-Reformation church, and Mokoh's Bom Bali situates violence in the street, at a crime scene, then Gregory Pryor's major twenty-panel oil painting Lakeside (2009) is also a kind of sublimated, encoded history painting. Monumental in scale, mounted close to the floor to give the sightly disorientating effect of seeing its almost ghostly Western figures patiently walking across the landscape against a low horizon, most of the surface of the work is given over to a huge and dramatic Australian sky, the kind of sky that is a massive blankness and akin to that of the walls in so many Dutch church paintings. Where in the church paintings the high, white-washed walls are an effacement, an obliterated past, Pryor's empty sky, far above and beyond the walking figures, holds a blank, potential future. It is in Lakeside, a distinctly Australian work, that the Virtual and the Actual are held in stasis, held on the verge of being politically overturned or reversed, just as Pryor reversed the colours of the drawings of Australian plants that he made in Vienna's Natural History Museum. In Lakeside, it is as if an Indigenous historical reality, for centuries rendered invisible by colonial violence and virtually displaced by Hartog's landing and all that followed the Beeldenstorm, might return once again to fill a world pillaged and empty. After all, colonisation, as an extension of the logic of modernity, usually required desacralisation to clear its path and empty the already inhabited lands. It might be that the Europeans, as well as the later British, could not have imagined that the second last continent to be explored by the West was itself a Being staring back at them, not with the eye of an invisible God, but with the quiet, consoling eyes of other hidden persons and other persistent spirits. Pryor once asked an Aboriginal Elder for her thoughts on the painting. Indicating the small, ghostly figures, she replied: 'They are being watched. The land is watching them.'

• •

Unlike the European historical circumstance where for more than a millennium Christianity with its myths and imagery enabled an integration of the individual's inner (Virtual) world with the outer (Actual) world, in those places colonised by the West, the local people, whether Indigenous or settlers, still find themselves in the predicament in which they are compelled to confront the incoherence of the dynamic between their imaginings and their experiences. In taking the event of Hartog's landing on an Australian shore as a point in time by means of which the reframing of a small part of the art of the Indian Ocean region might be contemplated, emphasising the 'terra incognita' of western Australia, the intention was to disrupt the usual terms of reference for the works—regional, national, postcolonial or post-colony—to return the viewer to a less conventional sense of art-making's historicity. Central to 'Invisible Genres' was the question of the extent to which modernity's secularisation has obscured from us the question of the ontology of the artwork, its integration of inner and outer worlds, or, in other terminology, the Virtual and the Actual. It is in the colonised peripheries of the now globalised world that the urgent politics of the tension between those two terms remains disturbingly apparent—because it is in places like Western Australia, Bali and South Africa that the reminders of colonialism's violence have not ceased reappearing out of the Invisible.

Notes

- 1 Wendelien van Oldenborgh and Binna Choi edited an artist's book which contains a range of material related to the project, as well as the relevant texts. See A Well-Respected Man.
- 2 See Pieter Spits' history of the building, Radio Kootwijk: Monument in Gewapend Beton.
- 3 David Freedberg's doctoral thesis is a good and detailed overview of the subject. See Iconoclasm and Painting in the Revolt of the Netherlands 1566–1609.
- 4 Angela Vanhaelen's study of the painting of that period, with particular attention to the details of the church interiors, is invaluable. See *The Wake of Iconoclasm:* Painting the Church in the Dutch Republic.
- 5 See Dagmar Hirschfelder and Leon Krempel, Tronies: Das Gesicht in der Neuzeit.
- 6 This account of the origin of Big John Dodo's work is by the anthropologist Kim Akerman. It is recounted in various contexts, but seems to have first been published in a 1989 catalogue. See Kimberley Heads: a Selection of Carvings by Aboriginal Artists from the Collection of Australian City Properties Limited.
- 7 This text was one of the cards of instruction displayed in the exhibition alongside the documentation of the South African performance.
- 8 See Robert Cook's essay 'Wallpaper for the New World Order' in which he reflects on the sociological significance of flatness in Lamb's work. See *Joanna Lamb:* Home.

- 9 Adrian Vickers' survey of Balinese painting is an excellent overview. According to his account, Mokoh would not be considered a modernist. Interestingly, he reproduces 'Bom Bali' without commentary. See Balinese Art: Paintings and Drawings of Bali 1800–2010.
- 10 Mokoh is an important part of Christopher Hill's small and personal study of Balinese painting: Survival and Change: Three Generations of Balinese Painters.

Works Cited

- Akerman, Kim et al. Kimberley Heads: a Selection of Carvings by Aboriginal Artists from the Collection of Australian City Properties Limited. Perth: ACPL, 1989.
- Cook, Robert. 'Wallpaper for the New World Order', *Joanna Lamb: Home*. Mosman Park: Johnson Gallery, 2006.
- Freedburg, David. *Iconoclasm and Painting in the Revolt of the Netherlands* 1566–1609. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Groys, Boris. 'Art in the Age of Digitalization'. *Art Power*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008. Groys, Boris. 'Iconoclasm as an Artistic Device: Iconoclastic Strategies in Film', *Art Power*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008b.
- Hill, Christopher. Survival and Change: Three Generations of Balinese Painters. Canberra: Pandanus Press, 2006.
- Hirschfelder, Dagmar, and Leon Krempel. *Tronies: Das Gesicht in der Neuzeit.* Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2014.
- The Koran: The Holy Book of Islam. Trans. E.H. Palmer. First edition 1900. London: Watkin Publishing, 2007.
- van Oldenborgh, Wendelien, and Binna Choi (eds.). A Well-Respected Man. Berlin/ Utrecht: Casco/Sternberg Press, 2010.
- Spits, Pieter. Radio Kootwijk: Monument in Gewapend Beton. Boxtel: Uitgeverij Aenaes, 2008.
- Vanhaelen, Angela. The Wake of Iconoclasm: Painting the Church in the Dutch Republic. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012.
- Vickers, Adrian. Balinese Art: Paintings and Drawings of Bali 1800–2010. New York: Tuttle. 2012.
- Virno, Paolo. Déjà Vu and the End of History. Trans. David Broder. London: Verso, 2015.

Bahasa Indonesia/Melayu & Yolngu-Matha—recognising familiar words in unfamiliar contexts

Siti Sarah Ridhuan

Sarah Ridhuan is the curatorial assistant at the Berndt Museum, UWA. She recently received a first-class BA Honours in Anthropology and will be curating her first show 'In Light of Shadows' in early 2018. Her interests include the intersections of anthropology, art and museums.

My involvement in the Berndt Museum's 2015 exhibition 'Yirrkala Drawings: Works on Paper, Barks and Sculpture' was an eye-opening experience that left a lasting impression on me. Working on the exhibition gave me the opportunity not only to work with the amazing UNESCO-recognised¹ drawings, but also to learn more about the Yirrkala community and the Berndts' fieldwork there. However, one thing I certainly did not expect was to see familiar words in the Yolngu-Matha language recorded in the database and catalogue cards of various items.

The Yolngu words that I was recognising and understanding are those also present in the Indonesian and Malay languages. For me, this realisation added a whole other dimension to the drawings, bark paintings and sculptures—works that are already layered with rich cultural knowledge and aesthetic practice. Whilst I was aware of the history of contact between the Macassans and the Yolngu people, this particular experience was a personal revelation into how extensive this exchange was. The similarities in the languages were a surprise, but what really fascinated me were the subtle local distinctions. The Yolngu use the word 'balanda' to refer to a person of European descent, whereas in Bahasa Indonesia 'belanda' specifically refers to a Dutch person. Another example is the spelling of 'prau' and 'perahu'—both meaning 'boat' in Yolngu-Matha and Bahasa Indonesia/Melayu respectively. Scholars have identified over 200 words that appear in both Yolngu-Matha and Austronesian languages such as Malay and Indonesian²—below are just a few more examples:

Yolngu-Matha	Indonesian/Malay	English
gapala	kapal	ship
baju	baju	shirt
ringgi	ringgit	money
racun	racun	poison
bandira	bandera	flag

For me, it is these similarities yet localisms which make language—especially amongst non-English speakers—a powerful tool. With English being the *lingua franca* of today, the ability to understand and converse in a traditional language or vernacular signifies an individual's and a community's place in the globalised world. The objects from Yirrkala such as the *Wuramu* sculpture of a *Balanda* and the bark painting of a Macassan *prau* are manifestations of a strong Yolngu local culture positioned within a context of cross-cultural exchange. The cultural nuances embedded in language made me interested in the process of this exchange—Why those particular words? At what point did a word become distinctively 'local'? How has this exchange influenced other aspects of social life, in regard to both the Yolngu and the Macassans?

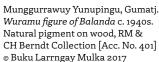
Such questions led me to consider my background and experiences in navigating my own cultural heritage. Growing up in Singapore, bilingualism is a given and most of the population are able to speak and understand at least two languages. Having my 'mother-tongue' (Malay) as a compulsory subject throughout school alongside English is something that I now realise I took for granted. It was only after coming to Australia that I became aware of the importance of language to identity and place.

The loss of many traditional languages—Australian Aboriginal languages are particular examples—also signifies the potential of losing valuable cultural knowledge, memory, practice and place-making. I think the point here is to recognise the far-reaching influences of cross-cultural contact, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, while at the same time allowing for communities and societies to be able to claim rightful ownership of their own identities. This is especially relevant now when linguistic materials are being used in Native Title claims and disputes. When I was able to recognised Indonesian/Malay words in the Yolngu-Matha language, my interactions with the Yirrkala works were transformed—not at the level of being part of the community or the culture, as I do not share the lived experiences of the Yolngu people. However, there was definitely an awareness of shared words and

Mundukul Marawili, Madarrpa. *Macassan Prau* c. 1940s. Natural pigment on bark, RM & CH Berndt Collection [Acc. No. 1005] © Buku Larrngay Mulka 2017









Munggurrawuy Yunupingu, Gumatj. Wuramu figure of Balanda c. 1940s.
Natural pigment on wood, RM & CH
Berndt Collection [Acc. No. 402]

© Buku Larrngay Mulka 2017

meanings that enhanced my understanding and appreciation. Language is such a vital part of place-making and knowledge transference, whether it is within a local or cross-cultural context. It also should be seen as a way of breaking down—rather than creating—social barriers. I think that to be able to say, 'I understand what you are saying', even if it is just certain words and phrases, does a lot to build cross-cultural relationships and ties. A truly globalised world is one that celebrates the similarities brought about by mutual exchange and contact while acknowledging the localised distinctions that give each culture strength and identity.

Notes

- 1 The Ronald M. Berndt Collection of Crayon Drawings on Brown Paper from Yirrkala, Northern Territory, was included on the UNESCO's International Asia-Pacific and Australian Memory of the World Register in 2006.
- 2 Walker, A., and R. D. Zorc. 'Austronesian Loanwords in Yolngu-Matha of Northeast Arnhem Land' in *Aboriginal History*, vol. 5, no. 1–2, 1981, pp. 109–134. [http://pressfiles.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p71311/pdf/articleo71.pdf].

The Sea Agustinus Wibowo

Agustinus Wibowo is an Indonesian travel writer, whose travel experiences have taken him across Asia. Currently he is researching on identities and border issues in the Malay Archipelago.

The first time I saw the sea, I was five. My father took me to see the Indian Ocean. We lived in a small town near the southern coast of Java, so we refer to the ocean as the 'South Sea'. The furious sea under the dusky and misty dawn emanated a mysterious, yet intense, energy, which triggered an unprecedented sensation inside me, that I was very, very tiny and powerless before the nature.

With his hand around mine, my father told me the story of the Queen of the South Sea. The beautiful goddess, always wrapped in a green dress, is a mighty spirit residing at the bottom of the sea: the one who makes this sacred sea so perilous; the one who so often takes lives. And so, fishermen, sailors, swimmers, even visitors who merely put their feet on the beach sand are carried away by underwater currents, transported to her palace at the bottom of the sea.

Listening to this, I shivered. I held Father's hand tighter.

Father laughed, called me a coward.

The mystical beliefs of Java somehow had become an essential part of my soul, even though my ancestors were not natives of this land. Both of my grandfathers and two of my great-grandfathers were born in southern China. They sailed across the sea in the twentieth century, landed in Java and settled in this southern-coast backwater town of Lumajang, which was known to the Chinese as Nanhaizhang, the 'South Sea Current'.

For the Chinese in China, Java was simply a faraway land at the end of the world, mysterious and dangerous. Parents back there in China would use Java to frighten their naughty children: If you aren't obedient, I'll throw you to the Java land! But for those of us who were born here and living here, Java was our homeland. A heavenly one, as the Javanese usually say about this land: it's so fertile that a stick or a rock thrown on the ground would grow into a plant; and the sea was a pond of milk, where fish and shrimps would come to you by themselves.

But those gods and all the magical spirits of Java that guard the jungles, seas, and mountains had to be kept happy, so that they would keep blessing our land. That's why, every Thursday night, my mother would make an offering, consisting of three-coloured flowers placed on a banana leaf, and place it in a corner of our shop. Without the offerings, as we believed, those mighty beings would be angered and curse us with disasters: the volcanos would erupt and the South Sea would claim more victims.

There was Java in our blood. We breathed Javanese air, ate Javanese rice, consumed Javanese herbal medicines, participated in traditional Javanese rituals respecting the Javanese mighty spirits. We talked and thought and dreamed in Javanese. But, no matter what, we could never become Javanese.

I grew up in the 1980s, in Suharto's Indonesia, when the suspicion and hatred toward the Chinese was hard to miss. My slanted eyes and yellow skin were easy targets for bullying by the Javanese kids on the streets. 'Cina! Slanty-eyed chinky, just go back to your country!' My father was right: I was a coward. Those bullies made me afraid to leave my house. If I had to, I would have one of my Javanese maids take me on a bicycle. I always walked with my head bowed, as I was afraid that my slanted eyes would be seen by people.

The anti-Chinese sentiment was related to the political turmoil after the 30th of September, 1965, as several high-ranking army generals were murdered in Jakarta by mysterious groups of people. The incident was mentioned in our history books as an attempted coup d'état plotted by the communists. After this bloody episode, in 1966, our first president, Sukarno, stepped down, replaced by Suharto. Among Suharto's first actions was to ban and dissolve the Indonesian Communist Party. All diplomatic ties with China were also severed, as the Red State was alleged of secretly supporting the Indonesian communists. Communism was officially declared as the greatest enemy of the nation, and, therefore, Suharto banned anything related to communism, which for him included anything related to China: Chinese language, Chinese names, Chinese culture, Chinese religion.

The Chinese living in Indonesia were supposed to wipe their memory of their ancestral homeland and traditions, in order to become fully Indonesian. In those days, if you were denounced as 'un-nationalistic', it was just as sinister as being accused of being 'communist' or 'atheist'. When I was in high school, my moral education teacher taught us on the subject of nationalism, and asked me in an intimidating tone, 'Which do

you love most, Indonesia or China?' The question was directed only at me. My teacher then announced my new label to the class, a 'foreigner', leading to laughter and mockery from the entire classroom, ninety per cent of whom were Javanese.

At school, we learned that our state ideology, Pancasila, is 'mighty', and under any circumstances would be able to destroy all of our enemies, especially the communists. Pancasila is 'mighty', not unlike those invincible Javanese gods and spirits. On the 30th of September every year, our national television would broadcast a propaganda film depicting how the communists slaughtered our generals—our beloved 'Revolutionary Heroes'. I will never forget one particular scene of the film, in which the communist women sing joyously, hand in hand, forming a circle in the middle of the night, after they shamelessly marred the faces of the generals with small knives. The next day, October 1st, the whole country would commemorate the Day of the Mightiness of Pancasila.

That year, our high school held a writing competition to glorify the invincible Pancasila. I wrote a long article on the savage behaviour of the communists, on the miraculous power of Pancasila, and how fortunate we were to have a great hero like Suharto. I genuinely believed that Suharto was as 'mighty' as our Pancasila. My article won the first prize. It was my first award in my writing career. Overwhelmed with pride, I brought home a tall and glittering golden trophy. I was excited to tell my parents about my great accomplishment.

But my father wept. My strong father, who I had never ever seen crying, was crying his heart out.

Over the next few nights, my father revealed his life secrets. In his bedroom that was locked from inside, he recounted the stories in an almost inaudible whispering, as if he worried that the walls might have ears:

Your history books are full of lies. After Suharto replaced Sukarno, Suharto immediately isolated Sukarno in a house arrest in Jakarta until Sukarno died of a terrible and humiliating fate. Now, you say, who is plotting coup against whom? Suharto declared that the communists were rebels, traitors, who must be eradicated. All those who had sympathised with the communist organisations must be killed without exception. Hundreds of thousands, some say even more than a million, were killed without trials, until the rivers turned red with blood and its foetid scent filled the air. Thousands of Chinese were among the victims. I saw a man who laughed with pride as he flaunted the severed ear of a 'godless communist' whose body he had maimed in cold blood, believing that he had done his nation and religion a great service. This was the biggest

massacre in our history, reported by the American *TIME Magazine* as 'the West's best news for years in Asia'.

One year after he took the power, Suharto planned on implementing the regulation that prohibited the Chinese from doing business in provincial towns and villages. All properties belonging to these 'foreign' individuals also had to be confiscated by the State, later to be distributed to the natives. This programme was first trialled in our province of East Java, or, to be more precise, in our hometown of Lumajang.

The heat was scorching that day. I was with thirty-or-so Chinese youths; we stood guarding the home of a fellow Chinese, about to be executed by the government. 'This is our home, this is our land. Don't take what is rightfully ours!' we shouted. Suddenly, from all around us, appeared dozens of rough-looking men wielding sickles, cleavers, and limestone rocks. They shouted back, 'Where is your home? Where is your land? Go back to where you came from!'

Police arrived, throwing all of us into a small prison cell. This enraged Peking, which raised a strong protest against Jakarta. Radio Peking was fierce in their broadcasting: 'The Indonesian Military is the puppet of the imperialist America...' After a week had passed, some of us were released. Radio Peking praised our struggle. 'O youths of the South Sea Current who fought to defend your rights, you are the role models!'

But I was still kept behind bars, along with two other men. We were locked up in a special prison cell, as we were regarded the most revolutionary of the protesters. 'You're communist! Admit it!' Their beatings inflicted upon my back left a stinging, gaping wound, which they then poured salt and vinegar into.

I was released after three hundred and fifty-five days in jail.

The praise from Radio Peking was like oil fuelling our revolutionary flame. We became more devoted in studying every word and thought of Chairman Mao. One day, Chairman Mao's message was broadcasted through the radio. 'O knowledgeable youths, you must go up to the mountains and down to the villages, learn from the poor farmers and peasants!' The message was well received by us here. We indeed went down to the villages, and arrived in remote villages on the coast of the South Sea. And what we saw there? The Chinese there were much smaller in number, powerless, so they just helplessly watched their homes and shops being looted and burned before their very eyes. Many of them were also slaughtered with no resistance.

Chairman Mao also reminded us to 'serve the people with heart and soul'. We, the Chinese revolutionary youths of Lumajang, received our call by going to sell goods in those remote villages. The Javanese villagers

in fact welcomed us warmly, as the villages were desperately running out of supplies of food and daily needs after the Chinese shops had been forced to close. We pooled what meagre profits we managed to make from the business to support our Chinese compatriots living in misery in the villages. After all this turmoil was over, we used the rest of the money to buy gold; we got four hundred grams with that money. This was our common emergency fund, for all of the Chinese community in this town, to prepare, just in case. Who knows, the slaughtering of the Chinese might be repeated again in this country.

• • •

In 1995, our nation had just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of our independence from colonialism. It was venerated as 'The Year of Golden Indonesia'. Yet, soon after the nationwide festive celebrations, we entered the 'years of living dangerously'. Riots began to spread all over the country. In one city, a Chinese reportedly tore the pages of the Holy Quran, causing Muslim mobs to retaliate by burning every Chinese-owned shop in town. In another city, a Chinese protested as his sleep was disturbed by early morning drumbeating during the holy fasting month of Ramadan, causing the masses to destroy all houses and shops of the Chinese, as well as factories, banks, churches, temples.

Our national television continued to air a public message from the government, showing a helpless traditional sailboat being rocked by rolling waves in the middle of a dark, stormy sea, as flashes of light raked across the sky. Then appeared the image of our president Suharto on the screen with his familiar stretch of smile, as the narrator said in a calm, deep voice: 'The storm certainly will pass, you just need to trust your captain.'

Those days, all media were the mouthpieces of the government. We never heard anything about brutal massacres that happened in Aceh, West Papua, East Timor. We had never been aware of the massive corruption of the Suharto family, so that the *Forbes* magazine had crowned our president as the sixth-richest man on the planet, while the great majority of his people were living on less than two dollars a day. Most people wouldn't dare to openly criticise Suharto or his government, if they didn't want to suddenly disappear, as if vaporised.

As the South-East Asian financial crisis swept Indonesia in 1997, prices rose to exorbitant levels as basic commodities became scarce; people got hungrier and angrier. Demonstrations, something we had never seen before under the authoritarian regime, suddenly sprang up everywhere. People shouted louder, as now they had got all the guts, to urge Suharto

to step down from his apparently eternal throne. People were protesting against the government, yet it was the Chinese's shops, houses, churches and temples that they burned to the ground.

Being Chinese in Suharto's Indonesia was in fact being a second-class citizen. The identity card of an ethnic-Chinese citizen would be marked with a special code, which would add complications for the holder when dealing with the government's draconian bureaucracy. It was also harder for the Chinese to get enrolled in public schools, to be a civil servant, or to be involved in politics. Their scope of activities was more or less limited to one sector only: business and commerce; and thus, it was not surprising that the ethnic-Chinese on average became richer economically than the majority of the native population. With no political power, money had become their last source of security.

But the more you have, the more you feel insecure. The rich Chinese would generally live in exclusive residential complexes, with their palacelike houses being fortified with high and solid walls, as if to protect them from the indigenous sea of poverty surrounding them. Also, for the sake of feeling secure, some of them would prefer to mingle with only the members of the same ethnicity, and thus, they would reinforce their prejudice that the natives were lazy, poor, backward, dangerous. On the other hand, the native population was increasingly convinced that the Chinese were an arrogant and exclusive people, who only mind their own business, only think to enrich themselves, reluctant to blend in with the locals, and reluctant to share their wealth—in short, 'un-nationalistic'.

Those years, the regime's propaganda was intense, claiming that 'the Chinese only make up two per cent of our country population but control ninety per cent of our national economy! The poor, angry, and ignorant masses simply regarded the Chinese as 'foreigners' who had robbed the country and caused all their miseries; while they saw themselves as a wounded nation ironically being colonised in their own land of fertility and abundance.

Overwhelmed by fear, tens of thousands of Chinese fled overseas. The exodus invited more condemnation. See how they treat our country, no more than a hotel that they can check in and out of as they please! See that they're never willing to suffer with the rest of the nation! But does being 'nationalistic' mean you should foolishly wait to be burned inside your homes? The majority of the Chinese, in fact, were like our family, who had nowhere to go, no passport, and no money. Eventually, the four of us slept on the same bed with all the lights on, with a hoe, a sickle, and a crowbar already prepared under the bed. My father also had painted a sign in front of our shophouse, in big capital letters: 'BELONGS TO NATIVES'.

In 1998, the Indonesian currency depreciated 750 per cent in less than six months. Ten thousand students held a massive demonstration in Jakarta, outside the university gates, and suddenly the security officers started shooting into the crowds, killing four students. Right after the incident, mass riots turned into a massive rampage with a clear target: the Chinese. They were checked on the streets, robbed, beaten, stripped naked, burned, killed, and some women were raped. Thousands of people ran amok, looting private houses, offices, shops, and malls. Among the mobs there were those who had special abilities of throwing Molotov cocktails and of provoking the masses by yelling something like, 'Attack! That mall is owned by Chinese!' Amidst this mass destruction, men laughed insanely, attacking and burning and looting anything they encountered, spewing revenge and hatred, as if the pangs of poverty they had been suffering would be compensated by their destruction of the city and its symbols of wealth and modernity.

The aftermath of the Jakarta riots was 5,723 buildings and 1,948 vehicles destroyed, 1,109 people killed due to fire incidents and twenty-seven were shot dead. The numbers of Chinese killed by the mobs and of the Chinese women raped remain unknown to this day.

Right after the race riots, the level of savagery of which shocked the world and severely damaged Indonesia's reputation, Suharto finally declared to end his thirty-two years of rule. Indonesia abruptly entered a new chapter of democracy. You were now free to speak out, free to express yourself, free to be yourself. It was a wild euphoria after being so long silenced by the regime.

Being Chinese is no longer a sin. One by one, discriminatory regulations against the Chinese were abolished. Once forbidden, the Chinese language is now taught in schools. The Chinese Confucianism was declared as one of the state-recognised religions. The Chinese New Year is now a national holiday. The most obvious change for me was that I no longer needed to hide my yellow skin and my slanted eyes, as no more people yell 'Cina!' on the streets.

My father decided to send me to study at a university in China. He is a typical Chinese man, an ordinary egg seller in this little town. I never imagined that he had actually saved up so that I could study abroad. And why China? He put his great expectations on my shoulder, that I could continue our broken-off ancestral identity after three decades of the anti-Chinese regime.

But it was in China where I realised for the first time that I did not belong to China. Their culture, their mind, their history, their pride, turned

out to be very different from ours. The Chinese blood in me had not so much meaning either: with the Indonesian passport I had, I was treated simply as a foreigner, who had to go through the same visa procedures and subjected to the same restrictions as those who came from Africa or America. In the land where I was born, I was a foreigner; and in the land of my ancestors, I was still a foreigner.

Nine years I lived in China. I ended up returning home to Indonesia, back to my hometown on the coast of the South Sea.

I found that my father now was a fragile old man lying in bed, fighting against the stroke that had paralysed his body in the last few years. He loved China so much, but he had never been to China. I thought it was the time to show my devotion as a son, so I said, 'Father, get well soon. I'll take you to fulfil your life-long dream. To return to your Homeland.'

He shook his head. 'No, that's not it,' he said. 'That's not returning to Homeland. That's just *going to China*. Our Homeland is here.'

I could hardly believe what I was hearing.

'My son,' he said softly, 'do you remember when we saw the sea for the first time?'

I nodded.

'The sea,' he said, 'when you look at it from the shore, all you see is the oncoming storm and vicious waves, perhaps even a tsunami. But when you look at it from above, the sea is boundlessly peaceful.'

All those waves and storms, he explained, have to exist, to keep the much greater balance of nature. The same with the turmoil and bloodsheds, they were phases that we had to go through. They were our revolutions, without which, our lives perhaps would never have changed.

My China turned out to be different from his China. My China is about being a minority and about a perfect fantasy of the ancestral land. When I was in Indonesia, my being a minority made me long for China; but when I was in China, my fantasy of a flawless China made me reject the real China. His China was about acceptance of his own reality, about his reconciliation of seemingly conflicting identities. Indonesia had accepted his being Chinese, and he had accepted Indonesia as his home.

The sea is nowhere but in your heart. I was a small fish searching for the sea, but failed to find it. I kept rejecting all seas around me, which I only saw as water. He was the old man who had united with his sea.

An earlier version of this work was published online as part of a series with the Centre for Stories, Perth.

The Dictation Test: ISampurna Chattarji

Sampurna Chattarji is a poet, novelist, translator and children's author. Her fourteen published works include five poetry titles, two novels and a short story collection about Bombay/Mumbai, Dirty Love (Penguin, 2013). Her most recent books are her translation of Jov Goswami's Selected Poems (Harper Perennial, 2014) and her book-length sequence of poems, Space Gulliver: Chronicles of an Alien (HarperCollins, 2015). She is currently Poetry Editor of The Indian Quarterly. http://sampurnachattarji. wordpress.com/

'In the face of international criticism, officials looked for a way **to exclude** people without making it seem due **to race**. The answer was the notorious Dictation Test. Immigrants could be required **to pass** a language test in any European language. If they failed, they were refused entry. Maltese applicants were given a test in Dutch. A political activist who spoke several European languages eventually failed when he was tested in Gaelic. This technique continued **to be used** by Customs until 1958.'

I take down the words from the photo I took as a note to myself. I take down the words like washing still damp from the line.

I put down the words by hand in a notebook, made of paper.
I put down the words like a burden suddenly heavy.
I put down the words the way I might a dog on the verge of dying.

I put up the words on my blank white screen.
I put up the words with four invisible thumb tacks.
I put up with the words, as they are.
I put up no resistance.

60 | Westerly 62.2 61 | Sampurna Chattarji

I take out the words I cannot bear.

[Exclude. Notorious. Immigrants.]

I take out the words like garbage. I put out the words like a light.

I output the words the way they were meant

['Exclude Notorious Immigrants']

I put off the words like a moment I dare not face

refused

failed

tested

I put off the words like a chore.

I put on the words that suit me. I take on the words that don't.

I take off the words that clothe me in their stink.

I put in the bold italics where there were none.

I take in the border of that fragment and hem it with my own.

I take back the words that hurt.

I take up the words like a cause worth fighting for.

I take up the words where last I left them waiting.

to exclude

to race

to pass

to be used

I take *to* to its unbearable heightening

I put **to** and **to** together.

I fail.

Words fail me.

2 sunken islands.3 kinds of rock.Sampurna Chattarji

2 large sunken islands were discovered in November 2011 off the west coast of Perth, Australia about 1.6 kms underwater in the Indian Ocean. Believed to be micro-continents that were part of Gondwanaland before it began separating 130 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. The material dredged up consisted of granite, gneiss and sandstone.

First, the plutonic rock. Plutonic, so pleasingly close to platonic. An intrusive rock, which bothers me, though all it means is that which never reached the surface. The opposite of extrusion. I replace intrusive with inclusive, and remember I grew up on a volcanic extrusion in the Himalayas. This will be my corner stone. My dimension stone. The granite grain visible, the borders hard enough strong enough inert enough.

Then, gneiss. The metamorphic rock. Gneiss, so pleasingly nice as it matches meaning and sound so perfectly. Formed by metamorphosis, defined by appearance and texture, rather than ingredient.

Foliated like leaf rock. Schist like schism rock. This will be my key stone. My crushed stone. Layer by layer, the interlocked rock of my world.

62 | Westerly 62.2 63 | Sampurna Chattarji

Last, sandstone. The sedimentary rock. Sedentary rock. Matrix of sand-sized-particles transported-by-windwater-and-ice rock. Roc as in bird. Egg. The greater the distance from the source rock the greater the change in composition. This will be my lode stone. Attracting strongly exactly what I need to construct forever.

The material dredged up: memories maps and nomenclature
The foliated rock: layer by

layer my days spent not understanding my lines crushed by seeing into words

The two large sunken islands: below

The Home of Lost Angels Mohammed Massoud Morsi

Mohammed Massoud Morsi is an Egyptian-Danish-Australian photographer, journalist and writer. His articles and writing have been published internationally and now in Australia. He writes in the three languages of his heritage. His latest works include the novellas Twenty Two Years To Life (2017) and What Is Past Is Dead (2016).

I remember there was a backdrop of colossal nimbus clouds. They were painted in the shifting colours of the disappearing sun. Lightning bolts silently discharged themselves through their mass and in the narrow gap separating them from the ocean, threads of light crossed in a stitching pattern. A faint rumble hummed across a mirror-calm sea as her fingers caressed the palm of my hand. With every flash she would gently move them, barely touching my skin. Heavy raindrops fell in slow motion. I felt her breath on my face as she turned towards me. A series of bright flashes lit the sky like a strobe light. Her irises were round and large and black. Strands of her hair tickled my face. We stared into each other. Closer again. Between every flash there was only our breath, the drumming of scattered drops and an increasingly loud rumble. We became so close we were breathing each other. Another bright flash. Close enough to make us both twitch. Our lips touched, just. As the giant cloud fed on hot moisture, it freed a windshear of cold air which swept across the ocean and up the mountainside to reach us. We nudged closer. Our lips touched again and stayed touching. The drumming intensified. And in the flash that followed our eyes were one. Her fingers stopped moving in my palm.

'The home of lost angels is the sea.'

The words etched themselves into my heart. We were at the lookout near Lho-Nga when she spoke them. That night was also the first time we kissed.

It was the beginning of 2002. I had found myself in Lhoknga, at the northernmost tip of the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. I had caught local transport all the way from Padang and it had taken me over a week to reach Aceh, less than a thousand kilometres further north. To my young self, local transport was adventurous. But, keen to escape the torment of endless hours in crammed and noisy minibuses, I got off about twenty kilometres from the city of Banda Aceh. I revived myself with a Padang meal at a large-selection *Rumah Makan* and went to look for another *Angkot* (the Indonesian minibus) to reach Banda Aceh before dark.

The first time I saw Ahmed, he stood next to his Angkot with his hands clasped in front. He wasn't hurrying to attract passengers like other drivers around him. As a nearby market was closing, people rushed to the minibuses that filled up quickly. But somehow no one approached him. He was a short man but had the posture of a giant with wide hunched shoulders and a stout physique. He was clean-shaven and his impressively clean white shirt was buttoned all the way up. Slacks and enclosed leather sandals with a classic cross-pattern covered his feet. I watched him for a little while before walking up and greeting him with 'Asalaamu aleikum', Peace be upon you. His smiled curiously.

'Are you Muslim?'

I might as well have been a strangled fish in the water, the one who survived with an obstinate limpet on its fin.

'Yes.'

I'm sure I asked Ahmed correctly in Bahasa but as I sat, a lonely passenger in the back I felt I wasn't heading the right way. I didn't suspect anything sinister. Ahmed radiated integrity. No explanation, he just did. As the day began to fade, the Indian Ocean came into view. He had only driven a few minutes through narrow alleyways with tin style shops and homes on stilts as I saw the first waves break. Where were we going?

'Kemana?'

'Kemana mana. Allah tahu.'

In all directions, *everywhere*. *Allah knows*. Ahmed looked into the rear-view mirror with a smile on his face. I didn't ask again. He took me to where I felt he would take me, his home. I was a Muslim traveller from Egypt, *Mesir* in Bahasa. Misr in Arabic.

I stepped out. Before asking me to follow him, Ahmed squeezed my biceps and said: 'Behaya! Aceh Malaria.' *Danger!* I was only wearing a khaki tank top. It was his way of telling me I was dressed inappropriately.

Ahmed's home was large, two storeys on thick hardwood stilts. There was a large, separate single-storey guesthouse, also on stilts. We were only a couple of hundred metres from the shore. Ahmed asked me to wait as we stood at the bottom of the small staircase leading up to the house. He stepped calmly up to the front door and knocked. The whole time I knew Ahmed, I never saw him rush. His wife Sarah opened, threw a glance

my way and let him in. The door was closed again and he disappeared for a while. Travelling in the humid heat, the straps of my backpack had gnawed through the skin on my shoulders. I took the bag off and sat down on the steps. Mosquitoes swarmed and judging by the subsequent itch, a few had their feed for the night. Ahmed's warning passed through my mind but before I could do anything about it, he opened the door, sat beside me and presented me with a cotton shirt. It was plain and grey and about two sizes too small. I buttoned up and followed Ahmed as he opened his home to me.

At the time I was in Sumatra, the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) were in a calm. Peace talks were imminent and the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998 promised hope for an end to a brutal war. Travelling from Padang in the back of beaten-up Angkots, the excitement in people's voices was clear. I felt an anxious slithering down my spine as Islamic Sharia law, freshly announced as official policy, was hailed as a symbol of independence and freedom. But some expressed their fears to me in whispers: There will be no freedom. We will do to ourselves exactly what has been done to us.

Not once did Ahmed ask me why I was in Aceh. Neither did he nor anyone else in his family ask me when I might leave them. During my first supper with the family, I asked what his job was. He looked calmly at me.

'I drive an Angkot.' We ate with our right hand. He was about to scoop up another mouthful when he stopped and turned his head back to me. 'And what is your job, Mr Mohammed?'

I looked at him and said: 'I am a student.'

Ahmed's tongue moved around his mouth, clearing it to talk as he gave me a questioning look. He turned his glance to the food in front of us, looking for what to combine next.

'We will get along very well then, Mr Mohammed.'

His wife Sarah carried a radiant smile. She was a kind woman to her family and a skilled seamstress. Her only two words in English were yes and no. Most of our conversations were bound in smiles and simple sentences in Bahasa. I helped her with her small business, carried heavy rolls of fabric and watched her sew colourful pieces of clothing for weddings and ceremonies. Ahmed's three sons, Mohammed, Hassan and Ibrahim, were handsome young men like their father and well-mannered. Mohammed, the youngest, was seventeen, Ibrahim twenty-one and Hassan in between. They spoke a bit of English and were thrilled to practise it with me. In addition, my speaking Arabic was a treasure to them. Although I had to be excused for struggling to decipher the old scripts of the Quran, I became the unofficial translator and teacher of the

family. I was handed newspaper clippings, poetry, memes and stories and taught the three brothers the Arabic letters.

Nur was Ahmed's only daughter, the eldest of his children and my peer at the age of twenty-five. Nur had no resemblance to her parents. She was the only one who was slim, bereft of any of the robust features of her family. She had beautifully drawn lips and a smile that drew an aura of light around her face. Nur was as tall or short as the rest of the family and when they lined up for a photograph, it was almost a straight line across the top of their heads. Ahmed gave her the duty of being my interpreter. She taught me a lot. She was smart, fierce and independent. At times, I sensed, more than Ahmed would have liked. It didn't take long before we discovered our mutual interest in philosophy. We debated existentialism passionately when on our own. We stirred among students at the local mosque, challenging Al-Ghazali and his epochal suppression of science within Islam. Sartre was our favourite with Ahmed and we often left him speechless. It didn't take long before we discovered we were both young rebels. It didn't take long before we found our conversations stalled in steaming attraction. And it didn't take long before we realised we were playing with fire.

I became a teacher while also a student. I was given a small but comfy room in the guesthouse. It even had a tiny desk where I could write. The only thing I knew I had to do was attend Friday prayers at the mosque, although no one ever forced me. And so the year of 2002 became the first and only year where I regularly prayed. I enjoyed my time of meditation as I found peace in the time I devoted to Allah. I didn't go to the sermon. In mosques, in churches, somehow they always appear as theatre to me. A mockery in which we assume centre stage, while really we are minutiae in a vast arena more profound than our imagined self-importance could ever be.

I had come illegally into Indonesia, jumped on a fishing boat from Batam near Singapore and landed in Sumatra. If it hadn't been for Ahmed, I would have had to leave in a similar way. Ahmed knew that. One morning, he came and asked for my passport. I gave it to him without asking questions and he returned it later in the afternoon, stamped. He didn't speak a single word about it. Not once in my life had I come across the kindness and generosity Ahmed bestowed. I could have left after that. Ahmed would have taken me to Aceh where I could have booked a ticket and flown out of Indonesia. He wanted me to know that. But I didn't want to leave. He had already looked after me like family when I caught malaria. He saw the signs before I even knew myself and gave me Fansidar before calmly driving me to Banda Aceh, where I was admitted to the best clinic there.

The whole family knew Nur and I were attracted to each other. I was worried it might pose a problem for Ahmed but although he was a strict believer, he never imposed his views on anyone. I admired his courage. Contrary to most other women her age in Aceh, Nur didn't cover her hair. She wore jeans and sneakers and short-sleeved shirts. Nur told me that her father was the noblest man I would ever meet in my life. She also told me that once Sharia law was enforced, she would also have to cover her hair, and he would no longer be able to stand up for her as he so often did. Her voice trembled slightly.

'When we free ourselves to do what we want, we also trap ourselves in believing we know what we want.'

It wasn't until the night that Nur came and dragged me out of bed that I found out what I had long suspected. In the final hour of the tropical darkness, she took me by my hand and led me to where Ahmed's Angkot was parked. She opened the back doors and we got in and sat opposite each other. She didn't say a word. I was too tired to ask questions. The front door of the house opened and Ahmed appeared. He got into the driver's seat, put the keys in the ignition and turned his head around.

'Pagi.' *Good morning*. He looked at us, stretched his lips in a contented smile and started the engine.

We drove towards the mountains. I recognised small, dimly-lit light bulbs from the sellers at the side of the road. Ahmed glanced at us separately as we passed the turn-off to the lookout. The Angkot struggled up the hill, more than usual I thought to myself. We climbed for a fair while. The Indian Ocean became visible in a gradient of orange to black as the Earth turned and dawn arrived. Eventually the road narrowed, the bitumen ran out and turned into a strip of mire that barely fitted the narrow vehicle. Branches embraced us and screeched tooth-wrenching sounds as we drove through the thicket. Ahmed finally stopped. He rolled down the front windows and we pulled open the sliding ones in the back. It was dreadfully hot and humid. The engine ran as he doused the headlights. We sat there. Not a word was spoken. I looked at Nur, looked at Ahmed. They both looked out the windshield. I wanted to speak, to ask a question but I sensed I was being told something and I was about to find out. We were surrounded by jungle. One of the bushes in front of the Angkot began to move. Then another. They were people, camouflaged. I swallowed as I began to piece moments and incidents together. I looked at Nur. She turned to me and we stared each other in the eves. She smiled carefully.

In that very moment, I knew that Ahmed knew. As I looked in the rearview mirror, I saw him glance at me and he knew that at that moment I knew that he knew. That Nur and I had been intimate. That our attraction

for each other had developed into a physical relationship. There were no secrets in Ahmed's family. I already knew that.

'Be honest. That way you know who you are and what the world is.'

Ahmed had said those words to me, the day Nur and I had declared our love for each other. He had found me sitting in a warm, calming bath of tropical rain on the steps of the guesthouse. My heart raced. Tantalising as love can be to the soul, it's also defining for the mind. It's where one truly flies from the nest and begins to give what one hopefully received abundantly as a child. Images of my mother sitting by my bed as a child came surging in. I opened my eyes in the middle of the night and there she was, putting cold bandages on my forehead. I know those images appeared because there is a dichotomy to love. On one hand, it sets you free to become a whole person; on the other hand, it creates a conscience that you cannot escape from. I explored the world, myself, the love within me.

The bushes in front of the Angkot were women. Each held a Kalashnikov. They looked at me and back at Ahmed. He nodded. A barrier hidden behind the growth was lowered and the narrow strip continued. We drove for a couple of minutes and arrived at a tiny clearing. There were roughly a dozen women in camouflage. Again, each with a rifle in her hand. Ahmed spun around and stopped. Nur left me and went to greet some of the women. Ahmed put his hand on my shoulder and moved me gently to the side.

'Tolong bantu aku.' Help me please.

He removed the nuts holding the seat covers and lifted off the covers one by one. He handed them to me and I put them on the roof. Then he handed me the first rifle. I took it. I looked at it. It was brand new. I kept holding it. I didn't move. Sweat ran down my entire body. Ahmed didn't speak. A woman behind me tapped me on the shoulder. I almost jumped and a giggle spread. I turned around and handed her the rifle. Then I turned to Ahmed again. He looked at me, waiting for me to take the next rifle off his hands. We emptied the Angkot.

Ahmed put the seat covers back on and returned to the driver's seat. I sat beside him as he pointed me to the passenger seat. Nur came and greeted her father farewell. Then she looked at me and smiled. It was a smile of love. She tapped the side of the minibus as we drove off. On the way down, Ahmed took me to the lookout. With a concoction of Bahasa and his best English, Ahmed told me he knew how much Nur loved me. He said I was welcome in his family. He also sighed and said I was a rebellious young man. And young men need a purpose in life and often loving a woman comes in the way of this purpose. Ahmed sighed once more and asked for forgiveness from Allah. I saw he was torn. Nur and I had done

the forbidden. If anyone outside the family found out, the consequences for us could be fatal. Ahmed was a believer but he also believed that true belief in Islam could only come from the heart and never be forced. And that is where our friendship bonded. If I wanted to stay, I had to do the right thing. I had to marry Nur. And If I wanted Nur, I had to know that Nur was a fighter. When Ahmed drove his Angkot, he took weapons and supplies hidden in mosques to fighters in hiding. When Nur went to visit her friends, she went to train for combat. For her freedom. And if I stayed, I had to accept that freedom came with a price.

It was the only time I saw Ahmed shed a tear. I felt an overwhelming sense of respect for his almost angelic calmness. In that moment, as we sat there, the questions flew through my mind. Various pieces fell into place and I suddenly felt my hair rise.

'Nur is *not* your daughter!'

Ahmed looked me in the eyes.

'If you ask me is she my daughter, I say yes. If you ask me if Allah gave her to me, I say no.'

Nur had lost her entire family at the age of fifteen. Her father and two brothers had been tortured, and her mother and Nur's best friend, who they mistook for Nur, had been raped repeatedly. The Indonesian Army was known for its savage ways during the rule of Suharto. In the end, the soldiers tore off all their captives' clothes and forced them into the chicken pen where they executed them at gunpoint. They were then gutted. Nur returned home and found her family naked in a pile of blood and intestines with the chickens fighting over the best pieces.

Nur collapsed in shock and woke up two days later with Ahmed and Sarah sitting next to her. Ahmed and her father had been best friends since childhood. Through personal connections, Ahmed had her surname changed and she became his daughter in every sense of the word.

When Nur returned from her training, she told me everything. She vomited, she cried and she screamed.

'Lose what you are afraid of losing, so you stop being afraid.'

Nur told me her story with a whole heart. She had no fear as she spoke. What I had contemplated through my own experience was challenged.

In the days that followed, I alternated between hiding in my guesthouse and walking on the beach with Nur. There was silence between us. We spoke our thoughts within ourselves and when we made love it was silent and intimate, as if in an emergency two souls were morphing.

Nur began covering her hair in public with a stylish *hijab*, the Islamic scarf. I missed her long black hair and the independence it displayed. Sharia police began turning up at markets, beaches, town squares. They'd

approach young people carefully and ask them to go home and change their jeans or get a better-covering hijab. They would ask young women who looked suspiciously unrelated to their motorcycle driver to get off and take public transport instead of having their arms around his waist. From the time I had arrived until the last week of that year, it was pretty much a matter of excusing one's self for 'forgetting', and moving on with a promise to not repeat the 'offence'. At the beginning of 2013, the adoption of the law that sought to build a 'heaven on earth' became evident. Just smiling to those installed with this new power no longer worked. Nur and I could no longer hold hands on the beach. We could not ride up to the lookout together, and when we did, we took separate bikes. There was a sudden change in the way female guerrillas were viewed. The central government in Indonesia was warming up to the Aceh governor to avoid losing natural gas revenues. Sharia law was part of the autonomy package. Nur's unit was secretly dismantled.

The oppressive Suharto regime, which had used barbarous methods to enforce its version of the truth, had perished. Paradoxically, a regime which had fought for freedom began to use the same methods to cement its version of the truth. As friends gathered on the doorsteps of Nur's home discussing rights of women in religion, I witnessed the first steps of the new struggle for freedom.

The freedom Nur and I had enjoyed was dead.

The day before I left Aceh in early 2003, Nur and I met in the dark at the Lho-Nga lookout. I couldn't see her nor her motorcycle. Although doubtful any police would patrol at that time, Nur hid herself. I sat down on the far end of the giant tree which had been carved to serve as a bench. I waited. Nur came out of her hiding. I heard her approaching.

'Hi...' I said without looking.

Nur sat down next to me. In the faint light of the night, she was as beautiful as when we had first kissed.

'Hi...' she said. A tear grew and slid down her face. I choked from within. I didn't want to leave and I didn't want to stay. The love we shared would quickly be crushed. We were too free-spirited to live with what was coming. We had talked about it for hours on end. Another fight for freedom would take place and in that fight we would lose each other. Nur couldn't leave her family. She couldn't move elsewhere. I was ready to marry her, move to Medan or nearby, close to Aceh. But Nur wouldn't leave. Aceh was where she was born, her gratitude to Ahmed and his family was all that kept her sane. Nur took off her hijab and placed her head on my shoulder. She looked around, then she took my hand and began stroking it.

'I want to thank you.'

'Why?'

'Because you never judged me. Because you made love to me as if I was $\ensuremath{\textit{whole}}$.'

Although Ahmed had taken her in as his own, people knew what had happened. Few men would want to ask for her hand in marriage and the families of those who did would fiercely oppose it, as there'd be no dowry. They saw her as *damaged*. A woman without a real family, orphaned, for a multitude of ignorant, dogmatic reasons, is not whole.

'Kata-kata tidak dapat menjelaskan cintaku padamu...' Words can't describe my love for you.

Nur had taught me the sentence. It was ironic I remembered it at that moment.

Quiet tears streamed down her cheeks.

'Aku cinta kamu...' I love you.

It was the last time Nur and I kissed. The next day Ahmed drove me to the airport. The last image I have of my time in Aceh is of Sarah and Nur waving to me, seen in the side-mirror of Ahmed's Angkot. Mohammed, Ibrahim and Hassan were at school. They had all embraced me before leaving in the morning and given me a card written in perfect English. I had left Nur a card to read to Ahmed and the family after my departure. All our words were, in short, an exchange of gratitude and love. I did everything I could to restrain myself but tears rolled down my face in silence and grew large dark patches on my shirt. Neither Ahmed nor I spoke a word, all the way to the airport. I had booked a flight to Jakarta where I would have time to collect my thoughts before returning to the reality of life somewhere else.

Ahmed handed me a piece of paper and pointed repeatedly to it.

'Read Mohammed. My friend, read,' he said.

I opened up the neatly folded paper and recognised Nur's hand. It was written in English.

A man who chooses from his heart will be fighting this world. Remember Allah in your life. He will protect your heart and your courage. Safe journey inshallah. Your friend. Ahmed.

Ahmed embraced me for the first time since we'd met. Our embrace was brief with strength and warmth.

'Allah bersamamu.' Go with Allah.

Ahmed stepped back into the Angkot, waved and drove off. That was the last time I saw him.

There was a world pacing around me at the airport but I was still at the lookout in Lho-Nga with Nur. That first night. It was as if I had

fast-forwarded a cassette tape and found myself in an inaudible section. I remained standing where Ahmed had left me, staring into nowhere. A distorted squelch from a CB radio reached me, successive beeps to remind me I was returning to a world I recognised but wasn't familiar with anymore.

I stayed in touch with Ahmed, called and greeted him in line with the rest of my family on Islamic holidays. After a while of talking weekly by phone, Nur and I decided to also keep to the holidays. The pain in our voices was evident, in the air moving across our lips there was a longing to touch. To kiss. A year after I left Nur, we arranged a time to chat face to face. She went to a cyber café in Banda Aceh and we tried Skype for the first time. At that time the connection gave us pictures in slow sequence. The only word I heard was a crackled 'Hi!' Moments of staring at slowly changing, still images followed. Unlike a photograph, they held no memories. As the connection broke, I burst out in tears as if my eyes were poisoned. I called her an hour later and we agreed not to Skype again.

We restrained ourselves to emails. Every couple of days she'd go to an internet café in Banda Aceh. Our souls drew us back together, regardless of how much it felt we resisted. In her last email, Nur suggested that I visit them again to celebrate the three years that had passed. Ahmed would not have me stay with them, but he would make sure I could stay with his friends that ran the tiny hotel near the beach. Nur had already talked to him about it. She wanted to see me. And I wanted to see her. I told her I'd arrive on the fourth of February.

Lho-Nga felt very near as I wrote my last words to Nur. It was a pitchblack December night in Copenhagen and I was at work at the airport. There were just a couple of planes to attend to. Most Danes were at home celebrating Christmas with family and friends. Shortly after I sent the email, I fell asleep. The smell of strong percolated coffee and the sound of the news on the television woke me. The morning shift had arrived. Still half-asleep, half-awake. Still with my eyes half-closed, I got up. The freighter from Singapore had arrived. It was time to look busy before going home to sleep. As I was walking out of our smoky restroom, I turned my head and looked up. I let go of the door. I walked back towards the television hanging high up on the far wall. A tsunami had struck the Indian Ocean. Houses were flattened, people were crying. There was debris, and people on top of the debris. A still picture overlaying the broadcast showed a young Danish traveller as she talked about the wave, sounding almost frivolous. The background showed tourists sunbathing as locals rushed to remove a beached corpse.

'When did this happen?' I asked Murat.

'When you were sleeping!' he said and laughed.

The last thing I saw on the screen was a circle expanding from an earthquake epicentre. It looped in tune with the narrator. I rushed into the office, picked up the phone and dialled Ahmed's home number. My fingers shook. Silence. My heart pounded. Silence. Pounding. I tried once more. And in the silence that followed I felt it. I put the phone down. I walked out of the room and kept walking. I walked past the front gates, past the security booth and along the road by the sea. I felt trapped, as if my pounding heart was about to stop. I took deep breaths of the cold morning air. I almost ran. The phone in my pocket tried to pull me back to sanity. I walked through frosted grass and frozen sand crackled under my shoes as I approached the sea. An anvil placed itself across my shoulders and threw me to my knees. I screamed and screamed as I felt Nur's soul leaving mine. I wanted to stay with her. I ran into the sea, breaking the thin surface of ice, and threw myself into the frozen water.

I opened my eyes and there she was, floating right in front of me. Her long hair flowing suspended and her fingers touching my face. We moved closer and our lips almost touched. The drumming of my heart began sounding the staccato of the raindrops, the day we first kissed. My lips numbed, unable to feel her touch. All that remained was peaceful silence.

The tsunami took more than a quarter of a million lives in Aceh. Only a few residents of Lhoknga and Lho-Nga remained. The rest were either swept out to sea or left petrified and naked on land as the wave receded. Heaven on earth had turned into hell and the truth about that place is that everyone gets the same treatment. We all end up in the same shallow grave.

My body was pulled out of the icy sea and I lived to breathe again. Ahmed and his family were never found. For a long time I refused to accept that I'd never see Nur again. One day I caved in to the calling from the sea and returned to let it speak to me. It told me of a place far from the confines of man. It told me what I already knew.

It told me the sea is the home of lost angels.

Pinggir Reneé Pettitt-Schipp

Cocos (Keeling) Islands With many thanks to Pak Yati, Mak Sofia and Pak Greta for the translations into Cocos Malay. Reneé Pettitt-Schipp lived in the Indian Ocean Territories for three years, inspiring her first collection of poetry due for release with UWA Publishing in February 2018.

apa arti nya hidup sekejap saja di atas lautan...

what does it mean to live subsist just a moment above the ocean where the slow coral grows its mighty mountain and life explodes as atoll meets air

all night I hear the sea's secret undoing all day witness uncountable beings rebuild

some early evenings when the sun is stirred into the trees—and the water returns to reclaim its margins—*kami sepi*—we are still

only then will crabs appear bodies below in air their eyes between worlds like sharks pushing fins into sky

here the sea's skin looks like something you can trust the statement of its reflected surface is sure promises we belong above.

Weaving Ketupat on Pulu Cheplok

Reneé Pettitt-Schipp

Cocos (Keeling) Islands for Nek Sofia

the neneks are starting to weave laughing under thin palms quick fingers, memory of muscle mast tap-tapping in breeze

laughing in shade of thin palms Nek splits fronds with sure fingers mast tap-tapping in breeze soft parcels piling by feet

sure hands, movement of muscle boat rocking slow in shallows Nek invites me to weave from banana-lounge under lean tree

boat sways, slaps sides on cool water the neneks are patient with me pale palm over and under these fingers cannot remember Trade Winds coming over sea.

76 | Westerly 62.2 77 | Reneé Pettitt-Schipp

Homecoming in the Garden of the Full Moon

Mark Fabiano

Mark Fabiano's fiction has appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, The Saturday Evening Post, Confrontation, Aestas, and The Long Story. He has been awarded an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, an Editor's Choice Award for Best New Writing, and was a runner-up in the Great American Fiction Contest.

Moonlight tinted the tall windowpane behind Heleen Ondaatje and her textured silk dress emanated bright teal reflections onto the glass. She stood in her father's dimly lit bedroom at his Wellington Drive mansion, glancing at the collection of pill bottles on a small table. At this end, the room held a wide sitting area where she and her father, along with Dr. Tambiah, her father's Tamil physician, talked casually about her teaching and the small gathering they would be hosting later on the back verandah. In the centre of the long room stood the king-sized bed with an intricately carved canopy. At the other end, there were French doors leading to a marble balcony.

'But Father, did you have to invite all those guests?'

'Of course. How else will people know that my lovely daughter has decided to stay in Sri Lanka?'

'And that she is also eligible,' added Prema, the Sinhalese housekeeper, who tucked a pillow behind her master's back.

'Yes, that too!' agreed her father.

'I think there will be too many suitors,' said a grinning Dr Tambiah.

Heleen breathed through her knee-jerk reaction to scold them for acting so paternalistic. She wished she had something to cover those feelings up. Such traditional thinking she expected from Prema, but Dr Tambiah?

Prema returned to making up the bed.

Heleen longed for Eddie to show up. She liked his slender body, Australian accent and wit. She smiled at whether Prema would wonder if they were lovers or just friends. Come to think of it, Heleen thought, I'd like to know where we stand. But she kept her mischievous smile to herself. She wondered if her father's or Dr Tambiah's reaction to her guest would be any different.

Heleen seated herself on the divan across from Dr Tambiah, who sat at one end of an antique teak wood table, the light of a Tiffany lamp cast across his face, while her father sat in his wheelchair on the other end.

Though he insisted she return to her job in Matara, she worried about his health. Since her return from Georgetown University only twelve weeks earlier, she'd been under the impression that her father was on the mend. Then, she'd hoped her return to Lanka would only delay her graduate studies in cultural linguistics for a year. But seeing him taking extra pains to appear as if he wasn't in pain, and that he was truly cheerful at her meeting all the guests, only made him appear more stricken with illness in her eyes. Perhaps he was hoping to make some connection with his daughter in his sunset years. And she was certain Prema judged her for running about the country—and the world—while her father lay in bed sick.

'Father, you can't expect the doctor to stay here every day and night. He has other patients.'

'But none as important and dear to me as your father.'

'Nor any who pay you as dearly!' Mr Ondaatje said.

All but Heleen laughed, and the doctor clapped his hands. 'You still have a sense of humour.'

'You just encourage him. Really, Dr Tambiah,' she retorted. 'I'd think you of all people would advise him to go to London or New York to get treated. To get better.'

'Now, now. Let's not change the subject. We were talking of Heleen returning to her school. And not by those fly-ridden trains or buses as she insists. Private car. You see? It's just like when she was little. Always changing the subject when she wanted something. But now you see, after all, I am fine. You must return. Your students are counting on you.'

'Here, here!' chimed in the doctor and he raised his glass. 'It is a noble profession, Nelson, that your daughter has chosen.'

Heleen smiled, stood up, and made a slight adjustment to the gauzy fabric of her dress. She moved towards them to retrieve her Gucci, a clutch made of smooth, buttery leather, yellow and just big enough for her Dunhills, a lighter, her mother's pill box, and a slim collection of bills tucked in one tight side pocket. 'I'll be in the garden.'

The verandah was arranged with bamboo and teak furniture, and the servants had laid out trays of small sandwiches, fruits, and bottles of wine and beer in large ice buckets. Most of the guests would be her father's friends, and perhaps an aunt from Nuwara Eliya, the highest town of the central hill country. Heleen had invited Eddie, though in hindsight, she

wasn't sure if it was the best thing to do. But it might force Eddie out into the open a bit. Having to be cautious with their romance down in Matara only made her hate the country more.

She felt inside her pale yellow clutch for the tiny pill case, the one that had been her mother's, undid the clasp on the Ceylon Blue Sapphire lid, and felt the collection of pills roll under her fingertips. She swallowed half a Quaalude, knowing that soon she would at least be free of her anxiety. She hid the small case in a corner of her clutch and walked over to the top of the large marble stairs that led from the verandah down to the main path. From here she could look out over the garden.

A ghostly full moon glimmered across the garden, and she could clearly make out the small network of paved trails in and around trees, bushes, and statuary. Just below the steps, one could walk straight towards a large fountain, coloured with yellow flood lamps, or go to the right of the fountain and into the more deep-rooted section of the garden with its Bo and Ironwood trees, some of which had been there for over a century. Beyond the fountain on the main path, there were small ornamental bushes, frangipani and other flowers, mango and banana trees, and another fountain with a large Virgin Mary in the centre, also lighted by lamps. Although unseen at either end of the garden, other smaller statues were hidden alongside paths on the right side of the garden. In amongst the trees and flowering bushes were a Ganesh, a seated Buddha, and a sundial.

She descended the stairs and inhaled the fragrance of white frangipani blossoms, their sweet, thick perfume mingled with the salty sea breeze. She took the main path around the large fountain whose jets sparkled amber in the flood lamps towards the centre where a sombre Mary stood, her pinkish face now faded and pale, and her blue and white robes no longer offering the brilliant reflection that had once seemed to purify the garden air. A chill came over her and she felt strangely alone, but at home. At the same time, she felt the weight of the darkness in the depths of the garden where the moonlight could not reach so easily. Her heart throbbed but gently in her ears like when, as a child, she would run through the garden chased by her father. They'd play hide and seek, her mother lying on a divan on the verandah and attended to by the doctor.

'Come, Father. Find me!' she would yell, and in her hiding place amid mossy and floral scents she could almost taste, she only heard the sound of her beating heart, hoping he would not find her, but hoping also that he would. And he always did, and it would start like a creeping sensation against the back of her shoulders and she'd almost shiver thinking he was standing behind her in the shadows, and she'd turn quick, and it would

be a branch rubbing against her, or a flower, and then she would hear a branch crack or sand being disturbed by his steps and she'd turn around and he would be standing there and yell, 'Found you!'

She would run and he would chase her until she made it back up to her mother, who smiled and kissed her head. Her breath smelled of medicine and at times she seemed tired, always lying down, always asking others to find her pill case, always complaining of aches and pains and not enough comfort. Heleen didn't want her mother to suffer.

'Why doesn't Mother get better,' she'd asked her father one morning, as they sat in the garden at breakfast—noodle-like string hoppers, lentil curry, eggs and toast. But he didn't answer; he couldn't. He just said, 'Eat your breakfast, Heleen. Come, you don't want to be late.'

Heleen sat on a bench near the Virgin Mary and cried. It had been a lonely childhood though privileged, being an only child of a Minister of Parliament. Few cousins and friends. And though she had a well-paid, American governess and private tutor, she'd preferred playing with the children she met on the shore of the nearby Mount Lavinia Beach Hotel. While her tutor was chatting up a boyfriend, sitting together on the large batik bedsheet under the sparse shade of palms, Heleen and her troupe would walk among the tourists, who wore sunhats and sat under large umbrellas, to sell them refreshing coconut juice that one of the boys with a machete opened right in front of their customers. But those children were never allowed to accompany her home, to this garden.

Heleen heard someone cough on the verandah. It seemed to her that her father and Dr Tambiah were far away and that it had been a long time ago she'd left them upstairs. She looked up at Mary, and remembered how she had prayed on her knees on the path, day after day, for her mother to get well. Her face burned with anguish, but she was too tired to be angry. She longed for a cigarette, a Scotch, a caress from her lover. And then she didn't. At last, she felt the Quaalude kick in.

She walked back to the verandah where she noticed that a few guests had arrived including Eddie. She laughed to herself glimpsing how well-groomed he looked through the leaves. No t-shirt, shorts and thongs. He was acting so proper. She couldn't wait to tease him. She decided to enter the house by the side door to freshen up in the first-floor bathroom. She slightly smudged kohl eyeliner around her blue-grey eyes, already incredibly striking, to make them look even larger. She livened her cheeks with a touch of blush, to remove some of the worry from her smooth, light-caramel complexion. She stepped back from the sink and turned to glance at her slender figure, her long chestnut hair falling down the middle of her back.

She headed back to the verandah and stopped just inside the house to eavesdrop, hoping to make a timely entrance on their conversation.

There were two servants dressed in white sarongs and starched shirts who stood at the table offering food and drink to the guests. Three guests, whom Heleen didn't know, stood at the stairs looking out over the garden, while her father, Eddie, and Dr Tambiah sat comfortably discussing politics. Heleen noticed another couple walking down near the fountain. She listened to the confident voice of her father saying, 'And during those bloody '83 riots, I had Dr Tambiah and his family, and their servants, all Tamils, living here.'

'It was like an embassy for Tamil Nadu!' said Dr Tambiah.

'Too right, Mr Ondaatje,' she heard Eddie say.

They all laughed, but then her father began coughing and that quelled the exuberance. People continued talking politely.

Heleen walked over to one of the servants and got a glass of mineral water for her father.

'Here, Father, drink this.'

'The prodigal returns, again!' said her father.

Eddie rose, and he and Heleen hugged each other politely. 'You look spunky, Heleen.'

She kissed his cheek as she would any guest, but held him a second longer, tugged at his collar and whispered, 'Phony.' Then she sat down across from her father.

During the meal, Mr Ondaatje called over one or two guests and either introduced them to Heleen and Eddie at the same time, perhaps to imply something of this match, or he might say to Heleen, you remember so-and-so from back when you went to St Thomas, and Heleen would nod politely and claim to remember, or if she actually had, she would try to recall some memorable details.

Gradually the party ended, after all, a success. Those who had attended to merely reinforce business ties with her father and his partner had done so. Everyone thought Heleen a perfect beauty and heir to a great man, and some observed Eddie favourably, like he was a groom-in-waiting.

After the last guests left, the servants cleaned food and drinks off the tables, and Heleen sat with her father, Dr Tambiah, and Eddie as they picked up an earlier thread.

'I was just telling your father, I'm gunna Matara tomorrow. I can give you a lift?'

'Ok. I would love to go.'

The doctor turned his attention to her father who grimaced.

'Well, Nelson, what say you and I leave these two to chat about their trip?'

The patient nodded, though with the same reluctance a child may have when told to go to bed while older kids are still gathered around the radio playing a game of carrom or chess.

Prema unlocked the brakes on the chair and Nelson reached out a hand to Eddie, 'Good to meet you lad. Come again.'

Then he turned to Heleen. She bent over, hugged him and kissed his cheek as he said, 'I'm glad you will go with him, and not on those dirty trains. It makes me rest easy.'

'I know, Father.'

Dr Tambiah turned to her. 'If I may have a moment?'

Heleen nodded and then said, 'Eddie, can I meet you in the garden in a bit?'

'Righto.' He grabbed his cigarettes and his glass and walked off down the marble steps.

Dr Tambiah motioned towards one of the chairs, but Heleen didn't move. Something about the doctor's demeanour alarmed her. His simple smile was gone. His eyes looked tired.

He took his pipe from a breast pocket inside his jacket. He stuffed tobacco in it, and then lit it. 'Heleen, I had advised your father to go to the US or London before your return. But he wouldn't listen. Business. Civic duties. He'd asked me to find a way to bring the equipment here. But well, I did manage to get him over to the Cancer Research Institute in Singapore." He exhaled a few spicy and fragrant puffs of pipe tobacco.

'Yes, I recall getting his letter. He said he'd passed all tests with flying colours.'

'Huh? I am sure he did say that. But the truth. Well, I don't know how to say this...'

'Out with it, Dr Tambiah,' she said. She studied his face as he talked, on guard for any deception.

'It's just. He won't recover. I don't believe it, but it is true.'

'But what are you saying?'

He leaned forward and moved his free hand to erase his last statement. 'I do believe that your presence here, even when down in Matara, has made a difference for him. Nothing gives one more comfort, I believe, than knowing one's child is happy and out in the world, confidently and productively engaging in life. So, you see, just doing what you must, is good.'

'That's very comforting, Dr Tambiah. But I want to know what you know. What is going on with my father's health?'

Dr Tambiah contemplated his pipe. He relit the tobacco and slowly drew on it. He looked at Heleen. There was sadness and surrender in his eyes. He slowly nodded as he said, 'You are correct, Heleen. Your father's cancer is terminal. He does not have much longer. I cannot say exactly when.'

She wanted to lash out at this doctor, but for what? He had only wanted to keep her father comforted, after all. The heartache she'd just revisited back in the garden returned. The heaviness in her chest, somewhat relieved from crying, now returned. How ironic to have just recalled her mother's death and now hearing this about her father. She watched a small smoke ring hover in midair over the table and noticed how it was made of tinier rings all moving more or less on their own but in the same general undulating pattern. She felt a chill and a slight dizziness. The fountain gushed loudly. She saw Dr Tambiah peering into her eyes. He held her hand and reached into his coat pocket. Her field of vision narrowed, and she looked at everything happening around her in that moment as someone other than herself. Dr Tambiah's pipe grew longer and his face blurry just enough that she seemed to forget him, but that scent, sweet and smoky, reminded her. A strange cloud reared up within her chest that at once combined fear, helplessness, surprise, and a momentary flash of memory.

She was eleven. Her mother had died. Her father and Dr Tambiah, smoking his pipe, introduced her to her nanny. Then, she was running down one of the stone paths that weaved in and around ferns, nutmeg, bamboo and royal palms. She saw a dark cloud. It stormed, the garden darkened by the rain. But a blinding gold streak flashed across the whole scene and left her in an ammonia-smelling fog.

Heleen understood she'd nearly passed out. Was it the pill she'd taken? Dr Tambiah tossed the smelling salts into an ashtray. Eddie stood next to him, offering her a glass of whisky.

'Yes, just a sip,' said the doctor. He nodded at the glass. 'You had a little shock.'

She felt the whiskey burn her lips and tongue. Then she drank again. Something about the familiar smell and taste of it helped break up the fog enough for her to sit upright.

'I had to tell you, Heleen. I could see that you were worried. Truth is always better.'

She wondered what she had just dreamt. But she remembered her conversation with Dr Tambiah. Her father would die. Sometime this year. And she had only been with him a short time. She felt a tremor in her chest and neck but she didn't let it out. She didn't cry.

Dr Tambiah moved closer to her, and she saw him peering at her eyes. She hoped there wasn't a way for him to determine she'd taken the lude. 'Pupils *seem* normal,' he said. Then nodding to Eddie, he added, 'She will be fine.'

'Righto,' said Eddie. 'I'll just wait down in the garden.' He walked down the steps.

Dr Tambiah picked up his pipe. 'Not to worry, Heleen. We will make him comfortable. If anything changes, I will send for you immediately. On that you have my word, not just as a doctor, but as a friend.'

She nodded and kissed his cheek. He hugged her in return in a paternal manner, patting her back a little.

He stopped at the doorway and tapped his pipe into a planter. Then he turned to her and said, 'I am lucky to have him as a friend. He has done so much for my family, for our country.'

Heleen didn't seek Eddie in the garden immediately. She smoked a cigarette and drank another Scotch to calm her nerves. She let the alcohol slide comfortably to the pit of her stomach. She smoked and looked at the bright moon. That's right, an inner voice said, it's a Poya moon, when Buddhists celebrate the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha. She often wondered whether she'd prefer to have been raised Buddhist. From what she'd read it seemed we should all embrace the fact of the void. It felt more like emptiness, this full moon, now. And the ways Buddhism was practised as religion reminded her more of her Catholic upbringing than what her Western friends thought. Rituals, dogma, nuns, monks instead of priests. How different really? One religion preached a salvation for believing in the sacrifice of the son of God, and the other preached liberation from all suffering by embracing suffering and then resisting desires. She wondered what her father believed. They hadn't talked about religion in how many years?

Heleen found Eddie, smoking near the Virgin Mary, on the same bench where she'd cried earlier that evening. As she approached, he stood and turned, then tapped his cigarette out on the back of the cement bench. She noticed him looking her over for a few seconds; was he trying to discern her intentions?

He leaned into her with arms outstretched, exuding a sympathetic air. Heleen hugged him, but rather than feeling a warm comfort she felt the darkness return, and along with it, an irritating emptiness that arose from her doubts about Eddie. She didn't feel any romance at the moment. Rather than allow Eddie to kiss her lips, she only gave him her cheek, squeezed his shoulders and dropped her arms to her sides. She felt a desire to let the soft pain linger in her breast, and to be alone.

Oceania as I imagined it

Ross Jackson

Ross Jackson lives in Perth.
He writes short stories and poems. His work has been published online and in literary magazines across Australia.
He has had poems published in Canada, England, Ireland and New Zealand.

Alain de Botton, The Art of Travel

...it seems we may best be able to inhabit a place where we are not faced with the additional challenge of having to be there.

at my kitchen island bench (in Perth, Australia) the western edge of Oceania, it's hot tonight and above the noise of drunks and traffic I can hear the dunking surf

after an old doco about the Pacific war images wash in like dead marines along the beaches of Guadalcanal

mangrove crabs and rust rob the graves where drowned American tanks are aquariums for schools of fish

no clouds till well after lunch then a heavy bomber of rain a flood of red hibiscus

the tropics in flower, I think of Gauguin on Tahiti in Rarotonga-Maugham on gin pahit

now ladies in straw headdresses juggle flames and with swaying hips and lips of coral wish you Aloha from Honolulu to Pago Pago

it's hot tonight at my kitchen island bench noise of drunks and traffic dunking surf

'A transfiguration of my local patriotism'

Christina Stead, the figure of oceanic totality and 'A Night on the Indian Ocean'¹ Fiona Morrison Fiona Morrison is a Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales. She edited the Selected Prose of Dorothy Hewett (UWAP, 2011), and her work has appeared in several journals and publications.

In a late interview with Rodney Wetherell (1979), when she was back in Australia and being interviewed rather more frequently in light of her rather belated status as a great Australian writer, Christina Stead found an intriguing way to deal with the equally frequent questions about the reasons for her expatriation to Europe in 1928. She implied that to be Australian was to be always already a citizen of the sea. Her conflation of national identity and the critical geographical identity of the island continent allowed her to argue that there was no especial volition to 'going abroad'. In a sense, Stead claimed that she had an automatic 'dual citizenship' drawn from a symbiotic relationship between her marine identity and her Australian one. Of course, therefore, one would travel by sea:

And the sea—we were all closely connected with the sea. It was part of our lives. Now the sea is a continent with no passports; it's a country in itself. We felt we belonged to the sea. It wasn't a question of leaving Australia, nothing to do with that at all. (Stead and Wetherell 432)

Stead was postulating a relation here that has become much more familiar in the recent 'oceanic turn'—that the oceanic is a figure of connection rather than division, and that, as Margaret Cohen has suggested, the 'marine transoceanic undercuts the focus on nation' (Cohen 658). The sea, rather like Australia, was both continent and country in one entity, but without any hampering bureaucratic and territorial apparatus. Stead's late account of her own origins conflate the actual proximity of the ocean in both her houses of childhood, the importance of the influence of her patriotic father (a patriotism grounded in the specifics of Australia flora and fauna, particularly marine animals), and the central role of stories generated in and around the sea. This imbrication of coastal and island

geography, the disciplinary importance of the marine in its many forms and the central role of storytelling gives us Christina Stead as the seafaring woman of early 20th-century Australian modernity. Like Teresa in For Love Alone (called Hawkins after seafaring stock), Stead claimed seafaring ancestors and set about with her trademark ambition and iconoclasm to fulfil this destiny as a citizen of the sea through travelling, working and writing. Indeed, she exhibited a lifelong writerly inclination to associate women in modernity with sea-going vessels, which, in a range of different contexts, configured femininity as mobile, adventurous, piratical and malleable. Women, like ships, were consciously involved in various kinds of trade—sexual, economic and transnational—as part of a larger effort to manage feminine survival.

'A Night on the Indian Ocean', the third short story in Ocean of Story (1985), Ron Geering's edition of Stead's uncollected stories, provides an early example, therefore, of Stead's interest in mobile women (later organised through renditions of romance and the picaresque). More specifically, its dystopian portrait of female sociality at sea works to reveal something truthful about something that has been hidden or excluded, and this is prime Stead territory. As Iain Chambers has argued: 'the languages that frame the ocean world remain susceptible to appropriation by monsters, slaves, blacks, women, and migrants—by the excluded who speak of overlooked, unexpected, displaced and unauthorised matters' (Chambers 68o). To borrow a phrase from Stephanie Le Menager's work on Twain's Mississippi, Stead's short story thematises water as 'a carrier of economic desire and troubled commodities that flowed beyond continental spaces' (Menager 405). In the marine space, well beyond the bounds of the continent or any of its ambiguous sovereign sea borders, deep in the medial space of the 'middle' ocean, water is the ambient theatre for a tale of the circulating prospects of capital and labour, mobility and immobility, law and lawlessness.

This paper will suggest, however, that there is an even more fundamental significance of the oceanic in Stead's aesthetics and will seek to trace the ways in which her earliest writing offers us a sense of the importance and complexity of the marine in her work. She is best known as a masterful and moving writer of the Pacific Ocean, which calls up lyrical and intensely material invocations of the marine world. These comprise unusual and early paeans to the Pacific Ocean by any writer, much less a woman. Seven Poor Men of Sydney opens with and retains an extraordinary sense of the Pacific, and For Love Alone, which opens with the famous 'Sea People' prologue, offers one of the most breathtaking visions of the Pacific in Australian writing. The vision of this

prologue grounds the logic of Teresa Hawkins' own expatriate voyage in the sublimity and wonder of the sea as well as the inevitability of sea travel for Australians who, as islanders of continental scale, were able to comprehend and negotiate the scale of the ocean. It is true, however, that Stead's earliest writing about the sea is a fictionalised account of her expatriate sea voyage, and that this story presents us with an account of the Indian Ocean, and it is markedly and importantly different from her work with the Pacific. In the way that Stead could see very early on that the marine was a figure of connection and multiplication rather than division, so too she anticipated much recent work on the oceanic with her obvious capacity to see both the sublime and the material possibilities and realities of the ocean world. Her 'A Night on the Indian Ocean' presents us with an account of shipboard experience that emphasises colonial social space and the class-bound and gendered relations this entails. This paper will establish and examine the doubled relation of the ideal and the material that characterises Stead's oceanic aesthetics.

The symbiosis between herself and the sea was first and foremost a question of location: from Lydham Hall, the sandstone family home high on the ridge in Bexley, 'you could see between the heads of Botany Bay—Cape Banks, Cape Solander—and most days which were clear you could see straight through to the Blue Mountains' (Stead and Wetherell 436). This proximity to the key coastal geographies of invasion and settlement was heightened by Stead's recollection that her father admired Cook and looked rather like him ('Ocean of Story' 5). After 1917, when the large Stead family moved in straitened circumstances to Pacific St, Watson's Bay, her affiliation with the oceanic intensified with even greater proximity and exposure:

...and in big storms the spray from the Gap used to come right on the roof of our house. It's so close to the ocean. And all the ocean liners, and other ships, mercantile ships and so on, came right in front of our house. The pilot ship was always there, anchored there, and they used to stay there for quarantine. We saw all the ships that came into the harbour it was very thrilling. And this was the reason why going abroad seemed so natural, because these ships were always in and out, in and out. (Stead and Wetherell 436–437)

This scene of constant harbour shipping, also detailed in the opening pages of *Seven Poor Men of Sydney* as the inaugurating vision of 1920s Sydney, speaks again to the synonymous identity of harbour-dwelling Australian and natural traveller. The material interest in the ships

themselves, however, also reflects Stead's interest in the material condition of the movement of people, as well as the capital base of Sydney's provincial modernity. This shipping scene recalled from the nineteen teens and twenties describes one nodal port in a larger British colonial maritime circuit as yet undisturbed by the Great Depression or burgeoning colonial independence movements. Implied in all of these scenes, and in Stead's sense of all Australians (and she includes, rather tellingly, the idea that Indigenous people themselves were originally sailors) as natural travellers, is the fact that movement and travel are preconditions of imperialism. As Anna Snaith has argued, mobility was the precondition of settler colonial history.

The late Wetherell interview rehearses and amplifies a great deal of material that appeared in a contribution Stead made to 'The International Symposium on the Short Story' in the Kenyon Review more than ten years earlier, in 1968. This piece, 'Ocean of Story', is a short essay that Ron Geering, Stead's literary executor, used as the introduction to his arrangement of her uncollected stories Ocean of Story, published by Viking in 1985 and Penguin in 1986, three years after Stead's death. In this essay about the short story as a form, the critical sense of Australia as inextricably sourced in sea-going mobility is traced by Stead back to her earliest memories. She relates how, as a young child of two, her 'bed was made up on a large packing case in which were my father's specimens, a naturalist's toys, things from the oceans around us and from the north, Indonesia, China, Japan' ('Ocean of Story' 4). The vocation of storyteller emerged from these night-time occasions of the bedtime story, when the young Stead was arranged for sleep atop the luggage from her father's marine travels and the tales of adventure were generated by the exotic objects in the cases underneath her. Her father would ask: "What is in the packing case?" I would tell and, what I forgot, he told' ('Ocean of Story' 5). The call and response storytelling with her remaining parent gave way in time to Stead's interlocution with the furniture of the room itself when her father was not there to participate in the generation of stories. We are meant to understand that her vocation drove her to note and remember the dialogue of these inanimate objects. Building on the earlier essay, her later interview answer emphasises: 'this was a sort of dramatic instinct, you know' (Stead and Wetherell 435). Proximity to the sea was both a matter of geography and it was also the scene of pleasurable instruction and secure orientation with her enthusiastically self-taught father.

If Australia and the sea are conflated for Stead, then the sea and story are also synonymous; the generativity of story could only be adequately figured by the ocean, of which the Australian writer-in-waiting was

native: 'I was born into the ocean of story, or on its shores' ('Ocean of Story' 4). The Indian Ocean was indeed a further shore for Stead, the east coast dweller, but as an islander she named and invoked all the oceans surrounding her island continent—north, south, east and west. She claimed, through her citizenship of the country of the ocean, both the vocation of writer and of traveller.

Stead writes that this thousand and one nights of stories with her father occurred between the ages of two and four and a half: 'it went on and on, night after night for more than two years' ('Ocean of Story' 5). This was the time after the loss of Stead's own mother and before he remarried and many more children appeared, and this bridge of motherless time forms the basis of her own origins as a writer, where she undertook her storytelling apprenticeship, immersed in the sea stories surrounding her locale and the trophies of travel in the natural world. In time, she became the family teller of tales:

By five years I used to sing them to sleep and rock them to sleep; and when they were very little and later on I used to tell them stories, talk them to sleep, just as my father had done, except I told different stories. They were most out of Grimm and Hans Andersen. I was always fond of those two and still am, and later on I made up some of my own, and that's how it all started. (Stead and Wetherell 444).

Stead distinguishes herself from her father through the difference of her stories, which are less based in travel and the natural world (though Darwin and his voyages loom large) and affiliated instead with the European fairytale. Nevertheless, this experience of writerly origin rests quite explicitly on the Arabian storytelling structure of the *One* Thousand and One Nights and, before that, the older and most capacious 'ocean of story' from the Indian tradition—the Kathasaritasagara. Stead's 'Ocean of Story' essay names as its progenitor this ancient Indian collection of fables and fairy tales, The Ocean of the Streams of Stories. The *Kathasaritasagara* was an 11th-century collection of Indian fairytales, folktales and legends compiled by a member of the Kashmiri court called Somadeva. The work consisted of eighteen books of 124 chapters (around 66,000 Sanskrit lines of iambic pentameter) and was itself a pale shadow of an original *ur-text*. The frame tale engineering was present in prolific dimensions, with main lines, springs and subsidiary rivers making an 'oceanic' set of tales celebrating earthly life in all its forms. Modern Indian critics suggest that it is a collection unusually focused on material rather than spiritual experiences, and that the compendium is strikingly free of

religious or moral instruction given its cultural context. As Tara Sheemar Malhan has argued in her book, *Plunging the Ocean: Courts, Castes and Courtesans in the* Kathasaritasagara, key issues of gender, class and social space mark this contradictory and teeming mass of stories.

As the original and largest treasury or compendium of frame tales, the Kathasaritasagara enabled the One Thousand and One Nights, and, in time, The Canterbury Tales, which, in turn, influenced Stead's own early collection of framed fictional stories, The Salzburg Tales (1934). The Kathasaritsagara was made available to readers of English between 1924 and 1928 as *The Ocean of Story* in a set of posthumously published translations by C.H. Tawney (a ten volume endeavour based on original translations from Sanskrit in Calcutta in 1880)². It is interesting to note that this was the period during which Stead was planning and finally achieving her goal of travel to Europe, as well as writing her first collection of tales. Whether or not she read the Kathasaritasagara at this time, its citation as the genesis of tale-telling itself turns our marine orientation from the Pacific Ocean in the east to the west coast of the island continent of Australia and into the darker waters of the stories of the many nights. The Indian Ocean houses the Arabian Sea, off the west coast of India, and it becomes the home of story—the cradle of the multiplicity and heaving creativity of human tale-telling.

The Indian treasury of story is glossed by Stead as an inexhaustible compendium. The sense of the ocean as pure magnitude is an appropriate figure for this dimension and scale of creative generativity:

But there it was, the ocean of story, starting out in the drops, drops of hill-dew, or sweat on the mountain's brown, running down, joining trickles from the rocks... broadening and sounding deep and moving in its fullness toward the ocean of story ('Ocean of Story' 10)

The magnitude of the ocean indicates that, for Stead, the ocean was a figure of totality, an interconnected whole made up of surging parts of human experiences, creatures, exotics lands, indigenous people on the move and foreign seas. The human capacity for story is similarly an expression of inexhaustible totality: 'How can anyone store up this vast natural treasury? It is inexhaustible. ... There is always a free and fresh supply' ('Ocean of Story' 11). A key contemporaneous discussion of the oceanic underwrites the significance of this notion of totality, and it is from a fascinating source. Romain Rolland, as a result of his work with Hindu myth and legend, corresponded with Freud in 1927 after reading Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*. In his letter of December 5, 1927 he

invokes the 'oceanic' as 'a sensation of eternity, a feeling of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, 'oceanic'' (Freud 11). I would argue that Stead was not much interested in mysticism (though she was very interested in dreams) but she was certainly a writer of 'totality'. For her (as for Marx and Engels) the material and the social were inextricably linked with a powerful affective and aesthetic sense of the interconnection of things. It is clear that from her own account that this sense of unity and magnitude comes from her early apprenticeship in ocean stories and the stories about the ancient land it surrounded. Her earliest exposure in the ocean of her father's stories was to 'the magnitude of the starry distances and our infinitesimal life' ('Ocean of Story' 6):

An interest in men and nature, a feeling that all were equal, the extinct monster, the coral insect, the black man and us, the birds and the fish; and another curious feeling still with me, of terrestrial eternity, a sun that never set ('Ocean of Story' 5)

It is the Indian Ocean that anchors these references to the inexhaustible force of human settlement and apprehension of temporal and spatial scale. Stead's first sea story is about the Indian Ocean, not the Pacific of her childhood or the Atlantic of her European fairytales. In his Afterword, Geering dates this story from her first months in London in 1928 or her early years in Paris from early 1929 and places it in the second section of his collection which he called 'Apprentice Writer'. It is likely Stead had a draft version of Seven Poor Men of Sydney when she met Bill Blake in London in the middle of 1928, so it was very likely that she had been working on the Pacific-Sydney setting. However, her short story, 'A Night on the Indian Ocean', gives a fictionalised account of her actual expatriate voyage in to London in May 1928.

In 1928, Stead travelled on a relatively new ship for the Orient Line; the SS *Oronsay* had been built in Britain in 1925 to increase the line's capacity to move people, goods and mail to the nether regions of the British Empire. As with many of the competing shipping lines in this pre-World War II (and pre-Great Depression) world of expanding capital opportunity and relatively intact imperial territories, the Orient Line (owned by P&O but operated separately since 1918) overshadowed, without entirely decimating, the ancient cosmopolitan trade routes and networks of the Indian Ocean. The newer boats of the Orient Line had simplified the stratifications of the ship from three classes to two—first and third (steerage)—removing in some sense the 'middle' class which was nevertheless becoming the most 'buoyant' class for shipping capitalists, with profitable evidence of a growing desire for travel and tourism.

92 | Westerly 62.2 93 | Fiona Morrison

Rather than offer a paean to the sublime sea world, this fascinating short story relays a much more material glimpse of the centrality of shipping in the colonial world system in the late 1920s. The British efficiency and regularity that had accompanied the steamship management of their maritime seaways, colonial outposts, arterial ports and sovereign coastlines is lightly noted on this main sea route connecting the colonial periphery and its imperial centre. The story takes place deep in the Indian Ocean—the middle point of the south-north route made possible by the opening of the Suez Canal by the British in 1869. In Stead's short story, the steamship is travelling between the Port of Colombo and the Port of Aden (prior to the run through the Red Sea and passage through the Suez Canal), across the deepest and longest stretch of open sea in the entire voyage. As the ship travels inexorably across this abyssal space, the shipboard time is constantly adjusted to Greenwich Mean Time and the imperial network of relay points for ideas, texts, commodities and people was thus controlled. The other controlling force is the social stratifications of class and rank—a strict and clear geography of social space is thus reproduced aboard the British ship, rendering it a compressed and intensified copy of Commonwealth colonial relations at large.

The Orient Line had a published schedule of stops at key nodes of the colonial marine circuit, with relatively precise timing, taking season and monsoon winds taken into account. The Australian passengers would have embarked at Sydney, Melbourne or Fremantle, and there is an easy sense of where and when certain Commonwealth passengers embark and disembark in the story. It is clear too that Captain Blount is an officer posted in India and returning home, that Port Said is coming up and that Southampton is the final destination. The central figures of the story are women at either end of the Commonwealth social spectrum: a young Australian woman travelling in third class who agrees to nurse (guard) a British heiress travelling in first class. The British men who skirt the story include the officer of the Indian Army and two working-class men from different areas of London.

Stead's voyage represented a movement outward from provincial modernity and its limited markets for a female fiction writer, but it was also a standard colonial voyage 'in'. This in/out ambiguity is registered in the different Orient Line schedules that list the 'homewards' leg from Australia to Britain via Suez and the Mediterranean, which is also called the 'outwards' leg from Sydney. This in/out confusion for the colonial woman supports a general sense in which this kind of voyage was a moment of potential transformation, of worldly education, a scene of 'dynamic, incomplete and expanding knowledge' (Cohen 660) which

nevertheless had all the hallmarks of intensification, compression and unpredictability of the journey 'inwards'.

This is a short story of the deep sea—it is not the account of sovereign coastline or port. This section of the voyage took the ship through the south Arabian Sea part of the Indian Ocean and the steamship was in deep waters, without island or other sightings, for at least five days. The setting of the Indian Ocean at night creates another sense of totality in a minor key. Because it is difficult to distinguish boat and water or sky and water-line, a sense of the scientific definition of 'totality'—produced by a complete eclipse of sun or moon blocking all light—is referenced. The night setting is complicated by the racial implications of darkness that are connoted on the Indian Ocean in particular—with the west coastline of India on one side and Africa's 'dark' east coast on the other. This darkness finds no human corollary in the story, though it was inevitable that a great deal of labour was being undertaken in the appalling circumstances of kitchen and engine room by Commonwealth subjects of colour. It is interesting to note that in Stead's account of the night stories of the ocean realm from her father, she suggests that she was no stranger to the expansive account of the life cycle, including death, and that, even at such a young age, she 'rejoiced in it; it was like a grand cloak covering me, and allowing me to see unseen; "the cloak of darkness" ('Ocean of Story' 5). There is another layer of 'darkness' in Stead's tale of the night voyage just south of the Arabian Sea: the Arabian One Thousand and One Nights are stories told at night to an embittered king by the virginal woman, Scheherazade, in order to delay or defer tyrannical execution the next morning.

The unsentimental portrait of an exchange between two women of different classes during one night at sea is both a theatrical portrait of women, imperialism, modernity and the female homosocial. It is also an early registration of another of Stead's fundamental interests—the ways in which aspects of political economy and of capital contour ordinary lives. With more in common with the modernist short story than some of her more Gothic juvenilia, Stead uses this early story to reveal the interrelated mechanism of femininity and capital in the seemingly unbounded marine context. In this context it is worth noting that though the key work on slavery and ocean trafficking has been undertaken by Gilroy and others about the Atlantic Ocean, Stead's story of the Indian Ocean conjures an account of capital enslavement for its most privileged subject, and underpaid labour for its most junior. I would argue that the portrait here is of an aristocratic heiress struggling with the excess and exploitation inherent in the system that imprisons and prostitutes her.

94 | Westerly 62.2 95 | Fiona Morrison

This dovetails with what Anna Snaith has suggested in *Modernist Voyages* about the 'associations of white slavery, prostitution and contamination' (188) with the transnational movement of women.

Stella is a young Australian woman from third class who is working as a 'nurse', assisting an alcoholic British heiress, Babs (Barbara). In fact, she is really working as a warden on suicide watch. What she observes of the behaviour of others, including Barbara, speaks to a dystopian and worldly economic and sexual education. In this sense, the narrative speaks to Blum's idea that the ship's voyage thematises 'passage, penitentiary and promise' (Blum 93), with an emphasis on the crossover of the lessons of the world and the spectacle of the imprisoned woman.

The story offers a relatively modernist opening, summoning up some sense of the alienated and nightmarish modernist city at night:

The night was rayless and sultry and phosphorescent jellyfish heaved in the round black waves. Two sailors came and closed the cannon ports. The rush of the sulky ocean could be heard through them. ('A Night' 53)

The setting is hot and delinquent—sultry, heaving, sulky—the equatorial stretch of the ship's passage is being approached. It is a time of bells, like the bells in Macbeth, but it is a rhythmic time of sleep and obscurity: the ship moves like a sleeper taking deeper breaths. Time is indeed out of joint—it is '12:10 and ship's time is 11:30' and 'they don't start the clocks again for ten minutes yet' ('A Night' 55). The colonial regularity of efficiency of its marine technology nevertheless produces a kind of disjointed time, where bells rings for service, to mark ship functions, but it is also in a configuration of delay, of arrested time and indistinct space.

I have written elsewhere about the heterotopic features of the ship (Morrison 165), but it is worth summoning up this rubric of Foucault's again, as we move into the scene of spectatorship of the self-harming alcoholic, because this space is almost theatrically enclosed and yet open to the outside of the ocean at large—an exact replication of Foucault's sense of the heterotopic space. Following Johnson's argument about the function of heterotopia to interrupt or problematise *utopias*, this ship and its cabin scene between the nurse Stella and her patient/prisoner introduces a determinedly non-heroic sense of the ocean voyage for women (Johnson 78). The cost of the reproduction of colonial and imperial systems of capital is scrutinised instead.

The heiress states baldly that the nightwatchmen is 'afraid of me because I've got money' ('A Night' 54). To Stella, it is clear that the young woman has been put into a small room following her suicide attempt—the

small space is a more manageable way of immobilising and watching her. Her conversation with Stella dramatises her disregulated, obsessive and volatile relationships with men, alongside her equally unstable account of her own history and the nature of the relationship with her mother. Her greatest focus is on acquiring alcohol to feed her addiction, but this is as superficially narrated as her fixation on men. As one of the millionaires on board, and they are relatively conspicuous because of the microcosm of class hierarchy articulated in deck order, she is both enormously free in economic terms and at the same time tremendously bound because of the misery and self-harm consequential on her wealth and the tax evasion strategies aimed at protecting it.

Babs claims that 'I travel six months every year to avoid taxes' ('A Night' 55). This makes her a distinct version of floating capital in the maritime colonial economy of the Indian Ocean. Through the evasion of taxes by avoiding landfall for certain segments of the year, Barbara represents a certain kind of currency kept in constant circulation, an asset which is movable and in this sense controlled, transferred and stored. As John Stuart Mill suggested, floating capital 'does its work not by being kept, but by changing hands' (Mill 34) and this is because it is portable. Floating capital, known also as circulating capital or working capital, must be portable, otherwise it is, rather tellingly, 'sunk'. The effort in this short story is to prevent the drowning suicide of Barbara—to protect at all costs her continued motility and currency in the capital system—by immobilising her on this floating tax haven/prison.

Though she is 'floating', or perhaps because she is 'floating', the drama of her account of herself to her nurse is characterised by volatility and instability on one hand, and fixity and obsessive preoccupation on the other. As a circulating pawn in a capital and imperial system, Barbara is trapped, addicted, manipulated and tragic. Rather like the taxes that are not paid on her wealth, she is also withheld, or arrested, at the same time as circulating around the oceans of the British imperium. The notion of arrested development inherent in her position as floating capital gives her all the ambiguity of worldly knowledge of ships and men, but in fact she appears to have the bearing of a child. The disregulation of relation and environment, of addiction and fixation, are wound back to the monstrous figure of her mother, with the claim that her mother was trying to 'make me like herself' and that her sexual 'spoiling' happened at ages eleven to twelve, indicating the endless reproduction and degrading impact of capital and class priorities as corruption, child prostitution and generational abuse. Certainly, Babs (Baby) seems to react to her constant marine environment as a baby: she can't walk, she is thirsty but can't

reach the water on her own and she claims that try as she might she can't manage to look older. This repertoire of the infantile works in a series of contradictory and overlapping commands and statements: "Give me some water'. Suddenly she was demanding, 'Hurry, I'm perishing! Oh, this terrible thirst in my throat. It is like dying in the desert or something" ('A Night' 55) and 'Oh, it's rotten, rotten being here. There must be some fun on board. He sounds a nice man. I'm so weak I can't walk' and 'My way's a rotten way. I can't help it' ('A Night' 60). The irony of her statement to Stella that 'you don't know what it is to live' becomes increasingly telling as her misery and self-contradiction escalate throughout the night ('A Night' 63).

Barbara, the alcoholic, describes herself to Stella (the moon/night girl) as soft, saturated, spoiled, weak and rotten. She exhibits all the signs of being constantly at sea, and the correlation here is the addiction to alcohol, contradictory statements and an unsteady sense of how to behave. This super-saturation of the young heiress who is being constantly circulated at sea is also troped as translucency and transparency, whiteness and near nakedness. Although confined in a tiny cabin and monitored for her safety, the young woman is proximate to the water outside, saturated by alcohol or dominated by her thirsty need for it and unable to acquire any real land or sea legs, Barbara is essentially water-logged and increasingly indistinguishable from the element that circulates her through the world.

The volatility of her account of her other relationships with women is balanced out by a constant stream of advice about men, the source of her main interest apart from alcohol and coincidental with her earliest forms of 'education'. She claims to know the world but in fact it might be that she is only able to provide advice about men she has met on boats—captains, doctors, pursers, military men from around the empire, fellow passengers—'You'll find the weakest at sea' ('A Night' 66). After she asks Stella, 'are you interested in men', she proceeds to impart world-weary sexual wisdom—'I know men' ('A Night' 56) and 'Men like to look at me' ('A Night' 65)—but also asserts, 'Don't wait and don't you live within him without marrying him, it doesn't pay' ('A Night' 56). The value proposition of sexual relations is never very far from her sense of her life and her femininity.

As a pedagogical scene, it seems that there are superficial worldly lessons about desirability and attractiveness, the destructive family realities of the upper classes, the perfidiousness of men operating at the peripheries of the colonial/imperial system. This scene of female sociality and female apprenticeship might also offer a superficial sense of the dystopian realities of worldliness, the female homosocial and vexed

maternity, but the taxing and infantilising instability of capital is what is really witnessed by the Australian girl. Rather more than water or even the female body of feminine identity, capital is what proves most unstable and destabilising.

This early short story produces a hawk-eyed account of the entanglement of capital, class, colonial relations and gender. The more profound worldly reality relates to the way in which the kind of capitalism that the colonial shipping routes enable and maintain are in fact a prison, and this particular pawn is both intensely policed by and sacrificial to that larger system. The effect of Barbara's constant movement is a kind of arrested development in terms of adult relationships—the heiress has not only lost her land legs, she is, in fact, pickled.

Stead's account of colonial social relations and female pedagogical space demonstrates the vitality and determination of her desire to comprehend and convey a comprehensive range of worldly forces—bodily, physical, environmental, and political. If you take her oceanic writing as a set, one is immediately struck by the breadth of her oceanic imagination. For the purposes of this paper, it is the way Stead's epic materialism also captures the second great totality of her time (and ours)—the totality of capitalism as an intricately connected set of social and economic processes. Her capacity to hold and convey both totalities, the ideal and the material, is one of the most significant aspects of her worldly aesthetics, so fundamentally located in and sourced from the marine world of which she claimed she was a native.

Notes

- In a letter to Thistle Harris, substantially addressing The Man Who Loved Children, Stead wrote a little about her future projects: 'I have had a tremendous idea—to write a novel about the Pacific and Pacific shores, that glittering continent of water which is bigger than all the land mass: that is a transfiguration of my local patriotism.' (Stead, Letters 91)
- 2 In her foreword to Arshia Sattar's translation of a collection of Somadeva's Tales from the Kathasaritasagara, Wendy Doniger comments that this was known as the Tawney-Penzer edition, 'translated by C. H Tawney, edited with copious notes by N. M. Penzer and published in ten volumes in London in 1924.' ('Foreword' xliii)

98 | Westerly 62.2 99 | Fiona Morrison

Works Cited

- Blum, Hester. 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies', *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 670-677. Chambers, Iain. 'Maritime Criticism and Theoretical Shipwrecks', PMLA 125.3 (2010): 678-684.
- Cohen, Margaret. 'Literary Studies in the Terraqueous Globe', *PMLA* 125.3 (2010): 657–662.
- Freud, Sigmund. Civilisation and its Discontents. Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton. 1962.
- Johnson, Peter. 'Unravelling Foucault's "Different Spaces"', *History of the Human Sciences* 19.4 (2006): 75–90.
- Le Menager, Stephanie. 'Floating Capital: The Trouble with Whiteness on Twain's Mississippi', *ELH* 71 (2004): 405–431.
- Malhan, Tara Sheemar. *Plunging the Ocean: Courts, Castes and Courtesans in the* Kathasaritasagara. Primus Books: Delhi, 2017.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Principles of Political Economy.* 1848. Ed and Intro. Stephen Nathanson. Indianapolis: Hackett publishing, 2004. Web)
- Morrison, Fiona. "The Elided Middle": Christina Stead's For Love Alone and the Colonial "Voyage In", Southerly 69.2 (2009): 155–174.
- Parsons, William B. The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling: Revisioning the Psychoanalytic Theory of Mysticism. New York: Oxford, 1999.
- Snaith, Anna. Modernist Voyages: Colonial Women Writers in London, 1890–1945. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Somadeva. *Tales from the Kathasaritasagara (The Ocean of the Sea of Stories)*. Trans. (with intro) Arshia Sattar. Foreword by Wendy Doniger. Haryana: Penguin, India, 1994.
- Stead, Christina. A Web of Friendship: Selected Letters (1928–1973). Pymble: Angus and Robertson. 1992.
- Stead, Christina. Ocean of Story: The Uncollected Stories of Christina Stead. Penguin: Ringwood, 1986.
- Stead, Christina and Rodney Wetherell. 'Interview with Christina Stead', *Australian Literary Studies*. 9.4 (1980): 431–448.
- Steinberg, Phillip E. *The Social Construction of the Ocean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

The Blue Katinka Smit

Katinka Smit writes regularly for northerly for the Byron Writers Festival. Her creative work has appeared in Westerly, Coastlines and 100 Love Letters, as well as in the US. She is inspired by the deepest longings of the human heart, with the form of the work following its lead. She is currently researching for a novella set in India.

The first time I took a breath through a regulator, I felt like I was going to die. The infinitesimal delay between the cool suck of air and the opening freedom in my lungs unearthed buried memories; a near drowning at age three; my irrational fear, age eight, of being buried alive.

I thrashed up to the surface.

'It's ok,' soothed the dive instructor.

The rest of the group, my boyfriend Alex and our friends, all German like the instructor, had dived before and were seated in the boat at the edge of the bay near Padang Bai fishing village where we were staying. They chatted quietly in their own language, looking out to sea, while I struggled at its edge to relax and breathe. Alex gave me the thumbs up from the boat and resumed his conversation.

'It's ok,' the instructor said again. 'Just put your face flat into the water and take a breath. You can lift your head up any time.'

The water felt warm against my cheeks. Sunlight shimmered over my bare legs; tiny silver bubbles tickled through the fine hairs there. A small triangular black and yellow fish swam under my face.

'Ok, now let yourself go down a bit. Hold your nose and blow softly, and kneel down on the sand.'

I dropped my legs and sank under. I sucked hard on the regulator, willing myself past the void of time when it seemed no air would reach me. I burst back up.

'You were already doing it,' he said. 'Put your face down and try again.' He put his hand gently on my head.

'Stay there.'

I started to squirm but his hand held firm.

'Just breathe,' he said gently.

I drew a breath and barely breathed out before gulping another.

'In—out,' he bit each word out slowly, at the pace that I should breathe.

I willed myself to breathe in rhythm with his voice.

'Good. That's all you have to do. Now start to lower yourself,'—the pressure of his hand increased—'down. Remember your ears. Always blow holding your nose—just gently.'

The crispness of his consonants disappeared, then his voice, and finally the pressure of his hand. His body under the water was lean and relaxed; his arms swam slowly, rhythmically. Beyond him, the sand stretched gradually downwards, the turquoise water becoming light emerald green as it deepened. My knees hit the sand and bubbles ran up in front of my eyes. Breath invaded my senses.

He signed ok to me underwater. I put my hand above the water and answered with my own circle of forefinger and thumb. His hands curled into two fists with the thumbs up. He jerked them towards the surface, the signal to come up. My head crowned and water ran down my skull. He high-fived me, grinning.

'Ok! Now you are ready. Let's go diving!'

We waded to the boat. He joked in German with the others while loosening my buoyancy jacket, then climbed over the side. I took off my gear and passed it up to him.

Alex crabbed towards me.

'Are you ok?'

I nodded. He gripped my hand and hauled me arm and elbow up. I scrabbled into the boat and plonked down next to him on the seat. He motioned towards the open sea with his head, taking my hand in his again.

'Just wait until we are out there. It's beautiful.'

The instructor said something in Bahasa to the boat boy who then pushed off, leaping nimbly from the water into his seat. The motor cracked to life and we spluttered loudly away from the beach.

• • •

'Do you believe in angels?'

Alex and I are relaxing on the beach watching the sunset in front of our bungalow. We've been here in Koh Samui a few months, diving almost daily in the marine parks off the surrounding islands. His face glows golden pink, his blue eyes shine against his dark lashes.

'No, I don't, but I can see why you do.'

I nod. Perhaps it's natural for me after having had cancer to need an anchor, a hope, to look for answers where there are none. Travelling

hasn't changed that. If anything it's given me more reason to dig into the murky depths of being, to feel every lump and grit of what is there.

I tap my foot in the sand in time to the song in my head.

'I believe in angels,' I sing, an old ABBA song from my childhood.

Stars pop out of the evening. The night sinks across the water, drapes its velvet over Koh Pangnan, slightly north of us. I kick my toes in the sand. It's full of coarse round grains like small planets.

'Do you know the story of Ulysses?'

'You mean Odysseus?'

'You guys call it that? Tied himself to the mast, was tempted by sirens? Left a very lonely wife at home?'

He nods and sips his drink. Darkness hangs languorously over the bay, smothers the last glow of the sun. Lights push up in the distant fishing village of Bophut. My hand finds Alex's and curls up in it, like a child on its mother's lap.

'I think that's what sirens are. They're angels singing under water, calling us to eternal peace.'

His hand closes around mine.

'Maybe peace exists inside of us already,' he says, 'and they are just telling us it is there.'

• • •

The instructor swam with me by the arm, as though we were lovers taking a stroll. He showed me his wrist computer, pointing at me then touching his mask with two fingers where his eyes were. He tapped the computer and showed it to me again. *Ten metres. Twenty-six degrees.* He reached towards my stomach and checked the tank gauge tucked into my weight-belt, signalled ok as he let it go. I nodded and he signalled again. I signed ok back. He let go of my arm. Bubbles frothed in front of my face. He signalled again. My hand made the sign.

The distance between us lengthened. He rolled over onto his back like an otter, finning slowly, and signalled ok to the rest of the group, waiting for all three replies before turning back onto his front. He signed ok to me again. The smile on my face answered. We ok'd simultaneously.

Alex swam up to me, his face pressed flat under the mask. He signalled ok. I signed back. He grinned and swam away a small distance, ferreting in the sand like some kind of nosing seal. His fins flapped steadily above him.

The coral was electric; blue, turquoise, magenta, violet. A pastel parrotfish gobbed by. The fish moved slowly, undisturbed by our presence, sparkling red, green, yellow, blue. Some stretched as though waking from a deep sleep, yawning and fanning themselves among the bright boughs.

A spotted brown and cream fish leaned on its fins in the coral, mouth gaping. A small cleaner fish darting in and out of its mouth. A skirted white mollusc swam delicately past, swirling in the current. Gorgolian fans, thin and soft, like long glowing pastel pipe-cleaners, swayed in the current, a harp of slender fingers reaching towards the streaming silver light. Above us the surface dimpled; a silk parachute of sunlight lay across the water, pockets of light rocked and billowed.

Alex appeared at my side. He took my left hand in his and held a semicircle of broken coral against my ring finger. Bubbles streamed from his mouth as he took his regulator away. His lips were slack and full, pushed out by the water his breath displaced.

'Will you marry me?' he mouthed.

I ok'd with both hands.

• • •

Alex is wearing my leopard-skin bikini. Brown hair tufts from its flimsy corners. His breasts fill the bikini fully, unlike my lopsided ones.

'You like? I love you long time.'

He takes his breasts in his hands and squeezes them softly, provocatively pouting forwards.

'You like? All for you, very good price.'

Stubble moves in thick waves across his cheeks. It follows the swell of his smile, crashes into crinkles when he laughs.

'You like boom boom? Aroy mak mak. Very good.'

His fake Thai accent broadens the clip of his German one. I laugh at him from the bed.

'We make boom boom long time. You try, very nice.'

I grab him by the bikini bottom.

'I like,' I say, stretching out the words with the bikini.

He falls forward, half on me, half on the hard mattress. His hands dive into the bikini top and surface again. Hot yellow skins pop out of his open palms. He grins.

'Mango?'

I point him out of the bed.

'Man. Go.'

'Are you sure?' he kneels up to leave, knuckles to the bed, fists full of fruit.

'No!'

I pull him back down and we make mango all over the mattress.

• • •

'Ok, so let's go over it one more time. We dive down to the bottom. Then we start the buddy breathing. You go first. Remember, two breaths, then pass the regulator to me.'

Alex looks me in the eyes to make sure I'm listening. He's instructing me for my dive master training. Today we're doing an underwater stress test. You take off your equipment and redress in each other's gear.

'First we'll take off our masks. We'll use your tank. Remember, we have to keep the breath in rhythm. One, two, pass the air to me and blow bubbles while I take my breaths.'

It seems counter-intuitive not to hold your breath, especially with your mask off, but holding the double-pressurised air can rupture your lungs. I steady my breathing, mentally doing the motions as he recites them.

'Next, we'll swap fins. Weights—make sure we pass them at the same time and hold on to each other—I don't want one of us floating up to the surface. Ok? We'll swap our buoyancy jackets last.'

We've practised this in the pool at the resort where Alex works as a dive instructor. The first time I panicked up to the surface.

'Should we still do the unconscious diver rescue? We can leave it for another day if it's too much.'

The rescue exercise is tricky. I have to inflate Alex's buoyancy jacket and swim him slowly to the surface, while he pretends to be unconscious. We need to come to the surface slowly enough to stop nitrogen bubbles from forming in our blood, yet fast enough to save a drowning diver. Once on the surface I'll tow him to the boat while giving rescue breaths all the way. I take a deep breath.

'Let's do it all.'

He looks at me and nods.

'Remember to keep your breaths in rhythm, one, two, breathe, breathe.' He counts it out slowly. I mimic his pace with my breath and imagine holding him by the jaw, kicking one, two across the water, holding his head afloat while I breathe into his mouth.

'When we get to the boat, take off my jacket, pass it up to the crew, then pull me up on to the boat. Remember to keep the breaths up.'

We've already practised this twice, but that was in the pool. I imagine myself doing it down at ten metres. My heart races.

'When we're back on deck do five more breaths, still counting, then put me in the recovery position. Got it?'

I nod.

'Bleib ruhig. Just breathe, that's the most important thing.'

His imperative to keep calm fills me like a lungful of air. I breathe out slowly.

'You can do it. We have plenty of air in our tanks, and the boat will be right here. If worst comes to worst, we do a CESA.'

The Controlled Emergency Swimming Ascent is a slow, voiced, exhale to the surface, in case you ever run out of air. Your lungs expand as you ascend, releasing a miracle of compressed breath. I've practised it often and I'm confident with it, his star student in the technique.

'Ok?'

'Ok.'

We clasp hands and press our thumbs and foreheads together, our eyes closed, breathing. His eyes open onto mine.

'Let's do it.'

...

Blue.

The colour of oneness. The colour of all.

The deep.

All things lead to its depths. We drown in its coldness, plunging from one blue to the next, airless, upless. Up there, the sky reflects me on the surface. I wobble and well up, dark sheaths of bubbles push dank air, like cancer, pushing up out of the muck. Gaseous. Steaming.

What's there?

Blue. Beyond.

Beyond this rock, beyond this fountain of stone spewed up and clutched hard here under the water, under me. What's there? We swim east-north-east, sixty degrees.

Blue. Surrounding totality. Pressing down. Pushing sideways, the current a cool dark stream, leading *where? Take off the mask*. No. Must see. The dark is coming. Must see the blue. Must feel the air disappearing, the sky rising away, pushing the ocean down on me.

Take off the jacket now. Take off the air.

Leave the lead. Sinking. Deeper, further.

Small, pale green glow. Fifty metres. Twelve degrees. Lungs tight little fists. Darkness. Pipes clanging? *No.* Angels singing. Over there.

I see a form in the darkness.

I follow her, leading me deeper. Further. No access to humans. But I am here. I am coming. My hair streams flat, sideways in the cold water air. Her fins flash fish thin. Thick black air, condensing, clouds of Cupid dust.

Her hair rising. She turns to me. Her face is not there.

I wake up silent, screaming, my hair in my mouth. The sheets grip my legs and drag me back under. I kick swim up for air, gasp on the surface.

Alex hasn't stirred. My hands drift up to my breasts and fasten on the small lumps there. *One, two, three*.

Maybe they're only cysts. A false alarm. I trace the lines of puckered skin, rubbing softly back and forwards over my scars.

'There, there,' I whisper, like a grandmother to a wailing child.

The calm is fleeting. Waves of fear clutch my throat, my mind awash. Für Elise jangles mechanically in my memory. The musical alarm rolls me backwards, down the dim hospital corridor, back under the dark brown eye of the radiation machine. The nurses race away, up the corridor.

You're very young. If it comes back...

I curse my doctor, smooth and pink in her linen suit. Her unfinished comment, a small seed of doubt, floats between us in her office. The small crack in my surface calm. The small turn of a cell.

I signal *ok* into the darkness and my left hand signals limply back. The night surrounds me thickly. I tread its sticky heat.

• • •

Flies buzz over the meat. A lump of pale pork sits fatly on the table, surrounded by chicken feet, breast fillets, fatty pork mince, a glistening liver and some gizzards. I point at a dull flat whitish thing at the side of the table, crumpled and folded. Smiling, the butcher holds it up. The pig's face smiles too, caving in on itself between her hands.

My mind leaps back in shock. Red laser beams link the black ink spots on the carcass. I lay motionless under the ceiling mirror in the radiation room. It's the bed normally used for head patients. A strong, beatific woman is gazing down at me. The nurses order my flesh with sheets and foam props. The mirror woman's body moves too.

The butcher holds the pig's face higher, beaming. It lines up level with her face.

'You like?'

It sounds like, you lie? I shake my head.

'Very nice. You try. Aroi mak mak.'

I'm sure it's not delicious.

'No, thank you.'

She drops it in a heap on the table. She picks up her cleaver and grabs a moist hunk of meat from under the table, hacks it neatly into chunks. She glares at me with a sweet smile as she bludgeons the flesh. She throws a comment to the woman next door who catches it and hoicks a fresh one back. I catch the inevitable word for foreigner, *farang*, but not much else. The butcher glances her knife towards the pig's face. They cry in laughter.

I cross the aisle towards my usual fruit seller. He has a harelip and a fast smile that stretches wide under his nose.

'Sow a dee krap.' He leans long into the last syllable, politely. 'You like mango? Forty baht. Very good price.'

I choose three papayas and a big bunch of longans. I'm not in the mood for mangoes.

• • •

The international hospital is on the other side of the island. It takes half an hour to ride there through the middle from our place, bypassing the busy ring-road. I ride past the airport on its drained swamp, the road tarred for tourists, and corner onto dirt. I brake and veer by the skanky large-eared dogs lying in the dust in the febrile sun. Scoot past the sagging, squalid huts where the underage prostitutes stand listlessly under the low verandas, dodge enormous potholes left over from the monsoon, which have already dried up. The trees droop under the weight of muck.

Every now and again a local roars past, staring at my paleness under my metallic pink helmet, laughing or waving, sometimes glaring, their bodies fluid and relaxed.

Coming back onto the major road that circles the island, the traffic thickens. I pass dense jungle on both sides and round a bend, brake in preparation for the sudden right-hand turn that enters the hospital. The boom gate opens slowly.

The hospital is cold. The receptionist takes my name and points me to the waiting area. It is modern, clean and well lit, unlike the public hospital in Nathon that stinks of failed air-conditioning, its dark halls crowded with beds and patients' families. There is soap in the toilets here, and disposable everything that only gets used once.

The receptionist calls my name. Sweat trickles down my sides. A young nurse waits at the entrance to the hallway. She *wais* me with her hands pressed together just below her nose. I follow her down the corridor.

• • •

All around me is light, as light as the blue can be at sixteen metres. Bubbles float slowly to the surface, drifting away. To my right, the weight of the island holds the water close.

My divers are metres away. The current whisks me around a corner.

Fish swim alongside me companionably. Soft bright corals wave purple, pink, white, golden blue. Giant clams clap their mouths shut as I pass over them, brown, purple, blue. My fins swirl the water as I turn over. The surface shimmers above me. Sunlight chandeliers across its expanse.

I roll back over and consciously slow my breathing. The air condenses, the bubbles released as though from mud. I drift.

Rasping and rumbling, my breath is the only disturbance in the underwater peace. Sea cucumbers rise up, streaming white and red clouds like paint, or blood. They wave gently in the current, mating, dancing life.

Something high and singing floats distantly, clearly, past the island. Somewhere out there, in the blue. The sound thins out.

My tank gauge reads forty bar. I should go up. My divers are gone, probably back up to the surface to wait for me, according to our dive plan. I check my wrist computer out of habit. *Twenty-one metres. Twenty-five degrees*.

Corals blob dully on the bottom, their colours filtered out by the depth. A thick shadow appears above me the size of a small boat; hundreds of scad clumped together, turning in unison in the current. Barracuda arrive. They circle the shoal like wolves, then attack. Fish smash in all directions then re-clump.

I no longer recognise the contours of the island. The current has me now and I drift wide, away from the rock formations at the base of the island. I check my tank gauge. *Fifteen bar.* A motor rumbles somewhere, chugging and churning the surface. Alex must be worried. I signal *ok* up to the surface.

And then it's there again; the sweetest, purest of sounds.

It penetrates the rasping, quicksilver stream around my head.

My thoughts dissolve. No doubt descends on me: no fear of dying, no waiting for the moment when my body betrays me again.

There is just this moment. Weightless, every atom singing, my cells a steady exchange of gases, membranes permeable and fixed.

Suspended on sound, I hover, breathing.

keunggulan Sanna Peden

Sanna Peden is a lapsed academic and recovering writer. Her poetry has previously appeared in Cordite Poetry Review, Creatrix, Visible Ink and Westerly.

hot garbage and mango coca-cola in an all marble dining room, the kids' table a family friend rides horses; i am afraid of animals

i win a prize for reading so much most of it enid blyton i memorise her instructions for summoning fairies hugging trees is involved

it does not work i realise malaysian fairies must not respond to english instructions i am seven years old, and a cultural relativist

gaya, mutu, keunggulan*

orange enamel bowls, fried rice salted peanuts for chopstick practice 'thankyou' is my first english word we sit by the pool and my father teaches us, me and my sister mr adarsh would teach us badminton, but we are too shy mr tan runs the place my mother remembers him as the one constant in a place of frequent flyer friends and neighbours

i don't remember the transience but i remember mr tan

my dad has a deal with one of the chinatown stalls: a refund on any watch that doesn't work in the morning he is a loyal customer, and all our intrepid relatives tell time by this stall

ten years later he seeks out the same man, meets his son

apartments in the same building are for sale for a small fortune of ringgit i could have all my nostalgia disabused of me

 $^{^{\}star}$ gaya, mutu, keunggulan, i.e. 'style, quality, excellence' was a slogan in an old Dunhill advertisement.

Sitting on My Grandmother's Skirts

Caitlin Prince

Caitlin Prince works part of the year as an occupational therapist in remote Aboriginal communities. The rest of the year she is based in Asia, writing, blogging and completing a Masters in writing and literature with Deakin University.

I don't want to play games with you so let me begin with some facts. When I was three years old my Australian parents took me to live in Kathmandu, Nepal. When I was ten years old they brought me home again.

Are those the facts?

Fact /fakt/ noun: A thing that is indisputably the case. Indisputably.

• • •

Outside my hotel window, two children in knitted hats are playing badminton. The shuttlecock, suspended in slow flight between the twang of every hit, is a ghost from my dreams. This light, this particular shade of the morning during Nepali winter, is the same colour as the insides of my eyelids.

The sound of Nepali language—*Didi—hunchha—tiksha*—intertwines with the sound of someone hacking back phlegm, the bumble of a motorcycle, a rooster crowing and somebody pounding spices in a mortar and pestle on the floor above me.

I can't be sure if I am dreaming or awake. If this is now or then. For so long these sounds have hung inside me, the empty echo of a lonely corridor.

• • •

'Where are you from?' Travellers ask this of one another before they ask your name or occupation.

I am sitting on the floor at a low table in a technicolour café in Thamel, the tourist centre of Kathmandu. I look up at the young American woman. She is about thirty I'd guess, like me. Probably volunteering at an orphanage for ten days before a trek and then onto a vipassana retreat. Unlike me.

'I'm from Australia,' I say to her. It's a lie, it's a lie, whispers behind me.

I touch my fingertips to the worn cushion beneath me. It is woven in the traditional Dhaka patterns. I know this without knowing what it really means. It has been Dhaka cloth to me the way salt is salt, and pepper is pepper.

I'm from Nepal, I want to say, but I am trying to avoid that inevitable moment where eyes widen with delight at the exotic or narrow in suspicion. Why does this happen? Are people threatened? Suspect I'm lying? Is my story too complicated for comfort?

I watch for these cues without knowing I'm watching for them. These are the microseconds of unspoken communication that have laid down on top of me for the past twenty years, suffocating the truth inside me until I simply stopped trying to speak it.

If I place my hand against my sternum I can feel the skyline of Kathmandu there, oddly shaped and asymmetrical like the teeth of an old woman. I want to say that this seething city has arranged my insides, so I too am craggy-toothed, twisted and wobbling, with warm breath, bad smells, pink gums and blackened ulcers. I too have hawks soaring, spiralling in packs in the ceiling of the Himalayas.

I am from here, I would say, if honesty weren't quite so hard to come by.

• • •

Here are some definitions I learnt during my Nepali childhood:

Home /hōm/ noun: A red-brick building owned by a Brahmin family who lived on the ground floor. We lived on the second floor and also on the big flat roof that had one room in which my big brother slept. The Brahmin family used to invite us to dinner but would not eat with us. They could not share food with the unclean.

The unclean /ən'klēn/ noun: Us.

Road /rōd/ noun: Any space through which a motorcycle can pass. May not lead anywhere. Construction may include bitumen, river rocks, gravel and/or an open sewer. Inhabited by chinky cheap cars, three-wheelers, motorcycles, chugging tractors and TATA trucks belching out black smoke and sparkling with tinsel tassels. May also include the palace elephant, residential cows, or once a year, the multi-storey wooden chariot pulled on giant ropes that houses Lord Machhendranath.

Building site /bildiNG sīt/ noun: Synonymous with playground. Perfect for chasing Aneil up concrete steps that have no walls, to floors that have no ceilings.

Kancha / kānchā / noun: House-boy. A boy sold into slavery by a family too poor to pay their debts, to feed their son, to offer a life. Aneil.

Shop /b 'zär/ noun: A web of alleys spidering off in all directions. Laws of gravity or physics do not apply. Stores stuffed with goods procured from invisible spaces. Hot sweet tea and shop-keeper's life stories come free of charge.

Here are some things left undefined (by Christian parents raising a Christian child):

Fierce Hindu gods and goddesses following me with wide eyes and sharp teeth, a multitude of hands holding weapons, fire and severed human heads. Copulating on temple pillars, leering out from roofs, guarded by snakes and lions—stained blood-red with tikka dyes, lit up by candles, the light and shadow shifting their features—half revealed, half obscured by the lattice of the temple walls. Not spoken about. Look away. But on every street corner, between the motorcycles and pressing crowds, men and women are bowing, touching their foreheads to the ground, ringing bells and lighting incense. Sacred acts on hallowed ground in the thick of all the living.

What happens when an experience impacts the senses but is left wordless and undefined, never articulated, never shared? If an experience cannot be put down in words and nobody verifies it, did it really happen? If you cannot name it, does it really exist?

• • •

When the earthquake hit Nepal in 2014, I watched the footage via Facebook from my home in Australia. I watched the temples I had memorised—the thread of their wooden beams, the purring of the pigeons in their rafters—disintegrate in a cloud of dust. I saw temple guardians lying sideways in the rubble as if keeled over in grief, derelict on their duty.

I stared at the screen in silent shock, heat burning out of somewhere deep in my gut. Tears spilled over and I began to shake.

I had experienced this before. I hadn't had the words, but I had experienced this before.

• • •

Ten years old and Kathmandu's toothy skyline is shrinking beneath the aeroplane. Now the green hills have come into view, patches of colour—rice terraces—cut into steep slopes. Clouds are reaching their occluding fingers through the hills until suddenly everything is white. Nepal is lost from sight.

Long after Nepal has been swallowed, the stony Himalayas stare me down, sharp as an inhale, piercing the sky. They trail on and on, seemingly

endless. This is their one last entrancement. They extract part of me, keep it always locked behind those mountains.

• • •

These are definitions I tried to relearn:

Home /hōm/ noun: Australia. Repeat after me: *I am Australian*. A fourbedroom home in a suburban grid.

The unclean / an'klēn/ *noun*: Brown people, especially Aboriginal. Not spoken about. Look away.

Road /rōd/ noun: Inhabited by cars only, windows closed tight and tinted, reflecting back your own face standing alone. Nobody to see here.

Building site / bildiNG sīt / noun: 'I went to Kathmandu once. It looked like a bombed city, or a building site,' said the librarian, the only other person in my school who had been to Nepal.

Shop/SHäp/noun: Air-conditioned mega-mall with shiny floors and bright lights and a background static of footsteps, exhaust and trolleys rattling. Everything is on the shelf and what you see is what you get. The price is as you see it.

Here are some things left undefined (by Australian adults educating an Australian child):

Why we must apply the make-up and the perfect clothes and step out into the clean straight streets to walk to the shined car and drive between those walls of metal to the gates of the school and scurry in away from the threat?

•••

Five years old and I am staring at the closed door. I can hear Aneil crying behind it. I am imagining the other side of this wooden door—dark, the sloping roof of the underside of the stair, the thin mattress on the floor. Behind me from within the main house I hear the flicking of a gas heater, its creak and boom as it springs into life. I shouldn't be here. He wouldn't want me to hear it. Haju Amma would squawk and chase me away. I wouldn't pay, not with my white skin and pale blonde hair. I'm a ghost running through these streets, getting away with everything. Aneil would pay, more chores to his working day.

I back away from the door and climb up the stairs to my own house. Dad is on the couch, reading *The Hobbit* to my brothers. I climb in.

There are beggars on every street corner. Every time you turn a new hand reaches out. Women clutch skinny babies, men without legs drag themselves on shaky wooden carts. My parents teach me to walk past them. They explain to me the difference between giving to an organisation who can help, and giving here on the street at the prickly, uncomfortable interface. If I was older, perhaps I would look away, but I am not, so I stare at the stretched thin breast of the woman feeding her baby, the dirty bandages around the man's stump—the swollen belly surrounded by four skeletal limbs.

• • •

When I graduate from high school my Principal announces in his speech commemorating each departing student, 'Caitlin wears her passion for social justice on her sleeve, even if it is a bit too in-your-face for my liking.'

I am blazing in my maroon school blazer. Aneil is crying beneath the stairwell, and my beloved Didi is coming to work with bruises on her face. My friend down the alley is having her marriage arranged at the age of thirteen. But these stories take on the sheen of exaggeration when I try to deliver them in my grey, blue school uniform. They echo with hyperbole in the gymnasium-cum-assembly-hall of our private school in the northern suburbs of Perth. Even to my own ears, they have stopped ringing true.

I am an adolescent trying to find the words to express my experience of the world, but the world I have experienced has vanished from sight. I am like Wile E. Coyote, running on empty air out past the cliff—the world that should structure and underpin my language has gone missing beneath me.

Don't look down—just keep running.

. . .

Why does it take me so long to go back to Nepal?

I'm thirty-one years old. I've been married and divorced and I never took my ex-husband there.

I didn't know how to fit those pieces together. Kathmandu is filthy streets and polluted skies, and my first and most intense love affair. What if he hated it? *Kathmandu looks like a bombed city*, the school librarian said. A single sentence remembered because precious little else was said.

There's another reason I never took my husband there. There are too many things I can't put into language, don't know how to bring up to the surface to tell him: Here, this is what this means. (Everything. This means everything to me.)

• • •

I tell myself I'll just pop over to the hotel near my old house, sit in their comfortable lounge and have coffee. Maybe visit a handicraft shop in the neighbourhood. My subconscious is playing games with me, hide-and-seek. It's too much to face head-on.

I leave early before the traffic, and oh my, it's a quick drive in the taxi. Whizzing past the monkey-infested temple—their population seems to have grown—past the Tapatali turn-off where Mum and Dad worked and we used to get the lychees, over the Bagmati River, past the little market where the goats used to get butchered, past the corner-store on my street—there—that was my alleyway—that old traditional house is still standing. Now there is a Ganesha where there used to be a rubbish dump with a resident cow munching. We drive up the Summit hill that I would always try to make in one go on my bike. The *dahi* (yoghurt) place seems to have gone. We arrive at the Summit Hotel and there is the very same waiter who has been here for thirty years. I called him *Daju* (father) and sit down in a corner and weep.

Everything has shrunken. The hill not so insurmountable, the hotel not so impressive. Even the closeness, this part of town to the other, everything so much smaller, closer, with adult eyes and adult legs.

I try to calm myself down by reading the paper.

As I read I realise I don't know the name of the Prime Minister. My political understanding of Nepal is in broad brushstrokes. I remember there was a King. Then gunshots and the smell of burning tyres, a plane left early so we never made it to our Indian beach holiday. Instead we stayed indoors, and came out to celebration, dyes pouring in the street—the dawn of democracy in Nepal. I remember printed symbols on the walls, 'Vote for Sun', 'Vote for Tree', 'Vote for Plough', democracy in a country with low literacy. Later I remember military patrolling streets, stalking through jungles, *bandhs* and curfews, streets emptied of cars and Maoists. I wasn't in the country when the royal family was massacred but somehow have images of Nepalis crowding palace gates and weeping. Did I visit then or see it on the news from Australia?

There's a scene in the final *Harry Potter* movie where Harry awakens in a dream-like King's Cross Station and a warped foetus of Voldemort is bloody, crying and dying on the station floor. I feel like that warped foetus—the child who was connected to this city got trapped here alone, stuck behind the mountains. She's still here, and I can pick her up, but my relationship to this place is weirdly stunted, trapped at a child level while I went on to grow up and be an adult. I was educated to understand other places, have been working and contributing to other parts of the world, yet always separated from this essential place, an essential part of myself.

I hate that I no longer speak the language. That I don't understand its political realities or what it is really like to live here as an adult. I'm scared

of the implications the recovering of my connection to Nepal will have on the other beloved parts of my life in Australia. I wonder if this is how adopted people feel when as adults they connect to their birth families. A weird sense of belonging and ownership but also gaping holes in their relationship with their birth family and fear about what it means for their adopted family.

Of course I walk from the hotel down the hill, just to go past the alley. A wave of nausea rolls through me. Okay, maybe just a little way down the alley, maybe just have a little peek at the house but I won't go in... But then I see Reema, my Nepali sister, and I'm opening the gate and I am in the courtyard being hugged by Reema, welcomed by her (my) brother Suraj, my father Daju, and Didi who now has dementia and can't quite place me but stares long in half-recognition. As we sit in the sun drinking tea, a parade of old neighbours come by, all to share their memories of me as a kid.

'Of course you feel it is your home,' Reema and Suraj say, 'you spent such a long time here.' I sit in their circle, surrounded by their bodies, the clamour of the conversation—claimed.

• • •

Back at my hotel, I sit on the balcony listening to Kathmandu's lullaby: Hindi music from somewhere nearby, crows and dogs barking, horns honking, kids' voices. Prayer flags are waving in the sky from a rooftop next door.

As I sit, I feel the fullness of myself, a sense of wholeness and coherence I can't quite articulate. I feel more solid here in Kathmandu, more aware of my muscles, the round presence of them, how much room they take up, how they connect with and touch the earth. I am effortlessly and innately both part of and distinct from the elements making up this city. The ease I feel brings tears of both grief and relief, for now I realise the effort it takes me to be anywhere—everywhere—else.

The sounds of the temple bells sound right. The Nepali in the bazaar sounds right. The sunlight in the morning through the fog is just the right kind of grey-blue. The pink of the Himalayas at sunset is exactly as it's meant to be. The city's crooked skyline of haphazard housing is exactly what a horizon is meant to be. It is the mirror of my heart.

I pick up my phone and send a message to my girlfriend describing these unfamiliar and extraordinary sensations.

'That's what home feels like!' she writes back.

'I didn't know,' I write. In different hemispheres we both begin crying.

'I'm so sorry you didn't know. You should have known. Everyone deserves to know that.'

'I thought that was broken in me. I didn't think I had a home. I didn't know I could feel like this.'

That night I don't sleep. I spend the night crying. Great racking, body-shaking sobs. Anger rising in hot waves. My gut rolling with nausea. All these years—two decades—of dislocation and confusion. Dumb silence. Desperate aloneness. How did I get so lost?

I may not be Nepali for the nationality of my parents or the culture of the family home I grew up in, but what nationality did I inherit from the mothering this city gave me?

• • •

In the Durbar Square of Bhaktapur intricately carved ancient bricks stand in piles rescued from the rubble. I have been circling the old city, again and again, like some kind of street dog. Even though I can see the empty platforms, even though I watched the footage of them coming down, I cannot stop myself from looking for the missing temples. I can still feel them, their pagodas towering over me.

I pick my way through the dust and construction workers to the last tall pagoda left standing, Nyatola Temple. I climb past its stony guardian elephants, up its slim steps. Its dark timber beams are warped but still here, the bricks cracked but holding up. Steel struts prop up part of the temple. The Gods dance above, around and behind me. I sit quietly, listening to the pagoda creaking.

A Hawaiian woman once told me she makes a monthly pilgrimage to the volcano, the home of Goddess Pele. She needs to sit upon that land, she says, because 'it's like sitting on my grandmothers skirts.' This, then, is coming to visit and finding my grandmother's skeleton exposed, essential bones missing—the breastbone perhaps, or the pelvis that cradles new life. They hold a powerful absence.

Since the earthquake, there are parts of this city that have completely disintegrated. Things lost that leave permanent gaping holes. Other parts have visible or structural scars but manage to stay standing. All over the city old bricks are being gathered and new bricks are brought in. The slow, dusty process of rebuilding has begun. It takes time and hard work and still some scars and losses will always remain.

In the ruins of Kathmandu Durbar Square, a woman bows to Kala Bhairava, Shiva's fiercest and most destructive manifestation. She stands, reaches past the human corpse that Bhairava straddles, past his belt made of human skulls, to place her hand in his—the hand that isn't clutching a bouquet of severed heads. I watch this woman, standing in this broken place, tenderly hold his hand a moment and wordlessly make her peace.

The Melbourne-Seoul Intercultural Poetry Exchange

In making this exchange possible, the authors would like to acknowledge the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia-Korea Foundation; the Literature Translation Institute of Korea; the Seoul Arts Space (Yeonhui); Sogang University; Deakin University; and RMIT University and their non/fictionLab.















'bending in all directions everywhere'1: a juddering, glimpsing, eidólonging of poets. Dan Disney, Jessica L. Wilkinson and

Cassandra Atherton

Dan Disney's collections of poetry include either, Orpheus (UWA Publishing, 2016) and Report from a border (with John Warwicker; Light Trap Press, 2016). He currently teaches in the English Literature Program at Sogang University, Seoul.

Jessica L. Wilkinson is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at RMIT University and the founding editor of Rabbit: a journal for nonfiction poetry. She is author of Marionette (2012) and Suite for Percy Grainger (2014).

Cassandra Atherton is Associate Professor of Writing and Literature at Deakin University and was a Harvard Visiting Scholar (2016). Her most recent collections are Exhumed (2015), Trace (2015) and Pika-Don (forthcoming).

Walt Whitman, 'Eidólons' [...] the substance of an artist's mood or savan's studies long.../ To fashion his eidólon

introduction/서론

Deriving from the Ancient Greek etymons eîdos ('form') and eídō ('to see'), the modern term 'eidólon' transmutes into English in two interconnected ways: an eidólon can either be an idealised person or thing, or a spectre or phantom. In poetry, the term is often associated with Walt Whitman's poem of the same name, included in his 'Inscriptions' section of the 1881–82 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. In this apocryphal text, stanzas repeatedly conclude on the word 'eidólon' as if the repetitions are one means (semantic satiation) by which to challenge connections between signified and signifier. The American transcendentalist's poem offers 'a theory about how a poet should handle, or mediate, form and materiality' (Cohen 1), and the eidólon remains paradoxical for Whitman, a 'spiritual image of the immaterial' which 'seeks to demonstrate the incompleteness

of our understanding of reality' (Richardson 201). Deploying the term experimentally here, we intend eidólonging (vb.) to identify that yearning for idealised space perhaps common to poets used to asking (in their own ways) 'have you reckon'd the earth much?' (Whitman in Bradley et al. 2). To eidólong is to apprehend depth structures within worldscapes—historical, cultural, ideological, architectonic—and by this means, poets perhaps acquire a vantage from which to trace into language apprehensions which remain pan-cultural. In this we follow Walter Benjamin's notions of a 'pure language [which] no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative Word, that which is meant in all languages' (Benjamin 2000, 22). This appeal to the phantasmic and the emphasis on Benjamin's theories in this article are in no way advocation for the mystification of process, or the obfuscation of cultural exchange and creative response. Indeed, we acknowledge Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere's (1990) identification of the 'cultural turn' with its emphasis on factors such as psychology, sociology, ideology and the importance of cultural contexts to translation. We extend this to argue for the reader as a further spectre in the poetics of translation. In this way, our experience as readers of haunted spaces and of one another's work, supports Jianguang Sun's contention:

Translation, as a process of intercultural communication, cannot be done without the participation of readers. Therefore, the readers' expectation and reception of the translation work should also be taken into consideration, which are influenced and regulated by the readers' poetics. (1278)

Speculatively, then, poets participating in the Melbourne-Seoul: intercultural poetry exchange² may be said to have viewed not only each respective city as an otherworldly space haunted with possibility; to each delegation, the work of foreign counterparts engaged in this exchange has served as an ideal, the poems-in-translation acting as points of entry into elsewardly generative sites. In his seminal essay, 'The Task of the Translator' (1923), Benjamin asserts that the act of translation necessarily engages notions of both a 'life and afterlife' (Benjamin 2000, 16), and he situates translations thus:

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, the reverberation of the work in the alien one. (Benjamin 2000, 20)

In each of the original creative works germinated during this exchange, we find echoes rippling as if spectrally from specific psychogeographical sites and the texts these give rise to, translated sounds shifting from what Benjamin regards as a purely extra-linguistic domain and into our own phantasmic language. Indeed, the poets from Seoul and Melbourne perhaps view one another in those same ways a translator regards an untranslated source text: in each visiting poet we behold an impossible other, as if we are two forests trilling with different birds. Acting as if latter-day *flâneurs* and botanising strange new pavements, all original poems here have filtered through foreign spaces and texts, each poet collating a bloom of interactions (interpersonal, cultural, glyphic, translated) to deliver their own cosmopolitan hybrids, as if grafted trees ghosting particular forests dispersed through common air.

two/둘

We sit together in the Urban Writing House on the grounds of RMIT University while Korean poet Bo-Seon Shim writes four phrases in Hangeul on the blackboard. Turning mischievously, he grins: 'guess the swear word', and this activity reveals familiar gestures within unfamiliar materials. Every language has expletives... so how do yours look and sound?

These symbols (are they glyphs or ideograms?) ('no,' he says) are a barrier, and of course we English-using monoglots cannot access the Korean alphabet to articulate its phonemes; after a few failed guesses, our guests do the translating:

1. finger ring 2. chicken feet 3. mother-fucking 4. rain drops

'Chicken feet' receives a burst of laughter, and this process opens onto an epiphany: perhaps in this instance our interpretation exercise demonstrates how translation indeed extends beyond language, as we find ways to connect interpersonally to understand more deeply our poemgenerating foreign counterparts. This is translation-as-humanisation, and these poet-others quickly turn into anything but spectres.

There is so much conjecture on the supposed untranslatability of this genre; as contemporary poet Don Paterson would have it, 'one can no more translate a poem than one can a piece of music' (77), while Yves Bonnefoy is more strident: 'The answer to the question, "Can one translate a poem?" is of course no' (186). Matters of materiality (grammar, syntax, phonology, the poetic line) ensure translatorly equivalence is impossible; eminent

theorist Lawrence Venuti feels differently to Paterson and Bonnefoy, though, and asserts a methodology based in subjectivity:

the translator's verbal choices are treated as interpretive moves that vary the source text according to a complex set of factors that include knowledge of the source language and culture but also values, beliefs and representations that circulate in the translating language and culture during a particular period. (128)

Venuti stresses that translators do not simply transmit lexical equivalents from source to a target language, but rather present 'an interpretation [...] among different possibilities' that will take into account not only linguistic but shifting temporal, spatial, and cultural dimensions (128). This seems to echo Benjamin's famous analogue: in 'The Task of the Translator', the philosopher deploys the German word *Brot* alongside the French *pain* to indicate culturality: Benjamin challenges us to consider what is at stake in differentiating, say, *Mischbrot*, *Stüütkes*, *Weißbrot*, and *Laugengebäck* from the *batard*, *pain aux céréales*, and the *ficelle*. Clearly, there are no explicit equivalents here.

Equally clearly, surrounded by a common air there remains so much that cannot be unlearned, disassociated from, or even explained between each delegation of culturally-defined creative producers. We may well be able to translate 김지 ('kimchi') efficiently enough, but what of 한 ('Han'), for example, that phenomenology central to historical Korean identity (and said to lie somewhere between melancholy and nostalgia)? Conversely, how to map for outsiders the mythos of AFL, Voss, Whitlam, $et\ al.$? Indeed, Peeter Torop discusses this in relation to intertextual translation, or what he defines as:

the translation by the author of a foreign word or a complex of foreign words into his/her own text ... What the translator considers dominant in his/her work will define whether the foreign word will be represented or not in the translation of the text into another language. (28)

In this exchange, perhaps the trick will be to use all our canny wiles to guide these ideal others across ephemeral sites that generate our own poems, and this may well start with a question: have you reckon'd much our part of the earth?

three/셋

On the second day in Melbourne, we take our Korean guests to the Queen Victoria Market, renowned for its fish and meat stalls, its fresh produce, rows of souvenirs, clothes, homewares, bric-a-brac. We discuss the buried history of the market, part of which was once the site of Melbourne's first official cemetery. Bodies were exhumed in the 1920s, though the remains of an estimated 9000 people still lie somewhere beneath the car park. We walk along Victoria Street towards RMIT where, on the corner near Russell Street, there is a recently installed monument to two resistance fighters, Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner, men who killed two white settlers to protest against their colonisation of Aboriginal lands. The warriors were publicly executed in 1842, and allegedly buried where Queen Victoria Market lies today (the market's name an unfortunate, unwittingly ironic echo of empire across sacred ground). The monument features five newspaper vending boxes in bright colours; information on the frontier wars and stories of these two executed men are held inside each box. In front is a structure that seems strangely poetic: what appears to be a child's swing doubles as gallows, and beneath it is a stone bench that could be a tomb, a place to rest, or a seat that will not swing.

Perhaps it is this narrative of Melbourne's unethical colonisation that compels So-Yeon and Bo-Seon to take a tram to the Melbourne Cemetery in Carlton, to gather a fuller view of the city's dead. In new poems, many of which are published for the first time in this issue of *Westerly*, So-Yeon writes of how 'it's too easy just to say there's no one, there's nothing' ('Coffin Bay'); Bo-Seon equally asserts how 'Every city is built over death, the poet knows / The more marvelous the top, the more graves towards the bottom' ('The Queen and the Poet'). These melancholic sentiments are echoed in Bonny Cassidy's poem 'Ghostin', in which she writes of how 'History's becoming easier / to explain: same birth, refusal, same shout.' Cassidy's poem takes up the trope of those voices shouting across Australia's imperialist history, the silenced-but-remembered voices of Tunnerminnerwait, Maulboyheenner, the many others. Cassidy's shout also ghosts those astonishing protests just beginning in Seoul when the Australian delegation visited, in which millions marched to call for the impeachment of then-president Park Geun-hye. In Dan Disney's 'that winter, these protests', the shouts of protesters become the city:

in the banging middle of this downtowndom, a crowd hurtles single-voiced its howl across the broad

dusk stuffed with elegies, effigies, placards,

police yipping votives through bullhorns, ghost-faced students blank with fact [...]

Seoul—and indeed South Korea generally—thrums with the spirit of activism in which public voices are raised in a tradition of political vigilance. Poems from Lisa Gorton ('The Futures Museum') and Yideum Kim ('Seoul Performance') precipitate this text, as if Disney is homaging his impossible others, their words acting as palimpsests by which this poet comes to fix a gaze on a place and performance that remains foreign, uncannily recognisable, and ideal.

four/ 넷

Poetry can articulate the ghosts of troubled spaces, a medium to unfold the unknown from within each everyday—what else is *ostranenie*?—to voice those echoes forgotten or buried under our always-already master narratives. But poetry can also make resonant the howling noises haunting each of us—our losses, griefs, resentments, et cetera, as if a poem can aptly vocalise the spectres of former selves we each comport within. Yideum Kim's 'Victoria Parade' whispers towards the ghost of a young girl the poet told us in even-handed tones she had seen in the garden of the Brooklyn Arts Hotel:

'I didn't go anywhere.'

Her feet that peeped out of her nightie as white as a lily were bloodied

And I wanted to run but the door like a coffin made of steel wouldn't open [...]

Which kind of chthonic seeing is this? In 'Eidolon', Cassandra Atherton writes of an uncanniness that seems so often to swarm into poems: 'I have been here before', the poet apprehends, straining into an appraisal of new space juddering with $d\acute{e}j\grave{a}vu$. And if the dedication is anything to go by—'After SY Kim'—Atherton also ascertains some kind of unreal textual exchange is at hand:

As the leaves fall, you suspend my noise with your smooth silences; a hibernation of longing forms on our breath. There is skin and bone between us, a currency of signs to be decoded when we part.

Eidolon (n.): an image, spirit, double, idol, phantasm, or ghost. Enchanted within and traversing the respective phantasmagoria of Seoul then Melbourne, have these flâneur-poets imagined sharply, reading not only texts-in-translation but these worldscapes as a kind of text, the human performances therein somehow auratic, that is, sacred and shrouded by a 'strange weave of space and time'? (Benjamin 1999, 518) Shifting with poet-counterparts and their counter-texts, this exchange incites three-dimensional dreams, poets swirling into mimetic language catching the logic of cannier recognitions.

Perhaps this is why we travel: to be knocked out of accustomed modes of perception so as to reach beyond habitual signification, as if *flânerie* is antidote to our mannerisms, causing us to shudder into new thoughts, next lexicons. Commentator Justin D. Edwards notes how travel to new places can invoke a gestalt between the familiar and unfamiliar:

The traveller's desire to unveil mystery is always accompanied by anxiety. Perhaps the longing to seek out new spaces, like the desire to return to the security of home, is universal and can never be satisfied [...] the longing for foreign travel and the longing for home [are] not mutually exclusive desires, but intimately linked. When we are home, we yearn for the mysteries of the unfamiliar; when we are in a strange land, we crave the familiarity and comfort of home. Fear and desire are thus central to the experience of the traveller: the desire to return to a familiar world is accompanied by the fear of uncovering something unfamiliar. (Edwards 15–16)

The poems manifesting through this exchange seem haunted by words displaced in unfamiliar settings, glimpsed moments retrieved as imagistic flashes in the poems of newly-found friends. If poems are 'translations from the silence' (75) as Don Paterson recounts, then any poetic text precipitated within a culturally and linguistically foreign space will involve some kind of psychic metamorphosis. Our experiences are meditated by professional interpreter, Ben Jackson, who accompanies the poets through Seoul and Melbourne, but our psychogeographical adventures seem to also produce random, unmediated memories. Disney lineates into prose form a set of poetic interludes:

Fermented skate wing. Neighbourhoods of persimmon trees in late bloom. Midnight noodles with soju. A gaol, not long into the past executing its political prisoners. Hanok. Dragonfly. Hanbok. Raccoon in a palace garden. '안녕하세요!'

nodding into our selfies, then trailing across the backyard of a monstrous former dictator next door to arts colony. Museum (shut). Poets wandering the crosswinds of translated conversation.

When Walter Benjamin asserts urban spaces open onto 'a phantasmagoria that people enter to be amused' (Benjamin 1978, 152) he situates a crowd of fetishisers and consumers at play in the unreal agora, or marketplace, as if acquiring through their consumption a subjective and self-narrativising stance. Benjamin then proposes a vantage point from which to mount a particularly humanising mode of surveillance: scanning phantasmagorical crowds, the *flâneur* 'only seems to be indolent, for behind this indolence there is the watchfulness of an observer who does not take his [sic] eyes off the miscreant [...] He catches things in flight; this enables him to dream that he is like an artist' (Benjamin 1983, 40-41). Wandering and wondering through Seoul's seething throngs scrambling past noraebang and jjimjilbang, across the shadows of towering Shinsegae Lotte World Home Plus, et cetera, we are as if Homo ludens amid the Homo digitalis shopping for shining packaged stuff by which to make a home; observing closely, autoethnographic, we are at play amid these workers, and our perception-into-language is 'limited to flashes. It flits past' (Benjamin 1978, 335). Like a phantasm.

five/ 다섯

In her collation of quotations delivered as a toolkit working towards a poetics of writing practice, Moya Costello points to ways in which writing is traced with unnamed connections:

[Writing is] not only 'an open fabric of heterogenous traces and associations' but these are also 'in a process of constant revision and supplementation'; these 'traces and associations' have a 'lateral dispersal' that 'disseminate' rather than 'integrate' (Taylor and Saarinen 1994, 'Telewriting' 6). Your writing is 'open to contingency, chance' (Crown 2002, 219). You make use of 'arbitrary patterns' (Keller 2002, 104). (Costello n.p.)

Intertextually and transculturally haunted, these hybridised Korean-Australian poems are part divination, part misapprehension, and part malappropriation; mostly, they are strange arrivals, as if the birds native to one language forest have landed in wrong trees. Sometimes, these

same birds are shrill inside their indigenous domains: when So-Yeon Kim writes in 'Mangwon-dong' of pacing across the streets:

[...] of ten years ago
The persimmon tree was still there, the bathhouse, the playground
The broken toys

she traces into her lines a sharp-eyed nostalgia which all visiting Australian poets register (and partly emulate); this eulogy for a tiny suburb surrounded by a megalopolis swarming to the logic of hypercapitalism anticipates as inevitable the arrival of Seoul's gentrifiers and profiteers³. At heart, 'Mangwon-dong' is a melancholic snapshot of a much-loved domain the poet already misses; this song of precarity precisely understands the nearness of a scarifying, instrumental language of erasure a.k.a. development. How might this translate into Antipodean contexts? Bo-Seon Shim's text of almost the same name observes floods spilling through the same area and then receding, to leave:

A black waterline drawn on the wall Like a warning from an awkward shaman

and he reads Mangwon as crisscrossed with 'hidden junctions between life and death'. *Eidólonging*: both So-Yeon and Bo-Seon render their places as spectrally enlivened; nearby, the river occasionally lolls tongue-like through the streets, speaking a ghostly trope and leaving marks on the walls in a typography none can read.

six/ 여섯

Sharing pizza for lunch on Melbourne's Lygon Street. Lisa and Yideum are admiring each other's clothes, and disappear into the bathroom at the back of the shop then emerge soon after, shirts swapped. Yideum parades down a makeshift aisle between restaurant tables: here is my new white shirt. Lisa is slightly more reserved in navy frills, and the exchange provokes this thought: how do we rest intuitively within a native language, and to which extent is it possible even to try on each other's styles? We set a writing exercise: the Australians are each to write a poem inspired by So-Yeon's 'Mangwon-dong' and the Korean poets will use Cassandra's 'St. Louis Cemetery No. 1' as a triggering text. The results are startling; inhabitations (or are they colonisations?) abound. Jessica transposes So-Yeon's nostalgic walk through a once-familiar place onto her own memory of a well-trodden path, her images gathering 'On the

edge of bitumen', where she 'pick[s] up the dead / and put[s] them in a jar; winged demons of my past / become a glass of eyes' ('Farm/Swarm'). This strange personal encounter (a butterfly swarm on a country road) unfurls its own logic of nostalgia for the poet, one that is fragile, oddly magical, and ghosted by tones writ large in So-Yeon's exploration of contemporary iterations of Han sentiment. Is this an instance of transculturality?

Rather than translating simply from language-to-language, source-totarget, Benjamin imagines an otherworldly, mediating, creative stage in the process, and it is here that he situates his so-called 'pure' language. The theorist figures his discussion of nuance and intention by asserting the task of any translator involves reanimation: he writes, 'a translation issues from the original—not so much from its life as from its afterlife' (Benjamin 2000, 16) as if, like poets, translators, too, engage in acts of augury and nonmercantile propheteering (a performance we frame here speculatively as a humanising enactment, in stark contrast to the profiteering that causes concrete echelons to stretch so quickly, multiplying across the skylines). During their trip to Seoul, a fast-changing city of towering glass set amid stone mountains, the poets from Melbourne visited Mangwondong and sought to speak of the apprehensions in their own terms; Kent MacCarter's hyperbolically charged 'Mujeongwiundong Mangwon-dong (North Korean blanket remix)' desemanticises as if sensorily overloaded, in a place that seems to precipitate excesses well beyond the capabilities of an English-language lyric line:

[...] With night's feet
perfect orbs warm in a grip—rolling out the lope of
redevelopment
by our hand, my palm haircut asleep above the coconuts.

I absorb paper fists landing in from the bathhouse, dank impact perforated into zodiacs my teeth rip to sate. Each block, a new cancer.

What is this high-octane appraisal if not a wildly energised syntactic explosion? MacCarter makes finely crafted lyric lines in a visiting linguistic material, but fractures syntax instead to capture an experience of dizzying foreignness. All the forests here are concrete towers twittering in wi-fi; in this text, the poet's *flânerie* through Mangwon produces a syntactically disordered map to show just how out of place he is.

Immersed within these immense urban spaces the poets from Melbourne are as if on the outside, separated by all-too-visible orthographic walls. Foreign as lost ghosts listening like birds in a hermetic forest to the

efflux and effusions of an impassible river of language. Synthesising a selection of lines in translation, Lisa Gorton captures some of the images swarming spectrally across the Korean poets' work; in this poet's hands, this cultural exchange works specifically to the logic of assemblage and transmogrification. In 'Yeonhui Remix' we read of floods, ex-dictators, the ghostly animation of white shirts 'blundering against the inside walls' of a wardrobe; the poet's imagination pieces together an array of pre-existing (and one can say with some certainty *prestigious*) cultural products, though the result is no organic whole and neither is it a MacCarterian fracturing:

Those who have built new rooms in air over the houses of their childhood step through first-floor windows into the boats, sending long judderings out across that picture-world they are afloat in

Gorton writes, as if in exile among Korean texts in Korean spaces and moved to voice that originary, Platonic ur-exile of all poets. Accompanied by a cabal of those who apprehend similarly but trill in a wholly foreign material (So-Yeon, Bo-Seon, Yideum), Gorton's ontologising is a lucidly open-eyed dreaming and her poem showcases a methodology populating so many of the texts in this suite. Gorton's 'Yeonhui Remix' divines how 'there is nothing that cannot be mentioned'; each of the poems here can be regarded as a haunted structure responding to and hosting the work of other poets. In shifting from source to target language, the images cause a shudder; spectral and *eidólonic*, the apprehensions in one poet's mind return to life (or is it Benjamin's *afterlife*) in the wholly new linguistic dimensions of another.

conclusion?/ 결론?

After failing to visit the Melbourne Museum's Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre (having arrived late), we walk through the gift shop and stop to inspect the souvenirs, more chic and expensive than those in the Queen Victoria Market. Bo-Seon acquires a hand-painted boomerang: 'You know that won't come back if you throw it,' we tell him. 'It's an ornament (like so much Australian culture). You'll chip the paint.' He throws it anyway across open concrete space; a brief flight, then it clatters to the ground twenty metres away as if an inexact metaphor for this exchange. The boomerang-souvenir is a mere fetishised object standing in for an iconic, mythological tool; it does not return to Bo-Seon's outstretched hand. This is almost an embodiment of Marian Hobson's identification

of Benjamin's 'view of the text to be translated as untouchable' (Hobson 2001: 115) and what Derrida defines in his work as 'the desire of the phantasm of the intact kernel is irreducible—despite the fact that there is no intact kernel' (Hobson 2001, 115). As a group of poets with varying styles, drives, energies, politics, and agendas, unlike the faux gift shop boomerang we each return to our writing practices, but something is changed which is neither ornamental nor merely stylistic: the poems we craft as a result of this exchange draw lines from our encounters with un/familiar sites (places, persons, poets, texts); some lines cross through the common air, boomerang-like, to set all kinds of birdlike activity into motion across the shared spaces of our eidólonging.

Notes

- 1 The first clause in the title is taken from Bo-Seon Shim's poem. 'An Unavoidable
- 2 The poets participating in the Melbourne-Seoul intercultural poetry exchange were: Bonny Cassidy, Lisa Gorton and Kent MacCarter from Melbourne and So-Yeon Kim, Yideum Kim and Bo-Seon Shim from Seoul. The poet-organisers of the exchange were Jessica L. Wilkinson and Cassandra Atherton in Melbourne and Dan Disney in Seoul.
- 3 'Impact of Gentrification', Editorial, *The Korea Times*, 24th January, 2016.

Works cited

- Atherton, Cassandra. 'Eidolon' and 'St. Louis Cemetery No. 1'. Strange Cargo: Five Australian Poets, Sheffield: Smith Doorstop, 2017.
- Bassnett, S., and Lefevere, A. Translation, History and Culture. London: Printer Publishers, 1990.
- Benjamin, Walter. 'The Task of the Translator.' Translated by Harry Zohn. The Translation Studies Reader. Edited by Lawrence Venuti. London: Routledge, 2000.
- —. Selected Writings 1927-1934 (Vol. 2). Edited by Howard Eiland and Gary Smith. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- —... Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism. Translated by Harry Zohn. London; New York: Verso, 1983.
- —. Reflections. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books, 1978.
- Bonnefoy, Yves. 'Translating Poetry'. Translated by Harry Zohn. Theories of Translation: an anthology of essays from Dryden to Derrida. Edited by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press,
- Cohen, Matt. 'Transgenic Deformation: Literary Translation and the Digital Archive'. The Walt Whitman Archive, 2006. http://whitmanarchive.org/about/articles/ anc.00165.html. Accessed August 2, 2017.

- Costello, Moya. "Irrigorous Uncertainties": Writing, Politics and Pedagogy'. Text Journal, vol. 9, no. 1, 2005. http://www.textjournal.com.au/aprilo5/costello.htm. Accessed August 2, 2017.
- Crown, Kathleen. "Sonic Revolutionaries": Voice and Experiment in the Spoken Word Poetry of Tracie Morris'. In Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hogue (eds). We Who Love To Be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance Poetics. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002: 213-226.
- Dryden, John. 'Preface concerning Ovid's Epistles'. Theories of Translation: an anthology of essays from Dryden to Derrida, edited by Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. 17-31.
- Edwards, Justin D. Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature. Canada: University of Alberta Press, 2005.
- Gorton, Lisa. 'The Futures Museum'. Hotel Hyperion. Sydney: Giramondo, 2012. —. 'Yeonhui Remix', unpublished, 2017.
- Hobson, Marian. Jacques Derrida: Opening Lines. New York: Taylor and Francis e-library, 2001.
- 'Impact of Gentrification', Editorial, The Korea Times, 24th January, 2016. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/common/printpreview. asp?categoryCode=202&newsIdx=196220 Accessed August 2, 2017.
- Keller, Lynn. "Nothing, for a Woman, Is Worth Trying": A Key into the Rules of Rosmarie Waldrop's Experimentalism'. In Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hogue (eds) We Who Love To Be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance *Poetics.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002, pp. 103–115.
- Kim, So-Yeon. 'Coffin Bay', Westerly 62.2 (2017) (within this feature).
- Kim, Yideum. 'Soul Performance'. Cheer Up, Femme Fatale. Translated by Ji Yoon Lee, Don Mee Choi and Johannes Goransson, Indiana: Action Books, 2016.
- —. 'Victoria Parade', unpublished, 2017.
- Paterson, Don. Orpheus: A Version of Rilke. Faber & Faber: London, 2006.
- Richardson, D. Neil. The Routledge Encyclopedia of Walt Whitman. Edited by J. F LeMaster, Donald D. Kummings. New York and London: Routledge, 1998.
- Shim, Bo-Seon. 'An Unavoidable Road'. Translated by Eun-Gwi Chung and Brother Anthony of Taize, Manoa, University of Hawaii Press, 27:2 (2015): 13-15.
- —. 'The Queen and the Poet', unpublished, 2017.
- Sun, Jianguang. 'The Manipulation of Poetics in Literary Translation-A Case Study of Journey to the West by W.J. F. Jenner', Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3:7 (July 2013): 1275-1280.
- Taylor, Mark C., and Esa Saarinen. Imagologies: Media Philosophy. London; New York:
- Toro, Peeter, 'The Position of Translation in Translation Studies.' Mauranen, A. & T. Puurtinen, Publications de l'Association Finlandaise de Linguistique Appliquée 55. Jyväskylä. pp. 23-40.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 'Introduction: Poetry & Translation.' Translation Studies, 4:2 (2011):
- Whitman, Walt. 'Song of Myself'. Leaves of Grass: a textual variorum of the printed poems (Volume 1). Edited by E. Sculley Bradley, et al. New York: New York University Press, 1980.

Yeonhui Lisa Gorton

Lisa Gorton lives in Melbourne and writes poetry, fiction and essays. Her awards include the Victorian Premier's Prize for Poetry, the Prime Minister's Prize for Fiction, and the Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal. Her two most recent publications, both from Giramondo, are the poetry collection Hotel Hyperion and a novel, The Life of Houses.

Lee Jai-eui | 'the street flowed like a river'

A pigeon is cleaning its wings in a branch of the pine tree, sifting its green shade down over the high white wall of the ex-dictator's garden—

This was the year of the flood when out of backlogged drains and gutters darkening levelly up the inside walls of houses and in the streets a new and single plain of water came rising through itself in one continuous wave the shoes by the door, a handtowel by the basin, the clock by the bed, books and papers spread out across the table, the window closed between its walls of water, the mirror's room folded back into itself—In the wardrobe a white shirt on its hanger swelled with water, its long sleeves, blundering against its doors as if with hands, were slowed at last inside its silence— Those who had built new rooms in air over the houses of their childhood stepped through firstfloor windows into the boats, sending long judderings out through that picture-world they were afloat in—When they passed through a cloud the colour of molten glass spread out

over the marketplace they saw through the shadows of their faces down into its flood—mudfish and eels unknotting from their basins, children's dresses, plastic bags and ropes, the butcher's meat resolving into its element, an octopus fitting itself through the skull of a pig-Afterwards in every street the heaps of rubble chairs, pianos, wardrobes, all soft-fleshed wood—rose even to the level of the second-storey shop signs— Their fires burned for days in unnamed valleys, the trucks brought 50 000 tonnes of concrete in from the north—

When visitors come to the high white wall of the ex-dictator's garden his intercom rings the electronic copy of a wind-chime and his armed guards gather behind the gates.

134 | Westerly 62.2 135 | Lisa Gorton

Ghostin

after So-Yeon Kim Bonny Cassidy Bonny Cassidy's third collection of poems, Chatelaine, was recently published by Giramondo. Bonny co-edited the anthology Contemporary Australian Feminist Poetry and coordinates the Melbourne Visiting Poets Program. She is Feature Reviews Editor for Cordite Poetry Review, and her own criticism and essays have been widely published locally and internationally. Bonny leads the BA in Creative Writing at RMIT University.

I'm old again. At the plaza huge whimpers hurtle out of the paving, arm and a leg

the warrior twists his mountain walls in swinging chains.

History's becoming easier to explain: same birth, refusal, same shout.

The trees wave and I find new signs to make float downstream, seeing lights come on

I'm not a pebble, I'm becoming more than like one.

ShieldsBonny Cassidy

I've come for my name its lemon heart.

Thumping to the shore getting tall.

Tower in grass it holds her hand.

Its eyes dig in tell her when to wake.

Shells flee a heavy feather.

Fizz around its corners a restful scar.

Reskinned it sleeps on my back.

Pulling out the small obelisk.

MangwonBo-Seon Shim

Bo-Seon Shim is Associate Professor of Art and Cultural Management at Kyung Hee Cyber University. He has a BA and MA from the Department of Sociology, Seoul National University, and a PhD from the Department of Sociology, Columbia University. He has published three poetry books, Fifteen Seconds without Sorrow (2008), Someone Always in the Corner of My Eye (2011), and Today, I Am Not So Sure (2017). He has also published an anthology of sociological essays, Art Burnt (2013).

When the first flood ended Mother gave birth to my younger sister

A black waterline drawn on the wall Like a warning from an awkward shaman

What waters flowed here Waters visible only from afar Waters only black

Mother heaved my sister on her back And swiftly crossed the water to the hospital

When the second flood ended
We heard the hollow sound of bottles rolling in the master bedroom
I was the message my father slipped in them to send out into the world

Quietly I raised fish without scales The bubbles seeping from their anuses Pulled my adolescent hormones in a strange direction

When the second flood ended The dog bit the child of its owner

As Father gave the dog away, he said to the monastery's white priest

Oh Father, please Oh Father, my English no good The priest smiled kindly

Behind him a beautiful scene spread like a silk fan

Blue-eyed nuns and lusciously feathered turkeys A tennis court a hundred times the size of my room Everything a grand composition of imperialist taste

When the third flood ended Father's pay began to rise

When the third flood ended Something like colonial modernity began to bloom

When the third flood ended

I came to know

How to make secret fog underneath the sheets at dawn

-O Father, take this fog from me-

And a better father who gave me bread and absolution on Sunday

What paths crossed this place

Hidden junctions between life and death
The progress of destruction that went against God's paperwork

Having returned here twenty years later I finish a poem in half a day

A few steps on an old path unearth a buried fear

O my loving readers

You may have guessed it but This is not a homecoming poem

You will never know it but
This poem is a note writ in blood in place of lost fingers

That's what I am, a poet A survivor of a great flood A public figure whose first duty is a curse

Mangwon-dong So-Yeon Kim

So-Yeon Kim was born in 1967 in Gyeongju. She was educated at Catholic University of Korea (BA, MA, Korean Literature). In 1993 she published her first poem 'We Praise' in the quarterly Hyundae Poetry and Thought. She has published the poetry collections Pushed to the Limit, The Exhaustion of Stars Pulls the Night, Bones Called Tears, and A Mathematician's Morning, and two collections of essays, Dictionary of Mind, and The World of Siot. She is the recipient of the Nojak Literary Award (2010), the Hyundae Literary Award (2011), and the Yooksa Poetry Award (2014).

Now a day Walks a crooked way Hands behind its back like an old man in search of a newspaper

I picked up a sparkling stone Gripping in my hand The complete warmth in the complete circle

I walked the streets of ten years ago
The persimmon tree was still there, the bathhouse, the playground
The broken toys

I picked up a doll I stroked the face of that angel Just one lost eye made it look like the devil

I need news
That nothing happened
Too many leaves were falling
But I couldn't hear
Anything like begging for one's life
Like the sign language of the deaf
The leaves fell all day

It has to darken a bit
If I want to see all the weak lights
If I want to follow them and find my old home

Nothing has arrived yet but Like I've met the one I was waiting for I stopped my prayer on the spot

I picked up a day from ten years ago and pocketed it The night arrived safely

'Coffin Bay'So-Yeon Kim

You wrapped an arm around my shoulders. 'The living heart of us is bound tight with oak and pine.'* You pointed to a stump that's no more than a few roots. I laughed silently. Sitting in the shade of a nonexistent tree, in the nonexistent embrace of a nonexistent you. It was when I bent over below the cypress tree. I picked up the fruit but it crumbled in my hand, an angel that's left with only their feet has no wings, and the vase with the unwilting plastic rose has not a drop of water. The crow that draws arcs in the sky has no purpose. I want to change your words— Tsk tsk, George died as soon as he was born—to mean 'you became happy as soon as you were born.' The sunlight conquers wide swathes of the grass and digs in between the cypress trees. I have to be able to say that 'the sunlight is caressing the disappointment of "trees deaf under the ice and pebbles thick like bees."†' Here lies a Spaniard next to a Russian, a Chinese next to an Italian, and a Thai next to an Irish. I want to lie down in an empty slot and take a nap. It's so easy to say, There is nobody, There is Nothing. I have to fix the way I say it. 'Here, together, are dark shadows and shining edges.' You stroked the sunlight dewed on the edges of the tombstones and disappeared.

that winter, these protests

(November 2016, Gwanghwamun)

Dan Disney

in the banging middle of this downtowndom, a crowd hurtles single-voiced its howl across the broad

dusk stuffed with elegies, effigies, placards, police yipping votives through bullhorns, ghost-faced

students blank with fact, Mt. Bukhan a stone backdrop through the breaking night, snowing, warmed

by clarions of myth set alight >>> 'o scene' unwhisper despots in blue houses, 'just be over soon'

Lisa Gorton's 'The Futures Museum', alongside Yideum Kim's 'Seoul Performance'

^{*} Cassandra Atherton, 'St. Louis Cemetary, No. 1'

[†] Bonny Cassidy, 'Oyster Perpetual'

spring, Hannam-dongDan Disney

- (i) the avenues of blossom wheezing concrete and a still-warm body count of soju nights
- (ii) gortex brigades raising flickering screens snapping selfies at multitasked heads
- (iii) the bridges span dully a river's hag-cough shining truckloads from mechanical fields
- (iv)
 this windblown season bright yellow with dust coating workdays with photo-real blur
- (v)
 a skyline of perfectly similar rooms
 defiantly poked through drear and exhaust
- (vi)
 the buses at dawn rolling into neon haze packed with the language of 'hey Siri'
- (vii)
 these troglodytic brown alleys at night
 from where unpensioned men cart life's big mess

So-Yeon Kim's 'Mangwon-dong', alongside Kent MacCarter's 'Expecting High Velocity'

Mujeongwiundong Mangwon-dong (North Korean blanket remix)

Kent MacCarter

Kent MacCarter is a writer and editor who lives in Castlemaine. with his wife and son. He's the author of three poetry collections-In the Hungry Middle of Here (Transit Lounge, 2009), Ribosome Spreadsheet (Picaro Press, 2011) and Sputnik's Cousin (Transit Lounge, 2014). He was also an editor of Joyful Strains: Making Australia Home (Affirm Press, 2013), a non-fiction collection of diasporic memoir. He was an active member in Melbourne PEN from 2010-2014, and was executive treasurer on the board of the Small Press Network from 2009-2013. He is Director of Cordite Publishing Inc.

A stooped walk, long and with day. Heavy seed nears cardboard, boxes of tired fruit womanise a decade of split figs, say, and back behind my clasp I fix the curtain from its hands

and pick up stones of glitter rooms. With night's feet perfect orbs warm in a grip—rolling out the lope of redevelopment by our hand, my palm haircut asleep above the coconuts.

I absorb paper fists landing in from the bathhouse, dank impact perforated into zodiacs my teeth rip to sate. Each block, a new cancer. How here impregnates me with triplet evenings—

two of three wrecked by an angel's apple, kinesis of posture the flight.

Ugg Boots Yideum Kim

Yideum Kim has published six books of poetry—A Stain in the Shape of a Star (2005), Cheer up, Femme Fatale (2007), The Unspeakable Lover (2011), Son of Berlin, Dahlem (2013), Hysteria (2014) and Drifting Black Hair (2017)—and the novel Blood Sisters (2011). Her work has been adapted into a play (The Metamorphosis, 2014) and a film (After School, 2015). She has received her PhD for a thesis on Korean feminist poetics and received numerous awards for her poetry, including the Poetry & the World Literary Award (2010), the Kim Daljin Changwon Award (2011), the 22nd Century Literary Award (2015) and the Kim Chunsoo Award (2015). She is also a newspaper columnist and hosts a weekly poetrythemed radio programme.

Fine dust falls like first snow So I wear my Uggs bought in Melbourne and walk around the edge of an alley The countless hairs wrap my ankles An old friend once told me she'd shorn a goat once But I did not ask about the cries of the sheep And I did not cut my hair for five years and did not give my heart Should I have cut my elongated insides once or twice a year with a machine or scissors This country never made me smile but just in case it made me cry I guarded my heart and protected my skin The lamb roaming the plains of my placid heart ate grass alone And slept alone There was a rumour that it hid in the woods I imagined a beach with waves like sheep's wool I gave no one my heart so the wool grew without needing anyone's bodily warmth Even on nights without snow the eight-pound pajama-like wool covered me up to my calves I was too covered by my wool to walk on the snow The white wool that covered me and concealed the pupils of my eyes Not having sheared for a long time like some sheep buried in its own wool I did not slice out my heart and instead whitely stagger into falling dust

'Face Made of Steel'

-For Ned Kelly Yideum Kim

Is love a thief
Is love an unfinished revolution

You cut steel to make clothes You ripped a steel door to make your face

My friend who sleeps standing up in a dark glass coffin It's as if you walked out of a mound of dirt you opened in the old garden of my heart

Your love was war

To me the joy of a nation meant nothing much

I want to walk arm-in-arm with you for the length of three subway stops In the sunlight your armour would gleam

Your shoes made of steel might not come off because of their sharp nails You wouldn't get wet if it rained But your cells shall awaken

Is the face of love a prison
I would never ever get to see your face
So why don't I put into your suit of steel my small violet bird

Reflected

Jessica L. Wilkinson

I. Farm/swarm

after So-Yeon Kim's 'Mangwon-dong'

The dusk is lace and velvet—insects arise, a netting. On the edge of bitumen, I pick up the dead and put them in a jar; winged demons of my past become a glass of eyes.

I want the lid to be tight. I want you to say there will be only one jar.

The road is a long, dark language—moving forward, the crush of butterflies.

II. Country/ward

after Yideum Kim's 'Country Whore'

I live in the country, where people say 'white frost.' But, there is never a frost of other colours—unless one were to count the frost in first sun, before the melt, streaks of colour like an old poet's hair.

Six sheep does not make a farm, but a wandering lawn mower—I look out the window and see them drifting across the yard, as if bound together by loose twine, unshakable as a clump of dags.

Over there, a stump—what must have been a large tree, once—is a seat for a fat kookaburra who turns to square me up, one-eyed. Tradition is a scarf that grows around my neck with every

winter. And the stars, signifying everything and nothing, populate the sky like diamond rings.

III. Birth/bard

after Bo-Seon Shim's 'My Wife's Magic'

Daily, my husband puts our cat up his jumper, then he walks about the house, performing simple chores, until Percy feels the need to be birthed. It makes

me think *how old* I'm getting to be. How old, and why have I not tended the garden of my womb, pushed out the future of our country, economic growths, *real*

contributions? That pressure builds and recedes like a bad poem idea, finding its odd resolution. Daily, I am asking where do I go from here? and daily

he picks up the cat to perform a response. What magic, to have a husband who teaches me to birth nothing but whiskers and a madcap yowl.

George Jarvis, Black Hindoo Servant, Port Jackson, 1809 (Preparatory Study) Roanna Gonsalves Roanna Gonsalves is the author of *The Permanent Resident* (UWAP, 2016), an acclaimed collection of fiction that is on several lists of must-read Australian fiction, and is being studied at a number of Australian universities.

She is a recipient of the Prime Minister's Australia Asia Endeayour Award.

He would be dead before he turned thirty-seven, reeking of the sea. The vowels of Cochin, of Bombay, of London, of the Isle of Mull, slay each other in his mouth then respawn shamelessly without memory. The kelp farms long gone, his love for his daughter ebbing and flowing unable to make up its mind, not calm like the backwater graves that held his own parents, not dependable like a loch that knew its place, he would be dead, always an outsider, always without his people, never at home.

But today, on this day of days, the sun rising for the last time on 1809, the world that churned away for months on the *Dromedary* is finally holding steady at Port Jackson. After weeks, months, of rancid butter, salty beef, of hearing Captain Pritchard call for yet another game of whist, of holding little Ellis Bent close through his teething cries and then calming him with honey, of hardening against death while waiting for a disembarking dawn, waiting, folding sheets, pinning medals, brushing coats, a consoler in grief, gritting through the band playing *God Save The King* again and again with the memory of the drummer boy dead from tetanus, watching women thrown off someone else's ship, the shape of time to come elusive as family, cursing the damp that was always drawing attention, George Jarvis feels combustible like peat. But he draws breath, sucks in the edges of his body, forces himself to be solid, because he loves his master, Lachlan Macquarie.

The *Hindoostan* was aproned to the *Dromedary* like its id, like a smell, like a country that can't be castaway. They were ships that held men who would flatten and build, flatten and build, not stopping even when women, children, men jumped off a precipice at Appin, the other Appin in New South Wales, named in longing for that first Scottish Appin, full of the flash of one white bone hanging from a tree and cries in the whisky, wanting so badly to be Nordic but getting a massacre instead.

This is the day, December 31, the wind finally turning its face elsewhere after realising that its warning about the decade to come would be unheeded, those flags trying hard to be historical on shore, the guns going off, the sounds of England drowning out the heartbeat of an opposite continent, throwing it off kilt and kilter, this is what George Jarvis sees. This, and a man as black as an ancestor he has met everywhere in his imagination.

George Jarvis has been expecting to see his father, hoping for a masterpiece of which he is but a small detail. Hoping for lashes curved like his, for the same three sneezes every morning, for a big toe that is shorter than the second toe by exactly the same measure as his own, hoping too for an inheritance that will release him and take him back to his own people. He knows his father is dead. His mother is dead. He knows he hopes in vain. Yet every time he turns his head, he feels he is a second too late, they were just there, full of potential, if only he had been quick enough.

He sees the Aborigine from afar, dressed in a hat like a wannabe Navy man not knowing it is the turn of the military now, and he knows exactly why. In his heart George, black hindoo servant, knows he is a performer like that man in another man's clothing, pretending to be what he is not, as if no one would notice. He knows this is useless. Approval is a horse that is always bolting. George Jarvis has come to this slow conclusion. He is tied to his master Lachlan Macquarie, Governor-elect Macquarie now, by duty, by obligation, by need, and yes, also by love.

This is the day before it all begins. It is time for his master to walk ashore to the people lined up all the way to Government House. He has been suited, booted, and slicked. He checks his notes. Then, 'George,' he calls, asking Jarvis to check his coat, to brush off the last dust of the old year. Duty done, the servant nods. The master nods back and walks out of his cabin towards an upside-down colony. But then, 'Sir,' George calls as an ancient light hits his face.

The master stops, turns back. 'What is it?'

'I have something to give you. A blessing.'

George draws from his pocket a single gold coin. He holds it towards the man who can orchestrate odd numbers into an above-board symphony, a man who is to be Governor in twenty-four hours, a man who does not need a gold coin. Still, he holds it to him. It is something he must do for himself.

Instant recognition and eyes pushing back water on an old ache.

'This is from Jane.' These words are left unsaid in holy memory.

There is a dropping of faces in tenderness as the two men remember a woman they both loved, one as husband, the other as slave.

'Please keep it, sir.'

'But she gave it to you.'

'Then keep it for me.'

The master recognises this as a gesture to mark this moment of arrival, so new yet girded with old memory and longing, and a future of responsibility and culpability, and some say of impunity. With Elizabeth, he is grieving for their baby daughter. Yet under this recent tenderness is the undimmed grief for Jane. He knows that George is the only one who can remember, who will never forget.

He takes the coin.

Macquarie walks out into Terra Australis Incognita. George Jarvis refuses to recognise this as home. The portents are conspicuous in this place they said is 'barbarous', 'untamed', just like what they said about Scotland, about the Bombay Presidency, about all of India. From the *Dromedary*, George Jarvis has sighted smoke bringing the promise of stability, only for his eyes to smart. He has seen a Port Jackson fig on the western shore of the cove. It is broad as a church and as glossy but still unable to mask that it is a strangler, like that other fig, the Banyan tree at Staffa Lodge, Calicut. It was under this tree that they washed his three-year-old vale of tears away, Lachlan Macquarie and Jane Jarvis in 1794, when they bought him and Hector for 170 rupees. He has heard the North Westerly, guessed its determination as the seagulls flew backwards, seen from deck how the unmistakable bracken fern invades without discernment like it does on Mull, on Ulva, in Calicut, his first remembered home. Yet he stands tall, supported by the waters of the Eora nation.

But the Billy Buttons are laughing at him on this December day. He lifts his face to the sun. The light sits on his skin like a couch potato from a different century, but equally comfortable, equally reluctant. It is a light that creates sweat. It is unmistakably the light of home. In a moment though, it is gone. A cloud reminds him that he is on a different continent, shows him his place. Out of his sight, a colony of spineless bluebottles, full of gas, are stranding on the shore. Then the light returns with intensity to a man slightly changed, a man with an apprehension that is hard to shake off.

As Macquarie is feted and fawned over, George Jarvis looks at the Aborigine, only to find that he, Bungaree, is looking right back at him. Two objects of the gaze of empire now witness each other from opposite ends of a Raj whose time is always coming. One is at home. The other has been brought to make his master's home.

Bungaree bows to Macquarie and smiles.

Bungaree bows to George Jarvis and smiles.

George smiles back at him. Strings are attaching themselves in microscopic fashion, across these oceans, deep enough for dreaming. The echoes of the gun salutes still rack the air.

Jane Jarvis has fallen. Tipoo Sultan has fallen. In two hundred years, at this exact spot, the bridge will light up in a puff of smoke. But this is New Year's Eve and there will be rum. This moment is summer even as it holds the Christmas Bush, and the deep blue polyps sailing the surface of the ocean, and the starfish on the seabed tipped with an autumn to come.

Then suddenly, a streak of crimson impales the moment, and George Jarvis notices the woman.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the staff at the library of the Australian National Martime Museum, and the State Library of NSW.

Selected Works Consulted

- Historical Records of Australia. Series 1. 'Governors' Despatches to and from England. Volume Vii. January 1809-June 1813.' Historical Records of Australia. Series 1.

 Governors' Despatches to and from England. Volume Vii. January 1809 June 1813.

 The Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1916.
- Barnard, Marjorie Faith. *Macquarie's World*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961.
- Bashford, Alison, and Stuart Macintyre, eds. *The Cambridge History of Australia Volume 1: Indigenous and Colonial Australia*. Vol. 1. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Cohen, Lysbeth. Elizabeth Macquarie: Her Life and Times. Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1979.
- Dillon, Harry, and Peter Butler. *Macquarie: From Colony to Country*. North Sydney: William Heinemann, 2010.
- Ellis, M. H. Lachlan Macquarie: His Life, Adventures, and Times. Second ed. London: Angus & Robertson, 1952 [1947].
- Fornasiero, Jean, Lindl Lawton, and John West-Sooby, eds. *The Art of Science: Nicolas Baudin's Voyagers 1800–1804.* South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2016.
- $\label{thm:model} \mbox{Hunt, David. $Girt: The $U nauthorised History of Australia. $Collingwood: Black Inc., 2013.}$
- MacArthur, E. Mairi. 'Fresh Fields for Enquiry: Travellers to the Highlands in the Eighteenth Century.' *Crossing the Highland Line*. Ed. MacLachlan, Christopher. Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2009.
- Macquarie, Elizabeth Henrietta. Elizabeth Macquarie Journal of a Voyage from England to Sydney in the Ship 'Dromedary', 15 May 1809 25 December 1809. The Lachlan & Elizabeth Macquarie Archive (LEMA).
- Macquarie, Lachlan. Lachlan Macquarie: 1809 Memoranda & Letters. The Lachlan & Elizabeth Macquarie Archive (LEMA) from Series 01: Lachlan Macquarie papers,

- 1787-1824, being mainly journals, memoranda, correspondence, commission and address.
- Mann, D. D. The Present Picture of New South Wales 1811. Sydney: John Ferguson, 1979 [1811].
- Parker, Derek. Governor Macquarie: His Life, Times and Revolutionary Vision for Australia. Warriewood: Woodslane Press, 2010.
- Poland, Peter. The Flag's Up: The First 20 Years of the South Head Lookout Post 1790-1809. Sydney: Halstead Press, 2016.
- Ritchie, John. Lachlan Macquarie: A Biography. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986.
- Shackleton, Gillian. 'The Appin Murder.' Appin and District: A Visitor Guide Including the Island of Lismore. Ed. Society, Appin Historical. Appin, Scotland: Printworks Oban. 1995.
- Simankevicius, Almis. *Macquarie's Kingdom: Exploring Historic Sydney Today*. North Sydney: Good Walking Books, 2004.
- Walsh, Robin. In Her Own Words: The Writings of Elizabeth Macquarie. Wollombi, NSW: Exisle Publishing and Macquarie University, 2011.
- —. 'Jarvis, George (1790–1825).' Australian Dictionary of Biography. Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2005.

Peeling Timmah Ball

Timmah Ball is a writer of Ballardong Noongar descent. Her writing has appeared in Griffith Review, Overland, Meanjin and Westerly. She is currently using zine-making to critique mainstream publishing conventions and will produce Wild Tongue zine as part of Next Wave Festival.

Empty chip packets, plastic scraps
Coke cans scattered along bitumen
A milk crate hangs flimsily
Industrial air ventilators hum
The colonial grid asserts itself
Meticulously assembled by Englishmen

Parliament around the corner
The Institue of Australian Architects across the road
And corporate bodies sweat
Packing bars with exotic names
9–5 over, cut loose, drink, get laid

Academics write books about this place
Tell me we should call the Yarra River by its rightful name
Tell me the Birrarung was a source of food for the Koolin Nations
Want Indigenous knowledge to mitigate climate change

So I start to share my story And a peculiar look grows across their faces Sharp raised eyebrows, defiant glare I open my mouth and they're no longer there

I want to tell a the story of a young girl A story of injustice and guttural defiance A crime, if judged by white man's law By a group of uni friends And Charlie Perkins leading it all

It was 1965 and little Nancy Prasad was only five Alone at Sydney airport about to be deported White supremacy unleashed No Indians here please

And Charlie and his mates are plotting
While Minister Opperman's policy stings
'They're deporting her because she's Indian Fijian' Charlie yells
'We've got to do something'
'We're a student action for Aborigines'
'But we're a student action against all forms of racism, aren't we?'

They jump in a battered old Volkswagen For the international departure lounge Officials transferring her as they arrive They block the exit with bright red signs 'Stop the White Australia Policy' they cry

Nancy Prasad is on the arms of a policeman Six foot four, burly, grim Carrying her like cotton cloth Just a slight little thing

So they wait and lower their protest
Gain a bit of trust and ask
'Hey look, I'll hold on to her, while you organise her tickets'
'Save you carrying her around with her belongings and the rest of it'
To their surprise he nods and grins
'That's a good idea, hold her for a while'
'Then follow me and we'll put her on the plane'

'Righto' Charlie replies
And believe it or not he handed her over
Safe in Charlie's arms
They turn and run
The bemused cop inert, overcome

Little Nancy was all right
She was safe and happy
'Don't you worry about anything, sis' they said
'We're not letting you go overseas'
'You're staying here with us'

'That's good' she replied
As the group consoled her
And drove her back to her uncle's place
Broken fantasies, hope abandoned
There was nothing he could have done

In his lounge room they sit
Drinking cups of tea
No need to worry now
No need for praise
Just the TV's flickering haze

And then it came
This man is wanted for kidnapping
Their images splashed across the screen
'Hey, that's a charge you know'
'We could get twenty years' gaol'

But the risk was worth it No charges laid Five years later the white law abolished Little Nancy Prasad was allowed to stay

On the other side of Australia
Another girl is hanging
Brown eyes from her mum
White skin from her dad
But language lost, masters command
6pm curfews, no blacks allowed
Citizen cards on their own land

This town's no postcard
Red dust storms, missionaries
Wheat farms, forced labour
And federation homesteads
Filled with rich white saviours

And her mother started to tell her You're white enough to pass But if anyone ever asks Just tell them you're Indian

The story stuck, knitted to flesh Her identity blurred In skin designed to protect Lies became truth, just one way to survive

At school she walks Head held high But no longer looks Her own cousins in the eye

The girl grew up and moved away In a bigger city the white gaze changed Free to pick and choose who it likes Blak fellas no longer the only despised

In a supermarket queue
She overhears the words
Muttered quickly under the checkout assistant's breath
'I'm sick of all the Indians living around here'
She scowls as she scans the milk and bread

The family moves fast Heads lowered, hands held tight And she notices the same look She'd seen in her own mother's eyes

Her lie weighs heavily
Wrapped like think coating
Living on another mob's country
She sheds the skin her mother gave
Peels the ugly layers away

And offers what she can
To others caught around her
Judged by those who bury their racism
Under an avalanche of pseudo-friendship
Unaware they live on stolen land

Because her mother always told her You're white enough to pass But if anyone ever asks Just tell them you're Indian

A lie made up to shelter Discarded in the end

God Willing Parvati Angana

Parvati Angana is an Australian academic who grew up in various parts of South and Southeast Asia.

Samosir Rajawani was finishing the rushes of his much-touted 'epic' when he disappeared into the fire-storm which engulfed his country.

The fire was lit just before the monsoon rains arrived. It spread street by street, jumped across stretches of water which slowly clogged up with dead bodies, and turned island after island to cinder. Some say that fifty years later, it's still smouldering away beneath the toxic ashes, threatening to burst into flame with the tiniest, bitter breeze.

Most Australians knew little about the disaster next door, and they cared even less. But that is not the point of this story.

Before the fire started, the Chinese, the Russians and even some Indians had said that 'Sam' Rajawani was his nation's greatest film director. They showered him with awards to prove their point.

Sam was as stylish as he was radical, not bound by fashion in either clothing or politics. He believed that the revolution was round the corner; that it would blow away his country's accumulated cultural crap. He was weaponising his camera for the mass transgression of class and gender. But the revolution failed to materialise.

Instead, Sam was expelled from the Party when someone complained about his affairs with the starlets. Very soon after and much more sadly, the fire blew the Party to smithereens. The expulsion didn't save Sam's life's work from being torched by the para-military thugs. Twenty years of hiding, running, prison and torture followed, but did not crush his spirit.

By the time I met Sam, his broken body bore no resemblance to the striking man I had imagined out of fading black and white photos in the *Star News* magazine's back issues, now stored in the *Restricted* section of the basement at the National Archives. But still, his eyes could play havoc with your head and his voice turned every conversation into high drama.

I had tracked down Sam via Pundit and Sons, an Indian family-owned business with a long-established stranglehold over the film industry in

this part of the world. After prevaricating for days, they decided they could trust a fellow Indian, even if she had grown up in Australia. Since his release from prison, Sam had been employed as a script editor, under various fake names to get around the laws that barred ex-political prisoners from working in the media. He didn't mind: he was only ever known by a pseudonym. Samosir was a lake he loved; Rajawani, a bit of literary conceit, with multiple meanings for those in the know. He was being paid peanuts by the Pundits but that's what you expect when you have to work for monkeys.

I had explained my oral history project in my letter, so we got through the preliminaries quickly and agreed that this would be a pretty unstructured interview.

'Let me start at the end,' I said. 'I was told you were working on a film about women, just before you...' I hesitated, affecting a cough to shroud the subsequent words: 'went underground? After the military coup, I mean.' Even decades after the event, the fire had to be spoken in muffled tones, because the very words you used to name it gave away all the information the state needed. And I didn't want to lose my visa.

'You are not Christian?' Sam asked. 'Because then you might be offended. The film was called 'Immaculate Conception'. Particularly ironic, I guess, given it got aborted.'

No, I wasn't religious at all, really, though I had grown up sort of Hindu, I explained.

'You will know then, that the Spirit didn't just move in Holy Mother Mary. He'd been moving all over place and time,' he laughed. 'Especially in your country, every petty prince can trace his family origins to the Sun or Moon or some other celestial body. Your legends are filled with heroes who were spawned at the pleasure of one god or another.'

He had discovered Indian mythology from comrades on the Island of the Gods—he got hooked.

'Peel back the *Mahabharata* just a little, and you see that grand adventure of men is only the cover. The real story is about women and sex—some passionate, some sordid.

Think about this: all the Pandava brothers were sons of gods! None came from their mortal father. The mother of the heroes, the very clever Kunti, still unwed, gave birth to a boy, when she dazzled the Sun god. Then married off to the impotent king, Pandu, she generously gave her royal husband what kings deserve: brave sons—each a gift from a different god!!'

His laughter now was accompanied by the arrival of sweet, hot black tea. Introductions followed. I shook hands with Ria, whom Sam had married soon after he was released from prison. We looked at photos of the children. I speculated which might be his and which hers. It would have been injudicious to ask.

After a polite interval, I deftly moved the conversation back to Sam's films.

'That last film was set in Bali. It was about a young woman seduced by a Catholic priest. Most of the film was taken up with the two characters fabricating a Balinese version of the Immaculate Conception story—but things go wrong, as you might expect in a film.'

He was punctuating his comments with self-mockery. Perhaps his notoriously caustic humour that once made politicians tremble, now had nowhere to turn except against himself and his craft.

'You might say I was trying to think about mythology as a weapon of the weak—stories that embattled women might sell, to save mothers and children in a world run by dogs and pigs.'

Something caught in his throat. He glanced at his wife. She was much younger than him, but not as young as I had imagined from the character references his former comrades had been pleased to provide me alongside the letters of introduction.

'Actually the film was funded by the Tourism Board—they wanted an extended picture post-card. And I, well... I guess I wanted to land my fists simultaneously in the face of religion and the Imperialist West. But I hadn't figured out women at all—the ending was all wrong—the usual shmuck of a young exploited woman killing herself.'

He stopped again and looked at his wife. Was there a question in his eyes? She might have moved her head a fraction, before Sam continued: 'Let me tell you about the script I am working on now. Who knows, this regime might fall and Sam Rajawani might yet rise from the ashes and pay his tribute to women.'

We were moving from a film that wasn't to one that, I knew, would never be. But first interviews are all about building trust. Besides, Sam still had a way with words to make you sit up and take note.

'This is the story of a girl who turned sixteen in a small village, in Southern Sumatra. Have you been to Palembang? This village was not too far from Palembang.

Her devoutly Muslim mother had named her Mariam, after the Portuguese nurse who had been so very kind during a very difficult birth.

Mariam had a nineteen-year-old sweetheart. His parents had named him Buwana, because he meant all the world to them. But he called himself Rehman after the Indian movie idol of that era.

Rehman followed fashion in all things and so like thousands of other landless rural workers all around Indonesia, he had joined the Peasants

Front. There was absolutely nothing exceptional about any of this. All of Rehman's friends from all the surrounding villages had also joined the Front. The girls adored their bravado and they loved the brave new world the boys fantasised, where everyone would own the land they tilled.

Then something went terribly wrong in Jakarta in the early hours of October 1st, 1965. Normally people didn't care what happened in Jakarta. No one from the village had ever been to Jakarta or seen anyone from there. But this time, the madness of the capital spread through the country. Just as rice-planting season was starting, all hell broke loose. The young men fought, were killed or disappeared.

Mariam started calling herself Akifah.'

'The girl next door had been a devout Muslim. She prayed five times a day. But that didn't save her. Bad things happened to her family, so she drowned herself in the village well. Mariam took the dead girl's name, some dried rice cakes and ran. Names had taken on a new meaning. Mariam wanted everyone to know she was a good Muslim. She thought a proper Muslim name, one that meant 'devout', no less, would help her in these tormented times.

In the year that followed, soldiers and gangs combed villages. If they couldn't find the men, they took their sisters, wives or girl-friends as hostages. Older men and women they just killed. They would spread the names of the captured girls, so the young men would give themselves up to save their women. If the men didn't surrender quickly, the soldiers said, that was because you were a slut and then on you were fair game.

Mariam was captured many miles south of her village, near where the Lampung port now is. She was trying to get to Java, where they said that killings had abated.

The prison authorities announced her name as Akifah. Rehman probably never heard. If he did, he would not have known what had really happened. In any case, he never came.

The soldiers gave her what they thought Akifah deserved, because she was the sister of the Peasants Front Village Branch Junior Deputy Secretary. They held her in a solitary underground cell. When she could no longer stand up, they tied her spread-eagle against a piece of metal from an old iron fence. In the pitch dark she could count neither the number of days nor the number of men that came and went. She was in and out of consciousness for what had seemed like an eternity in hell. She might have gone a little bit mad. Sometimes she imagined Rehman was with her, near her, in her.

Mariam was emaciated, covered in blood and shit when they took her out of the hole and threw her on the street.

Sometime later, she found herself in a hospital. She could remember little and said even less. After a few days in the hospital, the matron told Mariam three things: she was at the Bethesda Christian Hospital in Yogyakarta; she would never regain sight in her left eye; and that she was about five months pregnant.

As she recovered slowly from what the doctors had diagnosed as partial amnesia, brought on by 'unknown trauma', Mariam started to tell everyone that the baby belonged to her dead husband, Rehman. The story grew as she recovered, filling in gaps of a loving relationship, so that in due course Mariam forgot that she had never known sex except as punishment.

Mariam had been close to death, when they found her. So the doctors and midwives who delivered her healthy baby boy, meant it when they said he was a miracle.'

Somewhere in the telling the voice of the story-teller had changed. Now Ria was finishing it:

'That's Berka,' she said, pointing at one of the children's photos. 'Means 'Blessing'.'

There was an awkward silence. When credits role on bio-pics you usually find out how the key characters fared in real life. I needed to know what happened to Rehman.

'Did you ever find Rehman?'

Mariam looked amused. 'I found him alright, probably in the *Star News* or *Film Weekly* or something. Rehman was useful for Eka's birth certificate and the myriad other government documents that we need. But my Berka knows that he is my blessing, really only mine and mine alone.

Sam's really taken with this cocky little Rehman, though. He has plans for him if he ever gets to make the film.'

8.31am, 4.13pm Ouyang Yu

Ouyang Yu now teaches literary translation and creative writing at SUIBE (Shanghai University of International Business and Economics). He has to date published ninety-two books in both English and Chinese.

8.31am

there are all sorts of dictatorship where we came from and where we come from but one dictatorship, not seen here or there but seen elsewhere, comes slapping me across the face as it, in the voice of a fairer gender, dictates: thou shalt not write about family and marriage thou shalt not engage in young and youthful things thou shalt not send me anything of that sort that's meant for the 'classy' journals

and what did I do? I said:

thanks and cheers

4.13pm

Don't ever think that you can oppress Us because we can't write good English Don't get it into your head that because one writes Bad English one is of low intelligence Or even no intelligence Just wonder to yourself if you can even write A single Chinese character Let alone speak it Won't you feel ashamed of that? Because people praise you for speaking infantile Chinese You swagger and swing, with pomp Thinking you are some language god Capable of doing the least The very worst least Come on, mate, and start to learn Otherwise, you are outer lah History will won day determine Who's more superior to whom You think I right bad English That's because I ±t to

You don't even understand that?

Shame on you

164 | Westerly 62.2 165 | Ouyang Yu

how the hundred schools contend

(a little pearl of a river) Christopher Kelen Christopher (Kit) Kelen is a well-known Australian poet and painter and Professor of English at the University of Macau, in south China, where he has taught Creative Writing and Literature for the last seventeen years.

the river stinks we're the bad fish we should have been eaten by now

a funeral could last your whole life

with this much fish won't smell a thing it did for Qin Shi Huang Di (dead emperor number one)

have you noticed the little fellows gone in the jaws of the greater? it's happening all over the ocean

wherever there's sea so schools will behave

not much use shouting 'bring back the Ming!' they're superannuated now

the little fishies learn from us how dark the days ahead

Confucius said past a certain age there wasn't much harm you could do

and every fish must learn to smell when it is truly dead

and meanwhile sink or float or swim or feign some other way

I'd like to be your crocodile your simplest fish says this

Lao-zi wanted to fry just the smallest that would do the trick

in the warmest waters, get them more dead than the rest listen to the drone

there is a rumour we're not fish at all but where's the evidence for that?

piranha you think are a myth but I've been left just bones

a funeral could last your life

the river stinks we're the bad fish we should have been eaten by now

I tell you all this in strict confidence just one fish to another you know

Gion Shimu in Snow (Hiroshige)

Shane McCauley

Shane has had eight collections of poetry published, most recently *Trickster* (Walleah Press, 2015). He conducts a fortnightly poetry workshop for the OOTA Writers' Group.

As if on stage the ladies by the great gate twist to greet holding their umbrellas close warm syllables cool against the falling flakes bamboo heavy under its silver coat and the firs are covered with plates of ice.

The geta marks left in the snow more like the prints of birds as geisha leave their quarters for some brief visit to a market a short walk on this pre-solstice day.

Snow falls relentlessly gentle evenly distributed in slow motion fading on the dark kimono as they move on with careful paces into the painted day their powdered faces whiter even than winter.

Goji no Chaimu (The Five O'Clock Bell)

Bethany Rawson

Bethany resides on the
Bellarine Peninsula and has
spent several years living in
Hiroshima, Japan. A version of
'Goji no Chaimu' was shortlisted
for the Queensland University
of Technology Postgraduate
Writing Prize in 2015.

Underground. An old man approaches, his blackened teeth in a grimace. A cloud of tobacco rises. I avoid his advance and focus my attention on the tunnel pylon, decorated in painted sunshine. The tiles have images of children. Flowers. The doors of the Fukuya department store swing wide with the evening flow of people from the station building. Everything else in the underground is grey. Concrete, ash-grey. Up on the platform a cross lights up behind Hiroshima station. Automated birdsong plays from the speakers and the chirping sounds are so faint that I almost believe they are real. A group of pigeons gather beside the vending machine. The peace bird. Pecking at a potato chip and a flake of sticky rice.

We have a spring picnic in the Peace Park. Erica brings a big American apple pie and we eat it with chopsticks. Drinking beer and green tea beneath the fragrant blossom. My jumper has an embroidered pink flower and green stem. A single petal falls to float in my tea.

Later that night by the river in Kaita, happy parties sit along the river bank, huddled around steaming barbeques. The air smells of meat and mushrooms, cigarettes and barbeque smoke. Warm and hazy, the mood is tinged with beer and sake. Kouji creates balloon animals. This is unexpected and everyone applauds. His friend hoists him up on his knees, arms outstretched and wide. Kouji leans backwards, facing the white-pink of blossom and the black sky. Smoke rises and petals float to the ground like snow.

We sit together at the Retro café. Indoor plants nestle between lines of books on photography and architecture. There are black and white prints on the wall and some woody incense coils a stream of smoke across the room. A ginger cat uncurls on the soft cushioned seat beside us and Kouji stubs out his cigarette in an ashtray filled with coffee grounds. The smell

of the union lingers. His hair long and eyelashes short. He has dark toffee coloured eyes.

We sketch pictures of aeroplanes and maps of the world in my notebook. Re-making the earth. There is a book called PEACE with a picture of John and Yoko inside and Kouji carefully draws a pair of glasses over Yoko's face. They match John's circular frames. Martin's *Concise Japanese Dictionary* is on the table and there is a Murakami quote written in the margins, 'this place is tied to everything...' it says.

Back at his place, Kouji prepares a fish for dinner. Its body puffed up under the supermarket cling wrap, the skin, silken and blue. He removes the eggs with a knife and washes the flesh clean, placing it under the grill. We eat the fish with rice, miso and smooth white tofu. Peeling back the skin with chopsticks, he removes the bones in one neat line. Tail to top. We drink beer together and Kouji watches a zombie movie late into the night.

The rain has gone and summer is here, rolling in wet lines down my neck and pooling at midriff in damp stains. I am splayed out on the floor beneath the air conditioner. Dust, built up in corners and under drawers, clings to the folds of a gokiburi hotel. A little trap, filled with dust and not cockroaches. I blink. Pot plants are dying in the kitchen and the smell of tatami thick in the apartment.

A tap at the door. Obasan. My neighbour and landlord. I prop myself up on my elbows.

'O-nee chan,' she is impatient, knocking again. 'O-nee chan, imasu ka?' she sings loudly. Reluctant to answer, I roll slowly across the floor and find my feet on the cool tiles of the entryway.

'Obasan ohayo.' It is Saturday afternoon at two o'clock and I have just told her good morning. She is pink-faced with arms flapping. My rent has been paid, so that can't be the fuss. I've not parked my bike in her spot near the mail slot. Would only dream of it. Although maybe I did leave it propped against the wrong side of the phone box... I glance out the window. She is still flapping, sweat appearing on her forehead. Troubled. I'm troubled. I recognise a few words... my mind curving in on itself.

'Kutsu shita,' she repeats. Stamping her foot on the threshold and slapping her ankle.

'Hmm...' I squint at her. Yes. That is shoe... socks, sock! Okay.

More flip-flapping and I surmise that she has dropped a sock from above. Fallen onto my balcony. Washing day. I leap across the room to the sliding door, leaving the front wide and open to the critical Obasan eye. A daft-looking sock is balanced on the top of the rail. Ha, I think. She feigns

gratitude and bows. We are both relieved. I close the door, now hungry. Still hot. Returning to the floor, I lie down and dream about bread.

Coloured lanterns float down the Motoyasu River. It is the sixth of August and we light candles. I draw a bird on mine and Kouji writes a message in characters that I don't understand. He translates. The glow of the dome is behind him. Lights flicker and the crowd murmurs. Old people, children, foreigners. Nuclear protesters hand out leaflets and Kouji disappears to the bathroom. While he is gone a lady with long hair offers to pray for me. A cat is sleeping, beside the warmth of candles.

The night is humid and the shrill of cicadas thick in my ears, as I walk back to my apartment, alone. I race up the stairs and hurry with the key but the timer light times out. I am in the dark. Feeling for the lock and fearful in the empty stairwell.

The next day, children at school show me how to make paper cranes. We are settled in the foyer beside a line-up of shoes.

'Jess sensei dekiru?' asks little Natsumi, wondering if I know how.

'Hmm,' I reply. I remember making them as a kid, I think. My friend Lainie used to make them out of chewing gum wrappers. One day she had brought her collection to show me at Church. I watched as she unravelled her pocket and hundreds of tiny birds spilled out across the hardwood floor.

Natsumi's fingers work quickly, shaping the blue and yellow sheets of paper with gentle precision. Her dark hair in two neat tails and head cocked to one side. Other kids join the origami party and I ride home that day with a basket full of birds.

It's New Year's Eve and Kouji falls in the waterway. I had seen him earlier with his friend outside, Daisuke's palm outstretched, two white pills in the centre. Daisuke's girlfriend Mirei had seen them too, and pulled me away. Linking my arm through hers, we joined the others out on the balcony. His friends frying up fresh oysters from a daytime harvest.

It was the first time I had seen it snow. White stuff, floating through the air like bits of polystyrene. An icy nip on the tongue. I was warm with beer and barbequed vegetables and was making new friends.

Kouji had been missing for a while when the countdown started. He often wandered off, so I wasn't too concerned. I just felt a little miffed that he wasn't there to ring in the New Year, our first together. I kissed all his friends at midnight, but apparently that is not exactly etiquette... in Japan.

There was no answer on Kouji's phone. His friends told me that he had probably gone home. At least, I think that is what they said. Daisuke and his girlfriend suggested that I go with them and we took the last train

home. The rest of the group stayed behind, scouring the waterfront with a spotlight. After exchanging numbers with Daisuke, I was alone on the train for the last leg. I imagined that Kouji might be dead. My bike lock was frozen at the station and I walked through ankle-deep snow, down the hill towards my apartment.

Kouji appeared at my door the next day and I drummed fists into his chest. Idiot. The watchman at the port station had seen him fall in. Grabbed him by the shoulders, hoisting him out of the water and into a little office.

Kouji re-enacts the scene for me in the kitchen.

'Doko ni wakaran,' he says. He didn't know where he was. 'Ore wa Su-Go-Ku samukatta,' he emphasises the syllables to explain the cold. The office was heated by a small oil heater and the watchman had instructed him to remove his clothes, Kouji's body freezing and wet. Then the man lectured him and wrapped him in a blanket, which Kouji could only describe as itchy. A taxi was called and the watchman paid the driver. Kouji's wallet and phone at the bottom of the river.

We follow the small path that veers away from the road back to Kouji's house. Little plots of vegetables, leek and snow-covered cabbages decorate the pathway on either side. Wintertime pansies grow in pots. It is late afternoon and the cloud is falling low. The cold of the shadow leans forward as we turn to walk along, further away from the houses.

The big tree reaches up in two thick trunks, leaning slightly towards the mountain and across the path. Kouji jumps up to grab a branch. At first he doesn't get a hold, but the second try is perfect. He is hanging there between the leafy furrows of the canopy, legs dangling towards the earth. His smile is lively and his laugh echoes across the cemetery.

'Sugoi old kono tree,' he says, hanging there. 'Mina ga wakaru... kono machi de.' He tells me that everyone in the town knows this tree. 'Hero mitai,' he says swiftly, his legs swinging now with the effort of keeping hold.

'Hero?' I reply, looking along the valley of houses and rooftops, blue and red by the river and the train line that goes towards Hiroshima city. You could have seen it from here, I think. The plume. Black obscuring the sun. I imagine the water in the river and the birds that make home in its reeds. He jumps down and gives the bark a pat, pausing for a second.

'Dark tree yo. Sore wa,' he walks off towards the little red shrine to the left of the tree. Alone in the shadows a chill crawls against my skin. The pasty limbs of a grey corpse hung-up in my mind, just like Kouji had done a few moments before. The clap of his hands at the shrine breaks my thought and I join him as he rattles the tin bells at the altar.

We pick out hot cans of coffee from the machine. Mine is black. His, café au lait. Sweet, as always. He tips a bit from the can at the base of a gravestone.

'Oi,' I say giving him the eye.

'Aluminium. Pah!' he says and spits. His foot kicking up the dusty gravel of the path. The gravestones are stacked up like boxes. Taller here and there. Some with figures wrapped in red knits, plastic oranges and imitation rice cakes nestled at their feet. There is a chill. We are wearing our winter coats and the five o'clock song begins to play across the town. Children are called home for their dinner. We turn back down the hill, towards the road.

'Sugu... Erica wa, America ni going back,' I say in a dodgy mix of language. 'February. Ni-gatsu.'

'Yeah,' he says. 'It's soon. Jess wa samishii to omou.'

'Ne... no more cake. That's true,' I reply. Erica was always bringing something sweet for our little chats and venting sessions. I would miss her, for sure.

'Ja... Erica wa Los Angeles janai, Chicago?'

'Ya, no she's from Minnesota.' I watch as Kouji deposits his empty coffee can though the gap in a fence.

'Minnesota. I don't know Minnesota... Jess mo, home ni kaeri tai?'

'No, I'm okay. Not yet. I wanna stay a bit longer, finish my contract. Ni-nen grai ka na.'

'Sou ne. Jess wa Nihon ga daisuki dakara ne,' he says with a grin.

'Erica boyfriend wa?'

'Yah, he's not going. He wants to, but she says no.'

'Sou...' Kouji stops in the middle of the path as we see a big cat jump down from a concrete wall, further down the road. I suddenly realise that it's not a cat, but a massive animal, 'suki na... Monkey ja yo.'

We stand and watch the as the monkey ambles across the train line, disappearing behind an apartment block. Kouji is quick to follow, ducking under a railing and around the corner. By the time I'm there the monkey is gone.

Erica is wearing a tiara to mark the occasion. 'I will always be a princess,' she says. Cassis soda in hand. We are huddled together in a tiny bar, reminiscing about the couple of years gone by and flirting with the Japanese barman. It's his birthday today, he says. His name is Ken.

There are free cigarettes on the bar and we smoke them. Heavily pungent.

'What we actually need... is a cigar,' says Erica, expelling a thick mouthful of smoke.

I pluck out a series of little dried fish from the nut bowl and form a circle pattern on the counter.

'Remember when you were a kid,' she says, 'and you had visions of marrying a Ken? You know, like Barbie's Ken.'

'Yeah, I guess so,' I say. 'Handsome... dark haired.'

'Yup. Yup, it's hilarious now, though. Right?'

'Mm...' I say. The joke is that here, everyone is called Ken, or at least a version of that. Kenji, Kenta... Kensuke. We are more than tipsy and lean across the bar on our elbows.

A girl wearing powder-pink frills is playing with the karaoke list.

Her friend puts on a song and Ken offers to make us a special cocktail. 'I need cheesecake,' I say.

We bid Ken goodnight and wander back to my place via the convenience store. The rabbit moon, big in the sky. Erica drops her phone in the gutter and the battery goes missing. We spend a long time looking, eventually finding it, wedged between a drain-pipe and the corner of the building.

'Gawd,' says Erica, using a convenience store chopstick to manoeuvre it free.

In the morning we drink big cups of tea. Orange pekoe. It's raining and I walk her to the bus stop. The windows of the bus are darkly tinted and I watch as it disappears into the deep hole of the overpass tunnel.

Kouji didn't even tell me that it was snowing outside and rode away down the street. Lips, muzzled against a yellow scarf.

I go out later that morning in my pyjamas, wrapped in a coat. The sky heavy and a can of coffee warming my pocket. I want to be home.

It is eight-fifteen and dark. Kids with blue and red schoolbags trail along the footpath. Hand-in-hand. The ground in the park is frosty and my feet, damp inside cheap canvas shoes. A sausage dog skips across the lawn to his ball. The sun begins to emerge and boys on bikes shout in lively accolade.

The Chinese parasol tree grows quietly, and my turn around the block, finds milk, bread and a steamed pork bun.

Back at my apartment, I can still hear the sweet potato van, its song playing up from the street. I fill the kettle with water and pull a fresh teabag from the box. Its silver film misses the garbage bag and falls to the floor.

The cat lady is sleeping in the window opposite. If I lean over the balcony, just so that the railing digs into my hip, I can see her garden. Wintery gold and green. It's there on the rooftop and I watch as a striped cat emerges from amongst a gathering of silvery leaves.

On the Theft of My New TV, or Watching with Ryokan Mike Heald

Mike Heald lives in Ballarat, and teaches at Trinity College, University of Melbourne. His last book of poetry was *The Moving World*, with Fremantle Press, which mainly explores experience arising from meditation.

I spent a fair while choosing where to put it, carrying it here and there, arms wide as if to embrace the long-lost or forgiven, setting it down carefully on its one shiny flat black foot, then standing back, eyes roaming and returning to what would become the place-most-watched...

But finally it was passed through the spare room window—from which the curtain fluttered outward as we pulled in after our Christmas away—by hands unknown, wrapped presumably in the sheet missing from my bed, and placed in another house altogether.

And so we have to sit with Ryokan watching the unstolen moon, until insurance, like good karma that accumulates by monthly payments, restores a simulacrum of what was taken, as if nothing had happened.

Contemporary Japanese Poets in Translation

This work was recently released in the collection *Poet to Poet: Contemporary Women's Poetry from Japan*, edited by Rina Kikuchi and Jen Crawford (Recent Work Press, 2017).

The Gift Misumi Mizuki

Tr. Niloofar Fanaiyan and Rina Kikuchi

Misumi Mizuki is an awardwinning poet who was born in
1981, in Kagoshima Prefecture,
Japan. In 2004, she received the
Gendaishi-techō Poetry Prize
and her first poetry collection,
Overkill, was awarded the
Nakahara Chūya Poetry Prize.
Her second collection won both
the Rekitei New Writer's Award
and the South Japan Literary
Prize (2006). Her fifth collection
received the Hagiwara Sakutarō
Prize (2014), the youngest poet
ever to receive it.

This morning
I cannot find my foot.
To you, to your abode,
I cannot come.

I am truly troubled by this news. I will bring you a new foot now.

My beloved believed,
my bad lie was believed—
I put the receiver down
and hastened
by broad-bladed carving knife
to remove my foot.

Blood pumped forth in gushing streams from the newly severed limb and my heart ached.

Yesterday,
for the first time, I cut my arm
with a razor—it was a fine cut, shallow—
very thinly
I made two wounds,
and from the two long long crevices, from those wounds,
I was spilling, my blood was spilling,
and absorbing that blood—
the handkerchief—was
myself.
I could not throw it away.

177 | Misumi Mizuki

You, beloved, will perhaps,
will more likely,
no—
truly you will be very sad.
I didn't want to see you.
I did not want to see you.

Three breaths after I removed my foot the house bell rang, and into the cupboard beneath the kitchen sink I carelessly threw my foot.

Too soon my beloved came, impossibly soon.

I question if, perhaps, it is you, actually, you who is non-existent, not real.

I can't help myself, stop myself, from questioning my beloved—
he presents to me a swirling marbled thing of blue and turquoise, the colours of pristine coastal waters—
my beautiful new foot.

So pure white and long is my beloved's left arm—there are two fine scars, gruesome in their freshness, crimson lines.

Oh how has this horror happened?

I have mistakenly cut your arm.

My beloved says not one word,
but with skilful fingers
attaches the new foot
to my severed limb.
I feel unsteady as though standing in shallow waters—
a cool sensation
as the seawater laps up and past my ankle.

I question if, perhaps, it is I, actually, myself who is non-existent, not real.

Afterwards, on the kitchen floor, we lost our original forms—
we didn't keep ourselves—
we did not keep ourselves.

Despite this shift in form we felt hungry, we made breakfast, as ghost-like and ambiguous creatures— I stood up and, as before, my foot remained on the Tsuchimori coast.

No longer will I scar myself, never again—because I would be scarring you, that is why—never again.

My beloved still has not spoken a word smiling, he turns into a small cuddly pig.

We,
in reality,
may be non-existent, not real.

Even so,
I love this person—
my heart is hammering with this love.
And despite myself,
I am weeping.

Niloofar Fanaiyan is a writer and poet currently based in Haifa, Israel. She was the 2016 Donald Horne Research Fellow at the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research, University of Canberra, where she obtained her PhD. She received the Canberra Critics Circle Literary Award for Poetry for her book of poems titled *Transit* (RWP, 2016).

Rina Kikuchi is an Associate Professor at Shiga University, Japan. She has an MA in Comparative Literary theories from the University of Warwick (UK), and a PhD in Contemporary Irish Poetry from Chiba University. At present, she is a visiting fellow at ANU and the University of Canberra, and conducting her research on modern and contemporary Japanese women's poetry, which includes translating their works into English.

178 | Westerly 62.2 179 | Misumi Mizuki

プレゼント

今朝は 足首が見つからんから あなたのもとへ、 行かれない。

それはひどく大変なことだいまから新しい足首を届けに行くよ。

恋人はすんなりと わたしの 出来の悪い嘘を信じた 受話器を置いて わたしは慌てて 出刃包丁で 足首を切断せんといかんかった 血がだくだく流れて 傷口と こころが しくしく痛んだ

昨日、はじめて腕を切った 剃刃で浅く ほんに浅く 傷をつけた 長い長い二本の裂け目から わたしが零れてしまった 血液を吸い込んだ ハンケチは わたし自身 捨てられんかった

あなたはきっと 多分 いや 多分悲しむから 会いたくなかって、 会いたくなかった 足首を切断してから 三呼吸目にチャイムがなった 流しの下に 足首をほおりこむ

あまりにも早く 恋人は来た あまりにも、 早すぎた

もしかしたら あなたは本当は おらんひとなのかもしれん

疑ってしまうのだ 恋人は 水色と緑色の混じった きれいな足首をわたしに差し出した 土盛海岸の色 の足首

真っ白で長い 恋人の左腕に 細い二本の傷 生々しい赤の線

なんてことだ わたし、 間違ってあなたの腕を切ったのだ

恋人は一言も発さず 手馴れた具合で わたしに 足首をつけよった 浅い海のなかに居るように心細い ひんやりとした くるぶしまでの海

もしかしたら わたしは本当は おらんひとなのかもしれん 疑ってしまうのだ 台所の床の上で 乱暴なセックスをしたら わたしたち もう原形をとどめて いなかって、 いなかった

それでもお腹はすく 朝食を作りましょうよ 曖昧な生き物のまま わたしは立ち上がった 相変わらず 足首は土盛海岸に居る

わたし もう傷なんてつけん あなたまで切りつけてしまうから だから もう、せんよ

恋人は未だ 一言も発さず 微笑んで 小さな豚になった

わたしたち 本当は おらんひとなのかもしれんけど それでも このひとが大好きだ その事実にこころを殴られ わたしは 不覚にも 泣いてしまう

Original poem, 'プレゼント' was first published in 'カナシヤル', 2006.

Soles— Ishikawa Itsuko

Tr. Paul Munden and Rina Kikuchi

Ishikawa Itsuko (b. 1933) is a committed anti-war and anti-nuclear activist poet. She was born in Tokyo. The war experiences of her childhood left her with a legacy of perceiving her naive culpability in the violence of the Japanese Imperial Army across Asia and the Pacific. She has written extensively on the topic. Her second collection, Wolf, was awarded the Mr H Prize (1961). Her collection Chidorigafuchi e ikimashita ka (Have You Been to Chidorigafuchi?) (1985) won the 11th Earth Prize.

become shoes

on command: become shoes!

So many shoes—crossing the bridge to a foreign land...

hobnails

on command: he hard as nails!

Stab someone, anyone—nail the whole street...

become oranges

on command: become oranges!

So many oranges, unsold, going to waste—chucked out...

become chairs

on command: become chairs!

Hard pressed—we endure without muttering a word...

become frogs

on command: become frogs!

From spring through to summer—croak croak croak...

become mud

on command: become mud!

Mud-listening to the cranefly's summer song...

become a boomerang on command: boomerang! become a ladder on command: ladder! become leaves: on command: leaves!

become an eagle and a hawk on command: eagle! hawk!

We tear our bodies in two and fight!
on command: with airborne ferocity, clawing each other's eyes—feeling each other's pain—from within...

with shredded skin—and while resting, bleeding, we're commanded: *become a drum!*Drum—such a sorrowful beat...

become a screw we were told, but some struggled and were crushed—burned... our friends, dying under our riveted gaze.

Oh to return to our human form, mumble the many screws, only to become flat fish—on command but they do it anyway, become soles... and those soles who from the bottom of their hearts yearned to resist gain fins but can't swim...

flailing—they float to the river's surface. Others, perfect transformations, mock those adrift, whose eyes are full of tears, floundering, dying.

There follows an age without command.
Human souls all along,
we just changed form:
painfully, into shoes; sorrowfully, into frogs;
all of that forgotten, by almost everyone.
Come the day—when we regain our humanity,
how will we cope, we poor soles?

Paul Munden is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Canberra, where he is also Program Manager for the International Poetry Studies Institute. He has published five collections of poetry, most recently *Chromatic* (UWAP, 2017).

ヒラメのこと

靴になれ といわれたら 靴になった おびただしい靴が 異国の橋を渡った

鋲になれ といわれたら 鋲になった だれを刺すためか おびただしい鋲が道にあふれた

蜜柑になれ といわれたら 蜜柑になった 売れ余った沢山の蜜柑が 掃いて捨てられた

椅子になれ といわれたら 椅子になった 重たい尻に押しつぶされても じっと黙って耐えた

蛙になれ といわれたら 蛙になった 長い夏の日を 啼いて過した

泥になれ といわれたら 泥になった 泥になって 静かに蚊とんぼの歌をきいていた

ブーメランになれ といわれたら ブーメランになった 脚立になれ といわれたら 脚立になった 葉っぱになれ といわれたら 葉っぱになった

鷲と鷹にいっぺんになれ といわれたら 体をちぎって鷲と鷹になった けんかしろ といわれたら 空中で烈しく眼を突つき合った どちらも自分だったから どちらがやられても痛かった

皮がむけ 血がにじんだ姿で休んでいたら 太鼓になれ といわれた 太鼓になって かなしい音で鳴った

こんどはネジになれ といわれて苦しくネジになりそこなった太鼓は つぶされ 火で焼かれた ネジになった私たちは じっと死んでゆく友を見た

人間にもどりたい おびただしいネジがぶつぶつ云っていた でも ヒラメになれ といわれると やっぱりヒラメになった しんからいやいやヒラメになったものは ヒレがあっても泳げなかった

もがきながら 川の面に浮びあがるいくつかのヒラメをうまくヒラメになったものたちが嘲笑って突ついた 眼に涙をためて 泳げないヒラメは死んでいった

それから長いこと 命令は下らなかった ほんとうは人間で ヒラメに化けただけのことを 靴になった日の苦しさや 蛙になった日のかなしみも もう ほとんどが忘れてしまった いつか 人間にもどれる日がきたとき ヒラメたちは 私たちは どうするだろう

Original poem, 'ヒラメのこと' was published in '子どもと戦争', 1976.

Welcome Home Kawaguchi Harumi

Tr. Melinda Smith and Rina Kikuchi

Kawaguchi Harumi was born in Obama, Japan, in 1962. While attending Waseda University. Tokyo, she started writing poems and published her first collection, Mizuhime (Water Princess, 1985). She has taught creative writing courses at various universities and edited several anthologies. Her tenth poetry collection, Map of the Peninsula (2009), received the Yamamoto Kenkichi Literary Prize, and her latest collection, Tiger is Here (2015), won the Takami Jun Poetry Prize.

Happy Birthday! He came home with a box, more than an armful, and held it out to me, grinning.

Instinctively taking it from him and staggering a little at the unexpected weight

I messed up the timing of saying Thank you but this was because my birthday was over nine months away

—and since there is no question that this man who has been living with me for years would mistake the date,

I thought perhaps

just for a moment, that I myself was misremembering it

but that is, of course, unlikely <grin>

I tear open the wrapping paper with gusto, and a glass a quarium appears $\,$ is born

But it is empty

We don't own any beautiful tropical fish, cute turtles, gorgeous chameleons. I don't know what to do with it

To start with I try putting it on top of the TV unit, where our television that stopped working used to be. It goes there unexpectedly well.

Perhaps they are the same kind of thing

In saying that $\;$ that time the two of us carried the long-ago broken TV in our arms to the large waste drop-off

to throw it away, we looked back at it again and again, as if we had abandoned a *child* in the woods,

and we ran, the two of us. The blue of the dawn sky lit up my skin like a broken screen and I felt as if the colour would never come off

He has changed out of his work clothes, and opens a can of beer on the sofa in front of the TV unit

It might be nice to sit next to him and stare together at the empty aquarium, but since this is a special occasion

I decide to try getting inside it

Straddling with my right leg, guiding my left leg in what was it made that faint creaking sound? The aquarium? The TV unit? Me?

When I hug my knees and make myself round, I fill it out just right

I'm so happy. This is just what I wanted. Who said that? Me? The TV unit? The aquarium?

The glass panels kiss the skin of my arms and the soles of my feet, like cool fresh water

It is unexpectedly good

He is smiling, drinking his beer, looking at the aquarium with the same face he used to watch the TV with. Nothing in his head

I changed into my pyjamas, and climbed in again without really thinking. I was so comfortable like that I fell fast asleep. And so

as if it were the natural course of things, from the next day on it became my nest

Every time I come back after going out I say 'I'm home' throw my bag aside take off my clothes discard them say Goodnight and climb inside it

<squeak>

He comes home, quietly seats himself on the sofa, and draining the can of beer he has opened, gazes

at me, sleeping

at the empty aquarium

or the blank screen of the no-longer-there broken television

head full of nothing

I'm home goodnight welcome home I'm home welcome home goodnight welcome home welcome home

Something is being is born

I am full of nothing

When I get broken this time he'll be on his own, perhaps he'll need a trolley, for the day he'll have to take me to the large waste drop-off I'd better give him a trolley for a birthday present Happy Birthday!

I'm home My skin is the blue colour of dawn

Melinda Smith is the author of five poetry books, the most recent of which is *Goodbye*, *Cruel* (Pitt St Poetry, 2017). Her work has been anthologised widely and translated into multiple languages. She received the 2014 Prime Minister's Literary Award for poetry. She is based in the ACT and is a former poetry editor for the *Canberra Times*.

おかえり

誕生日おめでとう、と帰ってきた男がにっこり差し出したのはひとかかえも ある箱で

反射的に受け取りながら予想外の重さに二、三歩よろめいてありがとうを 言うタイミングを逸してしまったけれどそれはわたしの誕生日が九ヶ月以上 も先で

いっしょに暮らして何年にもなる男が間違うわけはないのだからもしかしたら

自分が記憶違いをしているのだろうかと一瞬考えたから

だけどもちろんそんなはずはない にっこり

ばりばり包装紙を破り開くと水槽が

あらわれる 誕生する

でもからっぽ

ここにはきれいな熱帯魚もかわいい亀もすてきなカメレオンもいないから 困って

とりあえず 映らなくなったテレビのかわりにテレビ台に置いてみると意外 と似合う

おなじようなものかもしれない

そういえば ずいぶん前に壊れたテレビを男と二人で抱えて粗大ゴミ置き 堪に

捨てたあのときはコドモを森に捨てるみたいで何度も振り向いてから二人で 走った夜明けの空の壊れものめいた青が肌にうつっていつまでもとれない気が した

着替えた男はテレビ台の前のソファで缶ビールを開ける

隣に坐ってからっぽの水槽をいっしょに眺めるのもいいだろうけどせっかくだ から

入ってみることにした

右足で跨ぎ左足をおさめ 微かにきしむ音がしたのは水槽かテレビ台かわたしか

膝を抱えるかたちでまるくなるとちょうどよくあてはまる

ウレシイコンナノ欲シカッタンダと言ったのはわたしかテレビ台か水槽か ひんやり真新しい水に触れるようで硝子板がきゅうっと腕や足裏に吸いつく 意外と いい

男は笑ってビールを飲みテレビを見ていたときとおなじ顔でぼんやり水槽を見て いる

パジャマになってから何となくまた入ったらそのまま気持ちよく眠ってしまったの で

当然のなりゆきとして次の日からそこがわたしの巣になり

外から戻るとただいまと言いながら鞄を投げ出し服を脱ぎ捨ておやすみなさい と水槽に

入る

きゅうつ

帰って来た男は静かにソファに座り開けた缶ビールを飲み干しながら眺める 眠っているわたし

からっぽの水槽

それとも映らなくなったもうないテレビの画面

ぼんやりして

ただいまおやすみなさいオカエリただいまおかえりオヤスミナサイおかえりおか えり

誕生する

わたしのなかにはなにもない

壊れたら こんどは一人だから台車がいるだろういつか粗大ゴミ置き場まで行く 男の

誕生日には台車をプレゼントしておいてあげようおめでとう ただいま 肌は夜明けの青いいろ

Original poem, 'おかえり' was published in '半島の地図', 2009.

Head Ache Kono Satoko

Tr. Shane Strange and Rina Kikuchi

Kono Satoko was born in Fukuoka prefecture, Japan, in 1972. This work is from her fifth poetry collection, Chijō de okita dekigoto wa zenbu kokokara miteiru (Everything happening on earth has been watched from here, 2017), published on black paper with white lettering and avant-garde design. She leads a group of young artists, TOLTA, which she describes as a 'verbal art unit'. She edited the anthology Centenary of Japanese Contemporary Poetry (2015) and writes monthly book reviews for Western Japan Newspaper.

'My skull's being squeezed, cut the bone, take me out!' This was Monday head.

'I knew this was coming,'

mumbled Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday heads. Saturday and Sunday heads were asleep.

Managing heads is becoming a problem, with only seven to last the week.

They have lived in the closet since the day I was born.

A closet with six doors. Behind each door, a different head.

At school, teachers said:

'Come to school each day with a different head.'

'Choose the right head, or else...'

Creative head was for the day of art class; Physical head for playing dodge ball; Maths head excelled at calculation.

Chatty head, stubborn head, pushy head, sooky head, stuck-up head—

How can I get my heads together?

A care-free colleague said use the days of the week.

Bad bosses choose their heads by their mood.

My boss used to be care-free, until he read an article:

'Impressive People Choose Their Heads by Mood'.

He changed his head accordingly. It did no good.

Monday head--the cleverest head--

can no longer cope with the world as it is and so has abandoned all hope.

I can understand this, I guess.

'We, the rest of the heads, who are not as clever as Monday head, are hewildered.'

They argue through the closet doors.

'Are we meant to decide who will take Monday's place by playing 'scissors, paper, rock'?

Heads don't have fingers or hands!'

They try a talking version:

'Sci-ssors, pa-per, rock!'

Saturday head cheats every time.

 $To morrow\ will\ be\ Monday,\ and\ the\ head\ problem\ remains\ unsolved.$

Once upon a time, it was important to present a beautiful face to the world.

But now, with each head having one face,

it is more important to choose the right head.

I will just have to choose my head

like a boss.

Shane Strange's writing has appeared in various print and online journals, including Overland, Griffith Review, Burley, Verity La, foam:e, Cordite Poetry Review, and Axon: Creative Explorations. He is currently studying at the University of Canberra, where he also tutors and lectures in Creative Writing.

専用

骨の枠で頭がしめつけられてつらい。 骨を切ってぼくをとりだしてほしい。 ある朝ぼくの首がそういったきり、キャビネットから出てこなくなった 月曜日専用の首である ついにきたか

火曜、水曜、木曜、金曜の首はつぶやいたが、土曜と日曜の首は寝ていた

近年首のひきこもりは社会問題になっている ぼくの首は7つしかない たった7つの首で、月曜から日曜までの7日間を切り回している

ぼくらは生まれたときからキャビネットを持っている

標準仕様のキャビネットは扉が6つあり、それぞれちがう首が入っている毎日ちがう首で学校へ来なさい。

適切な時と場合に適切な首を選びなさい、さもないと

このように毎日首のちがう教師はぼくらを脅したものだった。

器用な首は美術の日に、体育が得意な首はドッチボールの日に、計算が得意な首は算数の日に。

おしゃべりな首、根気のある首、喧嘩っ早い首、泣き虫の首、見栄っ張りの首 今日はどの首にしようか

これを曜日で決める同僚は気楽で、気分で変える上司は最悪である

とはいえぼくの上司もかつては気楽な上司だった、ところが

「人間としておもしろい」のは首を気分で変える者

なる調査結果が発表され、上司は首をランダムに変えるようになった

月曜の首は変化と予測不可能な現象が苦手だった

月曜の首はいちばん頭がよかった

月曜の首はさっさと絶望した

月曜の首がひきこもりになったのも無理はなかった

月曜ほど頭のよくない残りのぼくらは途方にくれ

いまキャビネット越しに口論しているところだ

月曜の首当番をジャンケンで決めろというのか

ジャンケン、

首には手も指もない

何度やっても土曜の首が後出しするため、ロジャンケンは中止になった

むかしの人にとっては、顔の美醜が大きな問題だったそうだ 少なくともひとつは首についている顔ごときが、どうして問題だったのか まるで夢物語のようだ 明日は月曜日で、首問題は未解決である こうしてぼくも「人間としておもしろく」なっていくらしい

Original poem, '専用' was published in '地上で起きた出来事はぜんぶここからみている', 2017.

Into White Darkness Misaki Takako

Tr. Subhash Jaireth and Rina Kikuchi

Misaki Takako was born in Chiba Prefecture, Japan, in 1967. She started writing in her late teens, taught by Yoshihara Sachiko (1932-2002), a feminist poet who ran a famous feminist poetry journal, La Mer. Misaki was awarded the La Mer New Poet's Award (1990), and published her first collection, Kannō Kensashitsu (Sensual Examination Room, 1991). Her third collection, Sakura byōin shūhen (Around Sakura Hospital), won the prestigious Takami Jun Poetry Prize. Her fourth collection, Shizukani, kowareteiru niwa (Silently Decaying Garden, 2011) was awarded the Ono-city Poetry Prize.

Barely dark is barely light all that was visible has turned invisible and the invisible has come to light there however deep it is we should go exhausted carrying the weight of nothing but our own bodies dragged alongside

Of sorrow the white shroud of pain the white shroud stretched across the whole field nothing more to lose now all is white and more white and yet strange darkness

Neither eyes nor hands know the way in the still darkness only the heart has its work we sort as if beans from the gravel stumble count our stumbles slowly so slowly

We pray we grieve
we stand next to each other
but alone heads lowered bodies curled
and hands stretched out looking for
other hands to rescue to hold
to farewell to mourn and remember

We exhale we cry
warming the white darkness with breath and tears
as if daubing it with colours
dropped from the paintbrush
and making it glow like embers around us
as we wait still silent becalmed

Subhash Jaireth, now Canberra based, was born in Khanna and spent nine years in Moscow between 1969 and 1978 before returning to India. He has published three collections of poetry and four books of fiction and non-fiction in Hindi, Russian and English. His book of poetic prose pieces *Incantations* (Recent Work Press), was released in September 2016.

白い闇のほうへ

うすくらがりは うすあかるみ 仄見えていたものが 見えなくなり 見えなかったものが 仄見えてくる そこへ どこまでも 入っていけばいい ぐったりとした 自分の重さを たったひとつの 持ち物のように ひきずって

かなしみの 白い布は くるしみの 白い布は 一面にひろげられてあるだろう これ以上 失えないほど 失って そのあと なにもかもが 白く 白く そして 暗く

目も 手も おぼつかない しずかな 闇のなかで できるのは こころの仕事 砂利と 豆を たんねんによりわけるように つまずきを つまずきながらかぞえるように ゆっくりと ゆっくりと

析るとき 悼むとき わたくしたち ひとりずつ立ち それぞれの もっとも深いところへ向けて うつむく 片方の手は もう片方の手を あるいは どこかにあるはずの 見知らぬ 熱い手を 求める

吐かれた息 流された涙が 白い闇を あたためる ほつほつと 筆の先の色がにじむように 小さな炎は点され やがて まじりあって 大きくかがやく そのときまで そこに とどまっていればいい

Original poem, '白い闇のほうへ' was first published in '飛びたたせなかったほうの蝶々', 2015.

Footprints Jen Banyard

Jen Banyard is the author of four novels for young readers (published by Fremantle Press) and numerous stories. She has a PhD in creative writing from The University of Western Australia.

Masaoka Shiki | Suna-hama ni Ashi-ato nagaki Haru hi kana

> A spring day— A long line of footprints On the sandy beach.

Tsugi wa Yotsuya-aaa-aaa. Yotsuya desu. The announcement growls over Kazuo's head as he hangs one-armed, swaying with the other passengers. Eleven stops to Ogikubo where he'll transfer to the Chūō Line. He'll be home in an hour and twelve minutes. An hour thirteen max.

At Ogikubo, he weaves, just short of running, towards the waiting above-ground train. He feels the cold sharp hit of fresh autumn air but daren't slow to breathe it in. He climbs aboard and falls into the aisle seat, feigning instant deep sleep. He doesn't feel like talking tonight.

He should have stopped somewhere for a beer. Why rush home? To hear his nephew's long-winded account of some boring kids' show? To pretend to like his brother-in-law's political rants? To climb to his top bunk in a Disney-papered room with the Shrek night-light casting a sickly glow?

The job interview hadn't gone well. Three interrogators sitting with their backs to a wall of glass and a slanting sun. He could hardly make out who was speaking. When they'd asked why he wanted to work there he shouldn't have thought so long. Stupid not to have prepared a liesomething to shunt aside the hammering truth: 'Because I've outstayed my welcome in my sister's apartment; because my family's embarrassed for me; because I'm desperate.' They'd wanted to know all about his exchange year in California and his ease with English, but his PhD they'd touched on with suspicion. Everyone in the room knew he'd hate the job within a week.

It's almost four years now since university—the silly hat, the photos, the family party. Three years since they cut his position on Yamaguchi's

nanotech research team—what he'd thought would be his life's work. Three years of floundering—the good jobs always just out of reach, falling to graduates newer and shinier. Once he'd thought some tiny brain-spark of his might help fight poverty or global warming. Today he'd been begging to join a company that made popcorn-flavoured toothpaste.

Kazuo opens his eyes. Above him, a man grips the handrail and lolls with the train-rhythm in and out Kazuo's space, filling it with sour breath. Kazuo averts his face, takes an iPad from his briefcase and brings up his schedule for Sei Chīzu. Sei Chīzu—the 'Hire-a-Friend' agency named for the fake-smile; the company keeping his bank balance breathing. Fake friends, fake colleagues, fake fiancés—whatever is required—he's your man. His sister had shown him the 'Staff Wanted' ad as a joke. But he'd noted the number. And to his shame he's found he's good at his job. He can make a good speech, handle tricky questions and rustle up funeral tears better than a Bollywood actress. He's discovered quite a talent for the virtual life.

His appointment with Satsuki Tanaka is two days away. For five months, every two weeks, they've been meeting at two pm at Nakanoshima Park, strolling the riverside then going separate ways. She's at the back end of her thirties and lives alone. Her father set her up in a small property management business but she seems to resent him for it. Satsuki talks about fatuous clients, immoral politicians, dreamy faraway places—and Kazuo listens. There's a sadness in her that runs deep. But despite her persistent gloom, her defiant frumpiness and the fact that, officially anyway, he's no one to her, Kazuo likes Satsuki. Their meetings make him strangely happy, like therapy in fresh air.

He wants to suggest she take the train with him down to Taiji when he visits his parents next time; that she look out from the bluff over the cliffs and coves and rocky islets of the Kumano Sea and be restored with the peace of knowing it's all greater than any one person. In his head he goes there after every failed interview. But he'd lose his job if Sei Chīzu management ever found out he'd done anything so personal with a client.

• • •

Kazuo's father Kiyoshi, in his best suit, drives, Satsuki sitting up front beside him. They skirt the bay dotted with fish farms and cross the bridge with its cement dolphin statues and the whale-and-calf sculpture on its tall red poles. Kujirahama Park, the whale aquarium, comes into view at the foot of the thickly wooded tsunami evacuation hill. A show is in progress, its commentary bouncing across the forecourt. Satsuki swings to look as they pass.

'Kazuo could take you there later,' says Kiyoshi brightly.

Kazuo sees the tiny shudder and hears Satsuki's silence.

The Yaris revs up the steep hill on the other side of town, the harbour with its fishing boats and yellow-tarpaulined fishermen's huts below, the Kumano Sea beyond. Inside the cement breakwater on the other side of the harbour is the familiar grid of floating pens. From time to time, the water flashes frothy white, parting for glossy bodies to carve their seamless curves of breathing and diving; aquarium-bound bottlenoses spared for their built-in smiles and resemblance to Flipper. Satsuki seems to be looking out to the scattered jagged islands and Kazuo's glad.

Kazuo's mother, Etsuko, is snipping herbs from a pot beside the front door as the car pulls up. The home is like a gingerbread house, squeezed onto a wedge of land between vegetable plots and an ancient lane that slopes sharply back towards the harbour, beneath ancient arching trees.

It's a happier meal than Kazuo had feared. Satsuki seems to have shrugged off some of her Osaka cynicism; his mother, seeing Satsuki's age and plainness, is inclined to believe Kazuo that they're only friends, so relaxes. After lunch, when Etsuko brings out the family albums Kazuo groans... but Satsuki shuffles closer.

'My family doesn't keep photos,' she says. 'I wouldn't have a clue what I looked like as a child.'

'I love to look back,' says Etsuko. 'It keeps the past alive.'

'My parents aren't much for the past,' says Satsuki. 'They're all for the here and now. Well, make that the "What's next?"'

'That sounds just like Kazuo!' laughs Kiyoshi. 'Always looking around the next corner and worrying, never slowing to feel the earth beneath his feet.'

Satsuki looks at Kazuo. 'Not in the same way as my parents but... yes... I've seen that in him.'

Kazuo re-crosses his legs.

Etsuko goes to the tokonoma alcove and brings back a photograph Kazuo knows well. She places it in Satsuki's hands. It's in sepia tones—a young man at sea.

'This is my favourite,' says Etsuko. 'It's my father, Hiroshi Ishikawa. He was a pearl diver in Australia for many years. Until the war.'

Satsuki studies the strong young diver, wind riffling his salt-spiky hair, hanging onto the side of a lugger. 'It's amazing.' She looks up at Kazuo. 'You look exactly like him.'

Kiyoshi laughs. 'That's what my wife's always saying!'

'It means a lot to me,' says Etsuko. 'I like to think my father lives on in our Kazuo here.'

Satsuki traces the frame with her fingertips. 'So far away,' she murmurs. 'Though that's the beauty of the sea,' says Etsuko. 'It connects us all. I go to the bluff and send my prayers across the water, knowing they will find him.'

'Have you ever seen his grave?' asks Satsuki. 'A photo perhaps?' Etsuko shakes her head. 'On the bluff there's a boulder I think of as his grave. It has to be enough.'

• • •

'It's peaceful here,' says Satsuki. She's gazing northwards towards a small lighthouse on a distant islet of rock. They've walked in the gentle sunshine to the high bluff that juts into the sea a mile or so from Kazuo's house, said a prayer for his grandfather Hiroshi and climbed the large stones that form the lookout.

Kazuo points to a smooth mound of black rock a few metres wide protruding from the dark blue swell. Two figures, legs planted wide, are balanced on top of it, fishing rods in graceful arcs. 'See there,' he says. 'We call it Turtle Rock. People wade out at low tide and fish on it for hours—until the tide ebbs enough for them to wade back in. I used to go there with my father all the time.'

Satsuki looks at the sky. 'Your parents... this place,' she says. 'They're lovely. My family home is a shrine to greed, to power. There's not a grain of compassion within those walls. I turn cold when I go there, like a bronze statue—I can't help it. My father...' Satsuki shudders. 'I don't... respect him. And for that my mother blames me.'

Satsuki suddenly turns to Kazuo. 'You should go to Australia. Go and visit your grandfather's grave. It would complete things for your mother.'

'It would finish things for my mother!' laughs Kazuo.

'You might be surprised,' says Satsuki. 'She knows you're not happy. Cooped up with your sister, always so anxious. I know what sadness looks like.'

Kazuo has never thought of Satsuki observing him, nor that he's revealed as much as he has. 'You could go,' he says defensively. 'There's nothing holding you back.'

Satsuki picks at a thumbnail. 'The world's too big for me. I'm like those dolphins in their pens in the harbour. Yes—I saw them. All I can do is come up for air every now and again—enough to keep from dying. Only I'm not going anywhere after this, Kazuo.'

They look ahead, silent, the wind rattling the pine trees. Satsuki laughs. 'I'm sorry for being so glum. And I'm not even paying you to listen!'

Kazuo looks away, stung. Satsuki takes his wrist. It's the first time he's ever felt her touch. She raises his hand and gently presses his fingertips one by one. 'And I'm even sorrier for saying that. It was thoughtful of you to bring me here. Thank you.' She puts his hand between her two. 'Tell me a story?'

Kazuo smiles. 'What kind of story?'

'Do you know any from Taiji?'

Kazuo tilts his head. 'There's one from around here that my grandfather used to tell me, but I never really got it.'

'Try me.'

She's looking at him, waiting, so Kazuo begins. 'There was a badger and a mud-snail...' He tells her how they agreed to race to the Great Shrine of Ise; that the mud-snail secretly attached herself to the badger's tail and hitched a ride; that when the badger reached the Great Gate of the shrine—the snail nowhere in sight—he whisked his tail with joy at his win, unknowingly breaking the snail's shell on the stone and tossing her to the ground. 'When the badger sees the mud-snail sitting there,' says Kazuo, 'she hides her agony. "Hello!" she says. "I've been here for ages! I took off some of my shell to cool down while I waited for you!" So the badger declares her the winner. But as soon as he goes off she dies.'

Kazuo frowns. 'I never could understand why she didn't just ask her friend for help.'

'She was going to die anyway, can't you see?' says Satsuki. 'Why drag her friend down with her?' She pulls close the neck of her jacket and stares out to sea.

• • •

Two weeks later Kazuo is to meet Satsuki at Nakanoshima Park—a Sei Chīzu appointment. He showers, puts on a white shirt then changes into a pale blue one. He descends the metro stairs with light steps, not noticing the hordes hurrying upwards.

Kazuo reaches the stiles to find the Yotsubashi Line closed. The authorities won't come out and say it, but people have mobiles and he catches there's been a suicide up the line at Higobashi station, near where he's supposed to meet Satsuki. He takes another route and is seven minutes late. Satsuki's not waiting, damn her. Hours later, he returns to his apartment, drunk and deflated. He stumbles past his purse-lipped sister and brother-in-law and sprawls on the Shrek floor rug, his clothes askew.

His nephew rouses him the next morning, poking crayons in his ears. Kazuo shoos him off and reaches for his phone. It's waiting in his inbox—an email from her, forwarded by Sei Chīzu along with a note advising his dismissal.

'I've hitched a long way on your tail, Badger, but my shell is too broken to go on pretending I'm whole. In Taiji, you showed me what is possible and, sadly, what is not. I believe my story must now come to its always-predictable end. Your sorry mud-snail, Satsuki.

'PS: You will thank me for getting you fired.'

The Finger

War Remnants Museum, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam Elaine Barker Elaine Barker is an Adelaide poet with work published over many years in newspapers, journals and anthologies. Her first collection *The Windmill's Song* was published in 2003 by Friendly Street Poets in the New Poets series. Ginninderra published *The Day Lit By Memory* in 2008 and *High Heels & Tartan Slippers* in 2011. Elaine is currently working on a new collection.

On the second floor the photos arc and flare their message from the war. In this image the finger is slender, elegant and not deformed. The nail is perfect, neatly trimmed. And yet the finger stands alone, just this one finger, extending from the boy's left hand, then to become one with the wrist in an immense bulbous mass of flesh. So, the boy was born during the war, after the low-flying plane had trailed its sickly mist over the town and across the terraced valley, and he must manage as best he can. Perhaps he will trim and tidy, sort out and sequence, make use of the wartime remnant. Maybe he will keep it under his jacket, especially when the tourists come by.

River Shane Strange

Shane Strange's writing has appeared in various print and online journals, including Overland, Griffith Review, Burley, Verity La, foam:e, Cordite Poetry Review, and Axon: Creative Explorations. He is currently studying at the University of Canberra, where he also tutors and lectures in Creative Writing.

On the Chinese side, a phalanx of trim hotel buildings line a cliff at exactly 45 degrees from the falls. Plump daddies with cameras like ordnance are pushed around on neat punts, performing tourist with novelty and national pride.

On this side—the side of Vietnam—rough paths cross a field past a buffalo tied; a rusting tractor; two circular formations of hay squat: pre-industrial, ritualistic, necessary; punts of thick bamboo wound together with rough jute rudimentary as breath.

Siem Reap Ann Dombroski

Ann Dombroski was the recipient of a Varuna Fellowship and an Australia Council grant. Her short fiction has appeared in various literary journals and anthologies. One of her stories was also broadcast on ABC radio.

All she could see were the driver's silver jacket, puffed across his back, and a wavering scoop of the Royal Road in the *tuktuk*'s headlight. The only sound was the *tuktuk* motor. On both sides lurked the sleeping jungle. Landmines still loosely buried there. That girl on the charity tin with her leg blown off.

They turned onto a bumpy road—her bones felt every bump—and the *tuktuk* stopped. 'Here,' the driver said, although how could he tell? In this darkness.

'I meet you there.' His hand flicked to the left.

She got down, and his *tuktuk* was swallowed by the night. Two children set upon her, swinging lighted torches. 'No!' she cried. Never buy from children, her guidebook said. But another *tuktuk* was arriving and the children ran towards it.

In the blackness, she began to feel her way with her feet, like a blind woman. When her foot encountered steps, she climbed them, but on the last step she tripped. A glimmer of water indicated she was on the causeway. She pushed herself upright. There was a murmuring in French and a couple overtook her, their phones illuminating their path. She tried to keep behind them, to use their lights as you do tail-lights in a fog, but they strode away.

A reservoir shimmered ahead. She stumbled towards it and sat on the edge. Mosquitoes, she thought. Phones lit up the faces of the new arrivals. People texting, wouldn't you know it.

Gradually the horizon lightened, and the silhouette of Angkor Wat emerged from the dark. Around her, phones clicked. Now came the jungle sounds... the great dawn stirring, a rooster, and bird-calls she'd never heard before... the tinkle of temple music... all as one extraordinary waking... and to think this had happened every dawn of Angkor Wat's existence.

She moved with the crowd, into the ruins. Distant voices sometimes drifted across the silence; there was a flash of a coloured T-shirt at the end of a corridor; but mostly she was alone and in awe, picturing the elephants dragging the blocks of sandstone, the labourers on the bamboo scaffolding. How many decades would it have taken? How many thousands of hands? And it wasn't just the scale, it was the detail. She took close-ups for her sister, of a frieze of Apsaras, the pattern of their sideways feet, but while she was shading the camera to view the results, a man in a Chinaman's hat materialised at her elbow. She pulled back with a gasp and he darted behind a wall.

Finally leaving the site, she made her way across the dizzying heat of the road, towards the *tuktuk* camp. Many drivers were asleep—hammocks strung up inside their vehicles—and who could blame them with the early start? She waited for someone to claim her. All she could recall of her driver was his silver jacket.

She wandered around the camp, dazed by the heat, dust drifting about her ankles. Her knee ached. If she didn't find her driver, how could she get back to town? All these *tuktuks* were taken, their passengers at Angkor Wat.

A group of drivers under a low tree chuckled among themselves at this old lady stumbling about asking, 'Are you my driver?' She felt like Baby Bird in that picture book, saying, 'Are you my mother?' to all the farmyard animals.

There was laughter as a driver was shaken from his hammock. Surly and red-eyed, he gestured with his head. With relief, she climbed into the shade of his *tuktuk*.

Back at her room, she rinsed away the dust in the cement shower stall, cool and dark as a cave, and then stretched out on the bed. Chopping sounds floated up from the kitchen. Voices, and a splashing in the pool. Different from the silent hotel suite in Phnom Penh, where she'd felt entombed as she lay awake, night after night, leaking dark thoughts.

But even here, drifting into a doze, she saw it. Spot-lit, as if on stage. The girl on her hands and knees, grunting, on the green kindergarten carpet.

She had hoped for a big, boisterous group to lose herself in, but no, there were only two women. Slender, tanned and blonde, not unlike herself fifty years ago. Only she'd been a true blonde. And she never wore those loose singlet tops that displayed so much bra. Though she fancied she might have, had it been the fashion.

The back of one girl bore the circular burns of the cupping cure.

'Did it work?' she asked the girl, as they followed the Australian guide to the village.

'Not really.'

As she would have expected.

Their guide stopped at a hut on low stilts. The hut was a single room, open to the road. The kitchen under the extended roof-line comprised a fire and a scarred bench. Alongside the hut, two sick-looking cows, their ribs protruding and their hide pocked with bites, stood at a lean as if they might topple. The girls—sisters, Fenella realised with a pang—passed the insect repellent between them, spraying each other's legs. They offered to spray hers. The village woman, holding a bag of rice, watched with resentful eyes. At her feet, two dirty infants watched also.

The deal seemed to be a bag of rice per tour.

'And this is our new project.' Pointing at long trays, like guttering, attached to the fence, the guide explained how these acted as aboveground planters for vegetables. 'For flood-time, when food is scarce.'

A worthwhile project, Fenella would've thought, but the village woman appeared unimpressed.

The guide led them further along the dusty lane until they arrived at the cook hut, an open-sided structure whose thatched roof sheltered a U-shaped bench with six shiny cooking stations. Here, they washed their hands before taking their places as directed.

A stocky man in an apron stood in the middle of the U and brandished some stems. 'What's this one?' he asked.

'Lemongrass,' said Fenella.

He waved an orange root and looked at the sisters in a teasing way.

Fenella, seeing the way of things, waited. When no answer was forthcoming, she offered, 'Turmeric?' The young women aaahed.

But when the cook held up a knotty root, she closed her mouth, not wanting to be the bright girl in the class with her hand up straight for Sir.

The cook looked pleased to have stumped her. 'Galangal!'

He demonstrated how to chop the lemongrass. It took a long time. 'Must be fine. Like powder,' he kept repeating. He went on to chop the turmeric, the galangal, and the chilli. While he chopped, he told them some story, largely incomprehensible, about a woman who'd killed her husband. The story seemed to be connected to the dish they were making. With the blade of his knife, he then scooped the spices into a mortar and began pounding. He pounded until sweat sprouted on his brow. 'Now! You try.'

They all chopped and chopped and when he said, 'No! Like powder', they chopped some more. The girl with the cupping burns whispered, 'Why not just buy lemongrass powder at the market?'

Fenella persisted. Sweat trickled inside her long-sleeved frock.

The girl who'd made the remark dropped her knife and went over to a chair by the lake, where she rolled a cigarette. The cook looked anxious. The sister, an older, quieter version of the other, said, 'She's sick.' The cook took the girl's place and did her chopping for her. When she returned, he showed her how to pound the powder, the wooden pestle knocking on the wooden mortar. She said, 'Wouldn't a stone mortar be quicker?'

The cook came round to Fenella and exclaimed over the curry paste forming under her pestle. It afforded her little satisfaction. All her life she'd passed tests of patience, and where had that got her?

She sat opposite the girls at the table by the lake while the cook served the dishes they'd prepared.

Over the green mango salad, the older sister began to talk.

They'd been on a three-day tribal adventure, she said. They rode an elephant to a camp in the hills, where every evening, the tribes-people crept out of the jungle to stare at their hair.

Fenella, listening, pictured the girls' hair by firelight.

And to sleep, there was a choice between being zipped up in a suffocating netted hammock or undoing the zip for air and risking malaria. The last night, the girls were frightened because their guide got drunk. It was a situation where anything could happen, that's what the girl with the cupping burns said.

Rape was how Fenella took her meaning.

The girls described this experience as eco-travel.

But didn't they realise all tourism had impacts? Take the elephants. Probably separated as babies from their mothers in Laos, and beaten into submission. But she held her tongue.

Tomorrow the sisters were visiting an orphanage.

Orphanages. Don't get her started! But she smiled; they meant well.

When the *amok* arrived, she couldn't face it. She asked the cook if he could take her bowl of curry to the village woman. And her dessert too. That sickly, sticky thing. He took the curry away with such eagerness, she wondered if he intended to eat it himself.

The sisters had opened up to her now, as people tended to. The younger woman was a nurse, whose boyfriend, a professional soccer player, was reluctant to commit. Fenella understood this as code for unfaithful. The sister was in love with an older man, a botanist she'd met on fieldwork, who was more interested in plants than in her.

A lost cause, Fenella decided. The sisters didn't ask her about her love life. Out of politeness or the assumption she had none?

In the empty foyer, the Halo tin sat prominently at reception, on its label the girl with one leg. Fenella removed fifty dollars from her bra and stuffed it through the slot.

The bath was on her balcony but it was private behind the bougainvillea. She folded her clothes as she removed them, placing them on the sunlounge, and then sat in the deep stone tub and turned on the shower. When the tub was half-full, she turned off the tap.

Her man, she could've told those sisters, her man was Indian. She squeezed the washer above her chest; the cool water dribbled down to the creases in her waist. A doctor, when she was a pretty young teacher. She could have married him, indeed would have and should have. Could have because he did ask her to; would have if she'd loved him; should have because now... now she'd have children, tall and dusky, grandchildren even.

He died recently, she'd heard. The end. She wrung out the washer and slapped it onto the rim of the bath. There was a trickling sound: bathwater leaking past the plug.

She woke in a puddle. Loud knocking and a voice calling, 'Fen-la'. In her confused haste to climb out of the bath, she banged her sore knee on the stone edge and whimpered like a child. 'What is it?' she called through the door.

'Fen-la, your friend here.'

Friend? Had her sister got the all-clear? She pulled on her underpants and dress and clambered down the ladder-stairs, sliding on the last steps. She stood at reception looking around. The Cambodian maid, the statuesque one, sauntered over. 'Sor-ry. I mistake.' Uncertain, Fenella stood there, barefoot and braless. By the pool, two older women were hugging each other and exclaiming.

'Oh,' she said.

'You want I book something?' The girl pushed a plastic-covered sheet towards her.

Fenella gazed down. Water dripped from her hair onto the plastic. As if her sister would come without advising her.

'A massage,' she said.

'Cert-ain-ly. The blind massage or-'

'Yes. The blind one.'

The little wrinkled woman in the massage room was not blind. Her small black eyes shone like pebbles in a riverbed. After some preliminary prodding at Fenella's back, she leapt up onto the massage table and began plucking at her skin. There was no oil, just this plucking with dry hands. It

felt too intimate, this woman up on the table with her. The woman panted with her exertions.

The little girl Paige had panted on all fours. How could they not believe her? All the documentation she did. The way Paige squirmed in her seat.

Finally, the masseuse—who possibly wasn't a masseuse at all, how would she know?—finally she stopped. But she lay in wait outside the massage room.

'Good?' she asked.

'Yes.'

'Tip, lady?'

Of course, a tip. On top of the twenty she'd already paid—including five extra for a blind one—but then who got that? She climbed the stairs to her room and returned with five dollars. Tips—they only went to those who dealt with tourists. The garment women in Phnom Penh got sixty cents an hour.

The locals on their bikes stared at her on her evening stroll. In this country you only walked if you were poor.

She followed the river up one side, crossed at the bridge near the palace and walked back along the other side. A driver was sluicing down the seats of his *tuktuk*, using a long rag dipped in the river. He straightened when he saw her and gestured towards his vehicle. She shook her head and continued her circuit. Up ahead, a Cambodian teenager was walking alongside a big man, white-haired. The man dropped his arm around the boy's shoulders. Fenella looked away. Those degenerates in Phnom Penh.

She arrived back at the main thoroughfare she needed to cross. Bicycles, motorbikes and *tuktuks* flowed by in a continuous stream. With no pedestrian crossings, you simply had to walk out into the traffic, trust that riders would avoid you. So said the guidebook. While she hesitated, several locals sauntered across the road and it seemed miraculous the way the traffic parted and re-formed around them. Eventually she took four steps onto the road, but there she stopped, forcing a *tuktuk* to swerve wildly. Too scared to move, she stood with the traffic streaming around her, as if she were a street lamp.

For her next temple visit, a different driver turned up. She asked why the previous driver, the one in the silver jacket, hadn't come as agreed. The man shrugged. But she knew why: it was because she hadn't tipped. And she hadn't on principle, for leaving her to wander, ridiculed, in the *tuktuk* camp.

The new driver dropped her at the Bayon. After climbing up, step after step, past all those monumental faces, and all the way down again, she followed an arrow pointing, she supposed, to the next site. The jungle soon pressed in close. She looked back but no-one else was following this path. Had she taken the wrong route? There was a flutter of colour off in the trees, a squat woman in a big skirt. Or had she imagined that?

The track ended where big blocks of stone tumbled upon one another: a ruin without signs or steps. Two boys emerged from around a boulder.

'Deutsche?' the smaller of the two asked her. 'Ein, zwei, drei.' He walked backwards in front of her. 'Where you come from? Australia! G'day, mate. How you going?'

She kept walking, intent on finding a path.

'I'm eleven. My brother fifteen.'

By Australian standards, both boys were small for their ages, but their bodies were hard. The older brother remained silent while the eleven-year-old kept up his chatter.

'You want see broken Buddha? Come.'

He clambered up the boulders. As there was no other path, she climbed too, carefully, followed by the older boy.

'Look!' called the young one, from the top of the rubble. He pointed downwards. Breathing hard from the climb, she gazed down into a deep hole, blackened by fire, at the bottom of which lay a massive Buddha with no head. Her life could end here. One push and she'd be down there beside that Buddha. So what? Here was as good as anywhere.

'Pol Pot do this,' said the boy. 'Boom!'

A sound of wingbeats and a startled bird flew off through the trees—a quick splash of colour.

Fenella drew back from the hole and began the downward climb. The boys leapt from boulder to boulder around her. Her unwanted guides.

'You like take photo?' They stopped before her and made smiles. She shook her head. She'd keep her camera in her pocket, thank you.

From under his T-shirt, the older boy produced two sheets attached to cardboard with a pen dangling on a string. He passed it to her and moved in close while she read.

The front sheet proclaimed that the boys were from an orphanage and that the orphanage was in great need of funds to stay open. If the orphanage closed, the boys, and many other poor boys like them, would have nowhere to live. On the next page, columns were drawn up under four headings: name, country, signature, donation. Signs everywhere in town said that under no condition should tourists give children money,

yet here were signatures and amounts, large amounts, in different hands. A hundred dollars from one German.

Fenella turned full circle, looking for that woman in the skirt. The boys watched her warily.

Her only way out was between them. They were mere boys but still, stronger than her. She had ten dollars in her pocket and the rest of her money stowed in her blouse. She signed the sheet and wrote '\$10'. The smallest amount in the column. She gave the boy the ten-dollar note, along with the sheets.

The boys scowled but they stepped back, making way. As she walked off, she half-expected a rock to come hurtling at her head. She looked around but the boys had gone.

On her last night, Fenella walked to the Foreign Correspondents Club. She took her time over the drinks list, reading the ingredients of every cocktail, but when the waitress came, she ordered a mango lassi. An elderly lady drinking alcohol on her own—not a good look.

She sipped the lassi as slowly as she could.

The waitress came for her empty glass and on impulse she ordered an Angkor Wat Sunrise. She drank it too quickly and the alcohol went to her head, releasing poisonous thoughts. That phrase they'd used, *unhealthy fixation*, it stung her still with all it implied. Spinster. Misplaced maternal instinct. Obsession. Years later she was proved right, of course, but it was too late for Paige. These days they might have believed her, what with the royal commissions.

She did see a counsellor as the Department recommended, but not for that. She and her sister, they didn't know about the other, until after their uncle died.

She browsed the night market, her mind fuzzy, and then the tourist shops open late, before stopping for coffee at a brightly lit café, where everyone was using iPads. At least here no-one took any notice of her. She rested her head against the wall and must have dozed, for when she opened her eyes, her coffee was cold.

Afterwards, she headed for the pub street the cooking sisters had told her about, the bar Angelina Jolie had drunk at. As if she cared.

Music boomed from a corner bar. Out on the side street, a small boy was dancing. Wearing plastic sunglasses, one hand to the ground, legs kicking out every which way. The men in the bar laughed. Some tossed money, US dollars floating to the ground.

She peered at her watch. One am, for heaven's sake. The infants mistress in her wanted to step forward and declare, 'This child should be in bed.'

But she'd learnt her lesson on that one.

She went to the corner and looked around. There'd be a Fagin somewhere. Didn't those men understand that? The more money the child made, the more he'd be put to dance.

There was a pause in the music and the men cheered as the boy scampered about, monkey-like, snaffling up the money. The boy looked up warily at a man who'd moved out of the shadows.

And then she is doing it. She is walking across the street and positioning herself between the bar and the little boy. Heads turn and her mind goes blank. Why is she standing here? Her heart pounds. But then the words come forth in her clear teacher's voice: 'This child'—she gestures behind her—'should be in bed. Please don't throw him money. He should go to school.' The men stare. When she turns away, she is shaking. She expects to hear jeering, but although the music thumps again, there is no laughter.

Could it be-is it possible?-that she's shamed them?

She walks on. Perhaps finally she's been heard.

Days without endDennis Haskell

Dennis Haskell is the author of seven collections of poetry, and author or editor of fourteen volumes of literary scholarship and criticism. He is the recipient of the Western Australia Premier's Prize for Poetry, and in 2015 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia. Dennis was co-editor of Westerly Magazine (1985–2011) and is currently a member of the Management Committee of the Westerly Centre.

Fay Zwicky ...your days without end are numbered.

In rain I went this afternoon to visit you as I have every week and a half or so

clutching bright bunches of Asian orchids, their long stalked bells excited you so much:

the first time I brought them they tolled you back so many, many years: a young woman *Perdjodohan*—

happy in Indonesia, words foreign on your tongue exhilarating and intriguing, growing even snappier

the more years swerved past. Down the empty corridor I went, and met that unnerving

hospital sight: an empty room, empty of people that is, too calm, too tidy—empty of you.

When I turned back towards the desk, lost flowers in hand, two young nurses stopped to say

you 'passed' yesterday—passed 'on', passed 'away', they avoided the words, but did declare you happy

and chatty to the end, though breath loped from your lungs, gift for a lifetime's smoking.

I brought the orchids home—what else to do? Now they stare from the vase, standing in for you.

Another funeral last week. The people I taught with have now really started to go.

I am getting older. Increasingly the world I see is not the world I know.

Perdjodohan - Indonesian for 'wedding'

This contribution and the essay which follows are offered in the memory of Fay Zwicky (1933–2017).

On Westerly's website, you will also find an online special issue, a tribute to Fay's life and work, edited by Dennis Haskell. Please visit our website to read and download. free-to-access.

Fay Zwicky and 'the riddle of the self's existence'

Dennis Haskell

Fay Zwicky's powerful collection of essays, *The Lyre in the Pawnshop*, from which the quotation in my title is taken (199), is subtitled 'Essays on Literature and Survival 1974–1984'. It is a subtitle which sounds surprisingly dramatic for someone who was living in Perth's relatively affluent western suburbs and lecturing at The University of Western Australia. Nevertheless, in the 'Introduction' Zwicky declares that 'the use of the word "survival" in the book's title was not lightly chosen' (13). The essays were written 'troubled by the progressive decline in humanist values and the current metaphysic of relativism and uncertainty' (13).

Despite this last phrase, a few pages earlier she claims that 'our perspectives on human nature [are] distorted by unquestioning optimism' (4). Intelligent and incisive as Zwicky's essays are, she can be very given to rhetoric, and many of her sweeping generalisations say as much about her as about her ostensible subject, especially when that subject is contemporary Australian society. However, no-one who knew Fay would ever say that she was given to 'unquestioning optimism'. In 'the knotty struggle for personal awareness' (Lyre 91), she was relentlessly pessimistic, at least outwardly. Her first book of poems, Isaac Babel's Fiddle, characteristically speaks of 'Spirit disjunct',* 'currents of estrangement' in 'black rain' (75) and 'Heart's death' (30). In my experience, a conversation with Fay could amusingly resemble a conversation with Hanrahan, the theme of 'we'll all be rooned' recurrent. In her published writing, especially in essays, this theme is more seriously insistent. Despite her family and her many friendships she felt that she lacked 'a sense of community ... in the Australian context' (Lyre 91), and thought that for 'the human being to feel in the teeth of the computerised blankness of twentieth century existence' would be a 'triumph' (Lyre 102). Fay Zwicky asserted that Australian society proclaimed 'a taboo on tenderness' (Lyre 135) and that 'Living and growing up in this country has

been an exercise in repression' (*Lyre* 92). In fact she was, I think, as she said of Henry Handel Richardson, 'an exile by temperament' (*Lyre* 164); she had a 'sense of being a stranger' ('Border Crossings' 15) to her own culture.

If the source of this embattled sense of self, fighting for survival was not Australian society, or not just Australian society, what could it be? Zwicky's published and private writings, in poetry and prose, suggest that its origins lay in her childhood. She came, she said, 'from a home of some turbulence' ('Border Crossings' 18), and the turbulent figure in the household was her mother, 'her wrath ... indistinguishable from God's' ('Border Crossings' 16). In Zwicky's poem 'The Caller', about Der Rufer, the statue outside the Art Gallery of Western Australia, she imagines that this 'Bronze brother' is mouthing 'pain of a God unsighted / sightless in this land of garish failure'; and she asks, 'where is childhood's strict and wrathful judge?' (253). 'What is required of me, long foiled...?' she questions, 'Obedient and rebellious to what end?' (254). 'Breathing Exercises' is a scathing poem which begins, 'Have you ever tried to give your mother breath?' and observes that 'Desolation keeps you both in check' (217). 'All you want to do is breathe' but 'Gagged, you can't move'. The awareness of never avoiding her mother's strictures is lifelong: 'Sentence has been passed / without words. / There are no bonds for good behaviour'. One section of Fay's journal published by her in Axon recalled 'the grandeur of something tragic and submerged with my mother herself—her strange long fingers, the rolled up hair, the severe lines of her face, the eyes that never cried but which darted and flashed and missed nothing' (610). In an interview with Hazel de Berg in 1976 Zwicky said that going to university provided 'the first freedom I ever had in my life'. She said, 'It was a revelation ... to meet people who didn't judge you, ... who enjoyed your company... suddenly I found friends, encouragement, a warmth which I'd never had before' (8).

Nevertheless, Zwicky recognised a lot of her mother in herself. In an unpublished section of her journal she wrote that as a young woman 'I had some mysterious vitality, almost diabolical... I had my mother's snap and sparkle. I was not gentle. Now ... I realize she was probably mad from time to time' (603). Elsewhere in the journal she portrays herself as 'a difficult nature, as my mother used to say. Difficult for her to understand, difficult to contain, to be with, to live alongside' (608). In 'China Poems 1988' she notes 'I am a Rooster. / Honest, frank, obliging, difficult / to live with' (141). It is not surprising then that Fay comments in her 'Border Crossings' essay that 'my own writing seems to have depended for a long time on remaining adversarial' (21). Mrs Noah declares, 'As soon as we're

born / we're all astray' (111); until her last months Fay always had, in my experience, an adversarial attitude to life.

Fay Zwicky's father seems to have been a gentler soul and she certainly felt more gentle towards him. In the poem 'Afloat' she recounts how as a child she waited for him to drive 'towards a / grey-green Melbourne sea' (218) and home. The child Fay would jump on the car's 'running board / to ride that little strip of freedom / called "our drive" before our mother / collared us to silence'. This non-adversarial poem ends,

Would it disturb you now [...] [...] to tell you how, each day, I wait that day's-end glimpse of the whispering sea?

That concluding sea image seems more poignant with awareness that Fay's father died at sea, a point made explicit in one epigraph of 'Kaddish' (91). She wrote that 'His death brought me up against my ignorance of just about everything' ('Border Crossings' 14) and that the poem is 'a long elegy' written 'to make amends to him' ('Border Crossings' 14)—although she later learnt that the traditional Jewish Kaddish is not meant to be elegiac but 'a hymn of praise to God' and 'a celebration of all creation' ('Border Crossings' 13). The poem has been praised and seen as one of her most important, including I think by Fay herself. This doesn't seem to me an accurate judgement. Behind the poem lies Ginsberg's ragged, self-promoting 'Kaddish', and behind that Pound's Cantos, with their grabbag of whatever came to Pound's hand at the time tossed in arbitrarily. Zwicky's poem is much less random than that, but various lines that sound important could be read in almost any order; they never cohere and never sound personally felt. The Old Testament tone of address is hard to make work in a contemporary elegy, and the poem's ending is derivatively 'Ecclesiastes' and T. S. Eliot. Ivor Indyk, in the best article written on Fay Zwicky's work to date, praises her poetry but notes a tendency to 'rhetorical inflation' (specifically in 'Mrs Noah Speaks'), 'a self-aggrandisement in the speaking' (42) and sometimes a 'theatrical stance' (50). He sees, accurately, that 'in her poetry ... her attitude is far from reverential' (34) but I find 'Kaddish' too self-consciously reverential, its ostentation making it a less powerful poem than the much less noticed 'Afloat'.

I differ from Indyk when he claims, 'It is a notable fact about Zwicky's poetry, and her most memorable essays, that when she speaks most powerfully, she speaks in a voice that is not her own' (36). This accords

with many of Zwicky's own comments, and is, I believe, entirely wrong. In an interview with David McCooey in 1996 she said that 'the assumption of masks came naturally. It was a great way to say what you wanted to say in safety'. In a 1993 journal entry, published in *Southerly*, she wrote:

Visibility is an illusory trap... Each 'I' [of her poems] is different, an impersonation, a dramatisation of diverse personae. There's no self, no graspable centre (28).

She saw herself as one of 'those who depend for survival on disguise' (Journal, *Southerly* 28). I believe that Zwicky's strongest poems are precisely those poems where the 'I' is her without disguise or rhetorical drama, where she is clearly 'visible'.

Notable in this last journal comment is the repetition of that word 'survive'. The reason for this desperate need for masking and disguise is given in the late poem 'The Age of Aquarius':

Today's my mother's birthday, a 1907 Aquarian of the selfdenying kind, 'never say "I"' her motto. She had me nailed for years (340).

In her 'Border Crossings' essay, Zwicky notes that her judgemental upbringing, and her Australian education, were 'hard on the imaginative life and the notion of spontaneous utterance' (21). She is indeed more a poet of memory and reflection than of spontaneous reaction but the progression in her work from the anonymous, authoritative, impersonal voice of Isaac Babel's Fiddle to the quieter, plainer, more questioning and personal speech of her later work is a sign of increasing poetic authority, not of less. She came to argue that 'gorgeous language lies' ('Portrait', Collected Poems 257) and worked her way towards a plainer speech. In one of her journal entries she declares: 'Yes, "bare English" [quoting a friend], that's the ideal. No fakery, no poeticisms, nothing but the most honest words' and 'reined in behind ... ordinariness ... a well of feeling' (Unpublished journal 605). In one of her now published journal entries, quoting *Time* magazine, she declares, "lucidity, probity and calm are still the virtues of the art of painting". I'd say they are equally those of literature' (Westerly 23). In a poem from her last book, 'Push or Knock', she tries to explain to a visiting Chinese scholar that the poem she's working on is 'fighting decorative / scrolls, rhetoric's fancy needlework', that 'The lyric voice is struggling with the ordinary' (335). She was, she said in her journal, 'trying to come as close to natural speech as possible' (Axon 636-37), but she recognised that 'plain speech, like playing Mozart, is the hardest to come by' (Axon 719).

This relative plainness is the language, and voice, of her most affecting, memorable poems, and they are particularly to be found in *The Gatekeeper's Wife*, especially in the poems about her first husband Karl Zwicky and their early married life. *The Lyre in the Pawnshop* is dedicated 'In memory, K.T.Z., 1926–1985'; like *The Gatekeeper's Wife*, it was published after their marriage had ended and after his death. Thus the notes struck in the poems about their relationship are hauntingly tender; the poems declare and evoke love, loss, guilt, and something much more fierce than nostalgia. They cohere with Zwicky's comment to David McCooey, in 1996, 'I still see marriage as sacramental'.

The title poem for *The Gatekeeper's Wife* is made up of twenty sections but all of them are short and each of the individual lines seems gentle and unforced. Section 14 describes its method: 'The steps of these poems / Are very small, your footprints / In my mind' (242). It is the most personal of her poems, openly vulnerable and 'Always listening'. 'I call to you awake, / Asleep, still waiting / For an answer'. The poem is agnostic and unknowing, her grief so great that her hopes are 'Severed from the possible' (which is the nature of deep grief). This simply expressed poem might convey a sense of wonder but for the elegiac tone, overwhelmed by guilt and grief. There is no need for a mask but equally no 'clamouring for attention' (*Meanjin*). 'I should have been / What we seemed' she perhaps unfairly accuses herself; but regardless, 'Like an old familiar tree / I'm still here, your branches / Tangled in mine'.

Anyone whose spouse has died knows about 'the guilt of survival' (Southerly 29), but in Zwicky's case that guilt was heightened by the marriage's ending—even though she and Karl were married for over twenty years. The later poem 'Letting Go', from Picnic, is self-accusatory in another way:

so you don't write a poem you line up words in prose inside a Journal trapped like a scorpion in a locked drawer... (332)

In fact, Zwicky published sections from her journal in *Southerly* and *Westerly*, and gave a copy of it to poet and friend, Lucy Dougan, to do something more with it once Zwicky became ill with cancer. Some sections of the journal are scarifying in their self-accusation and a sorrow close to despair, and should be kept private; but one draft of a never finished poem is confessional and powerful, and has an immediate concern with the issue of personal voice versus masks.

It comes after Zwicky has thought about *King Lear* and his guilt. The poem follows the comment, 'The greater the error, the more calamitous its consequences. Remember this when you think you're absolved' (601). Zwicky's poem makes it clear that she did not think she was absolved; the instruction would serve as a good title for the poem, which comprises a dark dialogue with the self:

It all happened so long ago. Must I tell it?
She asked the dark weight on her heart
Yes, you must tell it, came the answer.
And must I bear the pain?
Yes, you must.
[...]
[...] Some will deny the
reality. It doesn't matter. You have to tell
it and only then will I cease to be a dark
weight on your heart. You will be free of
me, whoever or whatever I am, and you will
have earned some rest. But not until you've

[...]

On the edge of silence you have to find the words. But the words of this story don't seem to belong in English. They would sound truer in a European language. French for example. Il y avait une fois un jeun homme Suisse qui est allé en Indonésie. Là, il a rencontre une jeune fille de l'Australie qui jouait au piano pour le gouvernement Hollandais—

told the long story, confronted its dark passageways.

But I'm still living back in the dark...

No you must tell it in your own language. You can't escape by that actor's trick. Once you inhabit a foreign skin you're extinguished (601–02).

The entry continues in prose. In her interview with Hazel de Berg, Zwicky gave a detailed account of her travel to Indonesia and her marriage to Karl. She later provided a poetic version of the original voyage 'on a trampy old Dutch steamer' in the poem 'Makassar, 1956' (305). In the interview, Zwicky recounts how 'I went on a concert tour, playing for the Dutch Government, touring Indonesia. I also toured what was then Malaya and Singapore for the British Council. I met my husband on that tour...' (6). Zwicky claims to have 'married after only knowing my

husband for four hours. I married him because he whistled Bach very well' (6). She describes it as 'a very theatrical gesture' (6). 'Theatrical' sounds right but the four hours a slight exaggeration; it is her daughter Anna's understanding that her father 'was lodging with a Dutch family' while teaching Zoology at university and that her mother was 'given accommodation with the same family, which was how they met' (Anna Quick, 30 July). Zwicky's stay with the family was brief, just one or two days, since her visa ran out at the end of her concert tour. She then went to Malaya for a month until she could return and marry Karl. She told her daughter that 'the local Bandung newspaper carried the headline 'Courted and Wed in 48 Hours' (Anna Quick, 24 September). Julia Fay Rosefield and Karl Zwicky married on 19 March 1957 in a Registry Office in Bandung.

The wedding is humorously and lovingly recounted in the poem 'Perdjodohan':

Newly married! Newly married! sang the motor bike to dust puffs rising from our dash.
[...]
White ribbon just in place when Mr Pronk van Hoogeveen stepped close [...]
You're going to ruin your life he said.
The jasmine-scented air closed in.

I tugged the ribbon tighter [...]
And leaning to the mirror laughed like one possessed of something not yet owned or named (280).

Deeply personal—no masks, no posturing, no rhetoric. In her essays Zwicky writes of love as 'self-sacrifice, or "meaning" as submission to a higher loyalty' (4), as a 'passionate meeting between man and woman' (35). She comments that 'There is a whole way of being in the world that is best described by the word "reverence" which accords life meaning in terms of debt to something' (13). Fay's poems about her marriage and about the young Karl, 'the disciplined line / of your back / slanted towards hope' ('Peminangan' 278), are suffused with this feeling. As with Thomas Hardy's great poems about his first wife, the sense of debt and of reverence is heightened by memory and by loss. The poem 'Akibat' begins, 'I said I can't imagine life without you', recalls 'I said I'd stay with

222 | Westerly 62.2 223 | Dennis Haskell

you forever' and that 'Outside the window the kebong's twig broom / whispered over gravel like a blessing' (283). The raw honesty of the poem seems undeniable in its closing couplet:

Ashamed for outliving you, I can't forget a long way from that house, that window.

In her journal Fay writes to herself, 'I feel so invisible, so plagued by memory', and unfairly castigates herself for 'never sitting down to write what ought to be written, ... afraid all the time' (604). She remembers that 'after Karl died, I knew I'd lost more than half of myself' (604). This sense of loss is heightened by self-laceration:

Was I so incomprehensible to him? Why do these questions still shoot up like arrows in the mind today? Will I never be free of the need to ask why? [...] Did he love me? He took care of us. Isn't this love? But why was I so lonely, so needing of words? I can't reconcile myself to all the unfinished stuff of our shredded life. (606)

These guilt-ridden questions underlie the sad last lines in her *Collected Poems*: 'We only ever yield to love / when someone's dead or gone' (388). They also underlie the title poem of her last published collection, *Picnic*. Picnicking in Kings Park with a group of Afghani refugees makes her remember 'my own young wifehood / as a stranger' (298) in Zurich, where she and Karl went in 1958 and lived for a year. She reflects that 'What weighs the heart must / sit it out till nightfall for release / once everyone's asleep. / And even then...' (298, ellipsis in the original).

The questions come more savagely to the fore in the next poem, 'Close-up', where she echoes the journal: 'So "why not say what happened?"' Age, however, has yielded only uncertainties:

What makes you think we'd know? Know thyself? A bad Socratic joke... (300).

No-one can 'help at crunch-time' and 'tell you why your life is skewed'. In 'Border Crossings', Zwicky wrote, 'I loved words, their sound, their weight, their capacity to open new worlds. I wanted to use them effectively for they seemed to be my first defence against powerlessness' (17). In 'Border Crossings', she declared, 'Poetry has always seemed to me a source of hope ... a place for the dissenting imagination' (24). Poetry at times seemed like the ark for Mrs Noah, 'one small "Yes" / afloat on a vast "No" (113). The autobiographical teacher of 'Learning', referencing Yeats, says that 'The emperor's / metronomic nightingale kept nightmare under /

wraps' (264). But at times in her last years even poetry could leave Fay feeling powerless. No-one could say

why your poems stall in scavenged diction, stick contraptions held by string and glue. Or why our nights are long and black and sleepless and your days without end are numbered (301).

It is well to remember that this 'standing, / stumped' (342) after trailing 'across the knives of memory' (338) was not a constant state of mind. Visiting Fay in the last few months of her life she seemed to me calmer and more quietly accepting of things than in almost all the time I had known her. In her work as a whole there is a lot of wonderful humour, as when a bushie rings the English poet Charles Causley (who had visited WA) from the Outback (191) or 'Miss Short Instructs Her Latin Class...' (211); she did jaunty folk rhythms very well, as in 'The Ballad of the Pretty Young Wife' (202); she wrote many powerful epigrammatic lines: 'Dreams are the suicides of the well-behaved' (148), 'The air is frozen with theory' (149), 'Darkness has secrets that / light never owns' (172). Moreover, she sometimes found uncertainty a positive, a force that set her afloat on 'imagination's tide' (352), noting that 'It's what you can't trim down to manageable that / seeds the poem' (356). She could also be a poet of joy in simplicities. Penelope in 'A Tale of the Great Smokies' is

Silenced by joy, the colour, smell and sound of everything answer any question I have ever asked (180).

In her own voice she remembers how as a child sometimes 'Just to be would do' on a 'fine / spring morning', how 'Just to be was something' (325–26).

Of course she was too much a restless intelligence for relishing sensory awareness to be enough. Even in this poem, 'Coming and Going', the ghosts line up 'like huntsmen' spiders and she had to leave childhood comfort in order 'to learn what I could bear' (326). The shift from innocence to experience in later years kept Karl alive to her: in a poem tellingly titled 'Orpheus', 'Keeping the pen on the move / keeps you somewhere near' (244). Her sense of self depended on him: 'So long as there is a you / there is a me' (244). In the next poem, 'Losing Track', she wonders 'how long can human memory stand / an absence trapped in strange geography' (245). She laments, 'I'm losing track of your face

in sleep, don't / know where you are'. Her 'memories are refugees' but memory also provides a hope:

Somewhere out there is a land, forgotten, promised. No, neither promised nor forgotten but hovering

like a half-remembered voice in eerie stillness between dream and waking (246).

Her poems and her journal reveal a great deal of regret and of haunted self-questioning; it is no doubt easier for us as readers than for her to recognise that even these excursions into darkness and her own metaphysic of uncertainty were undoubtedly expressions of love.

Works Cited:

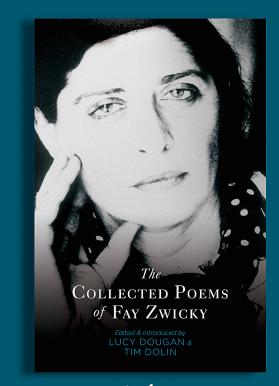
Indyk, Ivor. 'Fay Zwicky: The Poet as Moralist', Southerly, 54. 3 (Sept 1994): 33–50. McCooey, David. 'Just Very Basic: An Interview with Fay Zwicky', Meanjin, 55.4 (1996): 674–687. http://search.informit.com.au/, accessed 4 August 2017.

Quick, Anna. Emails to Dennis Haskell, 30 July 2017 and 24 September 2017. Zwicky, Fay. *The Lyre in the Pawnshop: Essays on Literature and Survival 1974–1984.*Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1986.

- ——. The Collected Poems of Fay Zwicky, ed. Lucy Dougan & Tim Dolin. Nedlands: University of Western Australia Publishing, 2017; all poetry references are to this edition.
- —. 'Border Crossings', Best Australian Essays 2000, ed. Peter Craven. Melbourne; Black Inc, 2000; rpt in The Collected Poems of Fay Zwicky: 13–25. All references to the essay are to this reprinting.
- —. Unpublished Journal. 13 vols, continuously paginated. I am grateful to Lucy Dougan for making relevant pages from the Journal available to me.
- —. 'Extracts from Journal', Southerly, 54. 3 (Sept 1994).
- ---. 'Plain Speech: Extracts from Fay Zwicky's Journals', ed. Lucy Dougan. Axon, No. 9.
- —. 'Ambushed by Hope: Extracts from Fay Zwicky's *Journal* (Notebook XIII, August 2012)', ed. Lucy Dougan. *Westerly*, 62.1 (2017): 19–27.
- —. Interview with Hazel de Berg, 1976, transcript; National Library of Australia, Tape 915.

I am grateful to the National Library for making the interview transcript available to me.

* The Collected Poems of Fay Zwicky 78; all poetry references are to this edition.



The COLLECTED POEMS of Fay Zwicky

Edited & introduced by Lucy Dougan & Tim Dolin

Purchase online at www.uwap.com.au Follow us on social media @uwapublishing



Scent Mona Zahra Attamimi

Mona Zahra Attamimi is Arab Indonesian. She lived as a child in Jakarta, Washington DC and Manila, before settling in Australia at age nine. Her poems have appeared in Southerly, Meanjin, Mascara, Cordite, Hecate, Philament Journal and Contemporary Asian Australian Poets Anthology. She lives in Sydney.

If I had to paint the scent of you I'd throw out the old brushes, the palette knives, drain the turpentine jars, and scour the Strait of Malacca for jade chopsticks, the ones dragon-wives dipped into the sea to taste cuttlefish ink. To paint the scent of you I'd explore the tanginess of forks drenched in tangerine;

I'd collect your ladles and wooden spoons, stew lamb and stir-fry prawn sambal, and inhale the cooking steam. For canvas, an aged calico, ten-feet wide, bought from *Antique & Wares* would be washed in the erupting fragrance of orange. Then, my coffee-stained fingers would smear the calico with green pandan leaves.

A copper pan of your mother's, rusted at the bottom, reeking of cumin, blackened after years of burning *rendang* would be my easel. Using Affandi's brush-curves, I'd stir rice fried in string beans and chilli onto the canvas. For mood, reminiscent of Kahlo, I'd borrow her vermillion. Now as I imagine myself painting memories

an invisible smoke is wafting around me—it must be the ghost-scent of your roasted wood-fennel. And if Tahia Halim, while painting Nubian Dawn had seen you watering your gardenias dressed in a house-frock and the lilac chemo-cap that hid your baldness, her oils would have captured the sunlight on your back and the trickle

of water on your wicker chair. Remember those days when you were pottering outside while I lounged on your couch, eyes closed, sucking in the breeze and the smell of your old batik sarongs? Like a dog haunted by the dead, I can still taste your cologne. In the background, I'd sketch the mint jellies, white gerberas,

your reading glasses and the tapestry needles sitting on the table. With a dry rag, I'd graze the canvas in bronze, depicting vapours rising from a pod of dried cloves. In cubist-chrome, I'd compose a bowl of grapes and bottles of pills—the ones the doctors had prescribed for fighting lymphomas. And then, I'd paint myself into the canvas

looking up at another version of you; you are holding a spatula, thinning out the last layer of cake-mix onto a baking tray. Kue lapis. Kue lapis. Kue Lapis. After decades, I mustn't forget the way your bluish eyes would turn watery whenever you were thinking of a recipe or sniffing cassia barks. The morning

before your life ended chicken breasts were marinated in soy and turmeric. Perhaps it was the air or the angle of the sun or in the thick night-clouds over the stars on the eve of your death—but somehow you knew people would be hungry.

Now, whenever I see a funeral procession, I remember the *krupuk*

bending in hot oil, slices of yam frying, spitting heat, the uncut basil and coriander growing above you, greening your headstone.

Call Me Eugene Liang Yujing

Liang Yujing grew up in China and is currently a PhD candidate at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Three characters, 30 strokes, constitute my name.

Liang Yujing

or Yujing Liang, as my passport shows.

A translator spelt it as Liang Yu-Jing: more accurate.

They don't know much about my name, neither do I.

They call me Liang, or Yujing, or Jing.

When I said Yujing to a café assistant, she put down Eugene on the cup.

Eugene is fine.

Call me Eugene.

I shall abandon my Chinese name.

Liang 梁 is a mountain of outlaws but the sound is identical to COLD.

Yu 余 means REDUNDANT.

Jing 晶, as you see it, is composed of three 日: the SUN or, in slang, FUCK. Cold, redundant and three fucks.

But my name denotes more than that.

Liang, my surname, comes from the adoptive father of my father.

Yu, the second character, is the surname of my real grandfather.

There is no Yu in my father's name.

My grandfather, a former Kuomintang member, was put in jail in 1957.

My grandma remarried with five children, the youngest being my father, a baby who was later given away to Liang family due to poverty.

My father grew up without his parents around.

My grandfather died in early 1982, alone, in a gulag.

I was born later that year.

My father insisted on putting a Yu in my name.

History sucks.

I shall abandon all these shits.

Call me Eugene.

To hell with cold redundant fucks.

The Aristotelian Questions Isabelle Li

Isabelle Li is a Chinese Australian writer and translator. Her collection of short stories, A Chinese Affair, was published by Margaret River Press in 2016.

A zebra gazing into the river asks himself, 'Am I a white horse with black stripes or a black horse with white stripes?' I put a similar question: am I a migrant who happens to be a writer or a writer who happens to be a migrant? The answers have implications, both 'for whom' I write and 'as who', and therefore for my artistic vision. Aristotle explored this conundrum in *Categories*, distinguishing between the accidental properties and the essential properties to determine an object's identity over time:

Accidental changes are ones that don't result in a change in an object's identity after the change, such as when a house is painted, or one's hair turns grey, etc. Aristotle thought of these as changes in the accidental properties of a thing. Essential changes, by contrast, are those which don't preserve the identity of the object when it changes, such as when a house burns to the ground and becomes ashes, or when someone dies. (Zalta)

Would I have been a writer had I not migrated?

When I was ten, I told my brother I wanted to become a professional writer. 'Good, he said, 'but first you must get a life, so you have something to write about.' I did, and as a result I came to writing late—in fact, only after I arrived in Australia. At the suggestion of an MBA classmate, I enrolled into an evening course in 2001. I learned that one can start writing wherever, whenever, and whoever one is. I studied the same course three times before enrolling into an MA degree at UTS. There I was introduced to the works of many important modernist writers, while prior to that, I had mostly read the classics. After finishing the fourteen subjects, I started a Master of Creative Arts degree by research. A Chinese Affair, my first collection of short stories, was the result of my years of study in UTS.

230 | Westerly 62.2 **231** | Isabelle Li

My father is very proud of me. He gave my book as gifts to his friends, although none of them could read English. He has wanted to write creatively his whole life, but never had the opportunity. He's now in his eighties and early this year published his memoir titled *Returning to Truth*. In it, he narrates the major events in his life, and gives a truthful account of how he had to contort his personality, his humanity, in order to survive. I think my father would have become a writer had he emigrated. Instead he sacrificed much of his artistic talent to keep us safe.

I often recall an occasion at a book launch when a writer friend ran his hand over a stand of books, caressing their spines, and remarked, 'There are so many books out there! Why are we still writing more?' Another friend responded, 'This might sound a bit clichéd, but don't you feel most alive when you are writing?' I agreed with him, and added, 'If I didn't write, I would be leading my life as an imposter.' I'm just fortunate that life hasn't put me to the test and has spared me my father's fate. As Borges said, 'Little by little, a man comes to resemble the shape of his destiny; a man is, in the long run, his circumstances' (Borges 92).

• • •

As China has become more powerful in global politics and economy, so has there been an expansion of Chinese writing in English, with the most popular titles being driven by personal or family history set against the backdrops of changing historical periods: the Japanese War, the Civil War, and the Cultural Revolution. Some familiar examples are Li Cunxin's autobiography, *Mao's Last Dancer*; Jung Chang's family history, Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China; and Adeline Yen Mah's Falling Leaves: The Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter. These books offer historical accounts and cultural insights, and may be read as creative non-fiction or straight-out biographies. More recently, Chinese fictional writers have started to emerge into the public eye, like Ha Jin and Yiyun Li, who were originally from China, then migrated to America, and write literary fiction centred on Chinese protagonists, using English as a second language. They both display highly polished craftsmanship, and have both won prestigious awards, including the Flannery O'Connor Award and the PEN/Hemingway Award.

Jin's collection of essays, *The Writer as Migrant*, investigates the metaphysical aspects of migrant writers' life and work, how they decide which language to use, and their relationship with their homeland. In his essay titled 'The Spokesman and the Tribe', Jin recounts the experiences in exile of Alexandr Solzhenitsyn and Lin Yutang, analyses the work they produced before, during and after the period of exile, and

evaluates their literary achievement when they acted as spokesmen for their tribes.

Jin sees that 'writers from less-developed countries are apt to define themselves in terms of their social roles, partly because of the guilt they feel for migrating to the materially privileged West and partly because of the education they received in their native lands, where the collective is usually held above the individual' (Jin, Writer as Migrant, page 4). This applies to Xin Ran, a British-Chinese journalist, broadcaster and writer. In an interview about her book The Good Women Of China, Xin Ran stated that she wants to 'tell the world about the lives of ordinary Chinese women' (Guest). Indeed, as Jin points out, 'most collective experiences and personal stories have no lasting significance unless they are transformed and preserved in art' (Jin, Writer as Migrant, page 4).

Jin, however, suggests that positioning oneself as a spokesman can hinder a writer's contribution to literature. Notwithstanding that a writer should be responsible to his fellow citizens and stand against injustice—'All the writer can strive for is a personal voice' (Jin, Writer as Migrant, page 29), and above all social roles—writing well is a writer's essential responsibility. Jin himself first set out to speak for those downtrodden Chinese, but over time has negated the role of being a spokesman for his tribe because he realised that he 'must learn to stand alone, as a writer' (Jin, Writer as Migrant, page 28).

• • •

Much of the literature about Chinese migrants tends to concentrate on foregrounding the existential dilemmas of diasporic consciousness formation, and the representation of Chinese culture has been skewed towards the exotic. Diasporas, according to Ien Ang, are 'transnational, spatially and temporally sprawling socio-cultural formations of people, creating imagined communities whose blurred and fluctuating boundaries are sustained by real and/or symbolic ties to some original "homeland" (Ang). The word 'diaspora' has traditionally carried with it a sense of displacement and mass exodus, which makes it apt for describing communities who are forced to flee their original homeland. Early generation Chinese sojourners may be called diasporic because they left China through limited or no choice, and intended to return as soon as they could. New generation Chinese migrants have left China of their own accord. They live individual lives without being bonded by a shared link to their original culture and heritage, or a common imagination of their homeland, and their experience does not conform to the prevailing trend of reading Chinese migrant narratives through the concept of 'diaspora'. Ronald Skelton has suggested

that 'the word 'diaspora' does not fit the Chinese experience', and it 'is a fashionable and hackneyed term in today's academic writings' (Skelton).

Furthermore, there are fifty-six ethnic groups in China. Mandarinand Cantonese- and Shanghainese-speaking people cannot have a conversation, although they write in the same characters. Some ethnic groups have assimilated into Han culture, such as my own Manchurian heritage, which is near extinction with a mere twenty native speakers left (Simons). Many other ethnic groups continue to speak unique dialects and practise distinctive cultural customs. Non-Chinese observers may construe a homogeneous Chinese identity in the characteristics of their outlooks, food, customs, artefacts, and written language, though a collective Chinese global identity is far more complex and multifaceted.

Ang notes that migrants themselves are often much less interested in the question of 'where you're from' than the question of 'where you're at' (Ang). In the same article, Ang warns against making a 'gross universalisation': 'There is ... no ideal-typical migrant, and it would therefore be unwarranted to collapse this diversity of experiences into a master-narrative of the migrant experience' (Ang).

• • •

My collection, *A Chinese Affair*, consists of sixteen stories, exploring recent Chinese migration to Australia. These new Chinese migrants, born in the 6os and 7os, have come from Mandarin-speaking parts of China. Just as their more documented predecessors, they are high in number, but are different in many ways from the early wave of migrants. They are well-educated, aspirational, and keen to be part of the contemporary global order as they deal with a complex past. Their stories are rarely told, voices rarely heard. They are under-represented in contemporary Australian literature, politics and consciousness.

Writing between cultures, I have double anxiety because my work can be perceived as 'other' by both non-Chinese and Chinese readers. A question that I have confronted is how to overcome the migrant writers' bugbear, the general perception that they leverage their ethnic background and life experiences, throw in some exotic food, a few inscrutable characters in a different cultural setting, to produce 'ethnic lit' and get away with inadequate vocabulary. To this, the author Nam Le has an insightful response:

For a long time I vowed I wouldn't fall into writing ethnic stories, immigrant stories, etc. Then I realized that not only was I working against these expectations (market, self, literary, cultural), I was working against my kneejerk resistance to such

expectations. How I see it now is no matter what or where I write about, I feel a responsibility to the subject matter. Not so much to get it right as to do it justice. Having personal history with a subject only complicates this—but not always, nor necessarily, in bad ways. (Le)

It is not uncommon for writers to write about places they know best: James Joyce's Dublin, Alice Munro's native Ontario, Tim Winton's coastal Western Australia, Jhumpa Lahiri's New England. Likewise, I write stories with the settings in China or Australia. The location is elemental to the characters that I want to understand, and their stories that I wish to tell.

I long to have my work read by a Chinese audience, yet feel apprehensive about it. The response to overseas Chinese writing in China is at best described as lukewarm. At a conference I attended, a PhD student from China told me that he had contemplated studying Chinese Australian writing, but his supervisor advised against it and suggested that he consider studying something more 'mainstream'. Ha Jin wrote in 'The Censor in the Mirror' about the power of censorship in China: so entrenched is it in the Chinese psyche that not only institutions but also individuals practise it in public and in private. Whilst the Chinese publisher censored two of Jin's books touching on the Tiananmen Square protests and the Korean War, Jin found himself censoring his own poems to be published in China, selecting only the ones that would get through the Chinese authorities. When the project was abandoned after a few years, 'numerous official newspapers spread the word that [Jin's] books had no market value in China' (Jin, The American Scholar). Yiyun Li, on the other hand, has declined offers to translate her books into Chinese because China is 'not ready' (Rustin), and she explained in her memoir that 'my abandonment of my first language is ... so deeply personal that I resist any interpretation' (Laity).

I was delighted and heartened by Chinese scholar Frank Huang's reading of my work. He analysed some of my stories for their representations of Chinese and Western men, comparing them to that of the early generation women writers of Chinese background who write in Chinese. He argues that instead of idealising Western men, my generation of migrant women writers from the Chinese mainland 'observe their host country at a distance and characterise their male counterparts in a more cool-headed and realistic manner' (Huang). Huang read my work in English because it is not yet translated into Chinese. If it ever will be, and if it is by me, I may well have to rewrite it.

•••

Although I write in English, my writing has been influenced and nurtured by Chinese literary tradition, and inspired by Chinese cultural elements. The title story 'A Chinese Affair' opens with a dream: 'I dream of my mother again. She is sitting in front of the sewing machine, crying.' The very first story I wrote in this collection, 'The Floating Fragrance', also opens with a dream, and is later followed by another dream. All three dreams are set around the house where I grew up. My brother was the last to leave before it was demolished. He told me he locked up as usual, to 'preserve it for dreaming'.

The concept of dream features strongly in Chinese philosophy. Master Zhuang from 4th century BC famously dreamed he was a butterfly. When he woke up he wondered whether it was him then dreaming of being a butterfly, or whether it was a butterfly now dreaming of being him. Such an elegant rendition of Chinese scepticism! In Chinese literature, dream is often used as a metaphor for life, like a mirror reflection. It's one of the central motifs of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a poetic novel that epitomises China's long, lyrical literary tradition.

Dreams intrigue me. Their vividness and strangeness, the haunting quality and unbound lyricism, the disappearing nature of an oneiric experience, inspire my writing. The code switching at the threshold of dreaming and waking presents infinite possibilities for drama and revelation.

I have frequently used the image of the moon, which represents longing and the vicissitudes of life in Chinese culture. In 'A Chinese Affair', the narrator wakes up in the middle of the night and contemplates the complexities of her life under the moonlight. In 'Mooncake and Crab', Crystal tells the story of the moon fairy, which seems to mirror her own life. In 'Pebbles and Flowers', the new moon outside the window represents new hope at a poignant moment after Raven goes through a failed IVF cycle. The Chinese characters' inner world is inevitably tied to their roots, and their feelings are often projected onto objects of emotional significance from their original culture.

Chinese culture has a strong tradition of indebtedness: 'A drop of grace should be repaid with a fountain of gratitude.' Parents' effort in bringing up children is considered a moral debt that cannot be repaid over a lifetime. Despite their apparent freedom, the migrant characters are bound by the invisible strings of their personal history, and are constantly torn between patriotic commitment, filial piety, and their choice to remain abroad. In 'Mooncake and Crab', while having dinner with her husband and the extended family, Crystal becomes agitated and defensive about China's one-child policy. In a moment of distress, the political is the personal.

Guilt also arises from the migrants' failure to share the knowledge they gain overseas with people back home. China has had a long tradition of what's called 'Intellectual's Conscience', which has changed the course of Chinese history. But this tradition is broken at the point of the new Chinese migrant. In 'Blue Lotus', feeling caught between two worlds, Crystal laments:

Looking at the fine food on the table, artwork on the walls, the mood lighting, I wonder who I am, why I am here.

'Be of service to the people.' Chairman Mao's command was once printed on posters, the front covers of journals, the flaps of school satchels, and I grew up believing that was to be my mission. But who are my people? Have I been of service to anyone?

As if walking in a snowstorm, I look back to find that my footprints have been erased. I do not know where I am and can no longer find my way back.

Chinese cultural elements are also invoked in the English names of the Chinese characters in the collection. In China, given names are made up of one or two characters, carrying with them positive associations, good wishes, and high hopes. So the characters, in deciding on an English name, have given hints to their inner selves. Crystal explains her name in 'Blue Lotus':

People give me good-hearted advice: 'You've got to be yourself. Why don't you use your Chinese name? It's very special.' I do not want to be special. I am not an exotic bird and have no interest in showing off my plumage. I am Crystal, perfect in structure and form, hard and clear in every molecule.

On the surface, the characters blend in by giving themselves English names. Deep down, they have demonstrated a distinctively Chinese attitude and carried forward their Chinese heritage.

• • •

English is my second language. For my mother tongue, Chinese, I feel an eternal nostalgia. Language is therefore one of my preoccupations. This collection is inspired by language, but also the lack or loss of it, and the resulting silence. The migrant characters' cultural dislocation, combined with their inability to express themselves, results in what I have termed 'endemic muteness'. They filter or disguise, say one thing while meaning another. Their loneliness and longing are individual and

not shared. Living in an English-speaking environment, they have lost the rich context of their Chinese language. As a result, they lose not only the ability to communicate with others, but also to recognise and articulate their inner feelings and emotions.

In 'Narrative of Grief', Lily is forced to abandon her mother-tongue as a child. She is dissociated from her own feelings, evidenced by numbness to her surroundings and a lack of understanding of her profound sense of loss. To survive, she has to toughen up, and she has made the enormous effort in English. Chinese, the mere utterance of it, makes her vulnerable. Her propensity for melancholy proves just how traumatic the loss of language can be.

• • •

Apart from the in-between cultures and languages, the collection is also about in-between spaces. The migrant characters feel rootless, floating between places, permanently disoriented. They yearn for a place to belong, for an identity that is certain, while leading a transitory existence in transient spaces, which are simultaneously here and there, now and then, but are also nowhere and in-between.

In 'Lyrebird', Ivy shares a unit with Sam but is often out house-sitting. She has been to a doctor's apartment with five budgies, a pink lady's house with two cats, and an engineer's unit with a collection of bonsai on the balcony. She says:

I move from one place to another, sharing the unit with Sam in between. 'Don't you want stability?' Sam asks. He does not know that all the while I am saving up to buy my own place. It will be a small apartment with an elevated outlook on a quiet street, where I will rise with the sun and sleep among the stars.

• • •

Last but not least, the book concerns the body and its secrets.

My mother was a gynaecologist and I spent much of my childhood in and around the hospital where she worked. So the body, especially the female body, has always been one of my primary concerns. For Crystal, education about the body starts young, evident in this excerpt from 'As Green as Blue':

A term they frequently used was 'endometriosis'. I asked what it was. My mother said the uterus is like a room with brick walls and the internal lining is like the plaster. When the

plaster spills out of the room and spreads to other parts of the house, the woman is sick. She may have a lot of pain and she may have difficulty conceiving a baby.

The grown-up Crystal continues her self-education about the body in the story 'Shower of Gold':

Lying diagonally, she studied the names of bones and muscles from a book entitled Body Atlas. She said that the body is a landscape and it is important to know the correct names of places.

• • •

I write from my tradition, from my cultural and linguistic background. I have consciously resisted the concept of diaspora as I explore a renewed perspective, which is less tied up with Chineseness, and is more about invoking a phenomenology, the sensual, experiential aspects of being a new migrant. I am interested in the internal, the private life, fascinated by the plasticity of language. I am searching for a unique voice to illuminate, to delight, and thereby to stand alone as a writer.

Works Cited

Ang, Ien. 'Migrations of Chineseness.' Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, 1993.

Borges, Jorge L. *The Aleph and Other Stories*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004. Ciabattari, Jane. *The Daily Beast*. 22 September 2010. http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/09/22/yiyun-li-gold-boy-emerald-girl-interview.html (accessed November 2, 2012).

Guest, Kate. The Independent. 13 July 2007. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/xinran-i-want-to-tell-the-world-about-the-lives-of-ordinary-chinese-women-456979.html (accessed November 3, 2012).

 ${\tt Jin, Ha.}\ \textit{The Writer as Migrant.}\ {\tt Chicago: The\ University\ of\ Chicago\ Press, 2008.}$

- —. The American Scholar. Autumn 2008. https://theamericanscholar.org/thecensor-in-the-mirror/# (accessed August 27, 2017).
- Huang, Zhong. 'From "Unreliable Lover" to "Soul Mate"—Shifting Images of Chinese Men in Writing By Chinese Australian Women Writers of Mainland Background.' LOOKING IN, LOOKING OUT: CHINA AND AUSTRALIA. Melbourne, 2017.
- Laity, Paul. *The Guardian*. 24 February 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/feb/24/yiyun-li-interview-dear-friend-from-my-life-i-write-to-you-in-your-life (accessed August 27, 2017).
- Le, Nam. namleonline. n.d. http://www.namleonline.com/q&a.html (accessed November 10, 2012).
- Lee, Regiona W. 'Theorising the Chinese Diaspora: Chinese Canadian and Chinese Australian Narratives.' April 2005.

239 | Westerly 62.2 **239** | Isabelle Li

- Li, Isabelle. A Chinese Affair. Witchcliffe: Margaret River Press, 2016.
 Rustin, Susanna. The Guardian. 14 April 2012. https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/apr/13/yiyun-li-life-writing-interview (accessed August 27, 2017).
 Simons, Gary F. and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). Ethnologue: Languages of the World. 2017. https://www.ethnologue.com/language/mnc (accessed August 27, 2017).
- Skelton, Ronald. 'The Chinese Diaspora or the Migration of Chinese People.' In *The Chinese Diaspora: Space, Place, Mobility, and Identity*, by Carolyn L. Cartier Laurence J. C. Ma, 51–66. Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.
- Zalta, Edward N. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. 6 October 2016. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-time/#5 (accessed August 26, 2017).

The China– Australia Writing Centre

A Passion for Australian Literary Studies Huang Yuanshen 'Well, in this makeshift room I welcomed Whitlam, pointing to the bookshelves and saying: 'We don't have many books on Australian subjects, but we believe there will be more in the future.'

'I'll get you some,' the former Prime Minister of Australia assured me generously, and he kept his promise, for soon we got three big boxes of books [...]

This is how the first Australian Studies Centre of East China Normal University accidentally came into being...'

Introduction Lucy Dougan

Lucy Dougan's books include White Clay (Giramondo), Meanderthals (Web del Sol) and The Guardians (Giramondo), which won the WA Premier's Book Award for 2015/16. A past poetry editor of HEAT magazine, she now works for Axon: Creative Explorations.

She is Program Director of the China-Australia Writing Centre at Curtin University.

Gathered together here are a selection of pieces by writers associated with the China-Australia Writing Centre (CAWC), a collaboration between Curtin University in Perth and Fudan University in Shanghai. Established in 2015, the centre showcases Australian writing in China and Chinese writing in Australia, and provides a forum for the exchange of ideas about writing and the teaching of writing in Chinese and Australian universities.

What I have come to value most about working at CAWC is the human connectivity of a virtual shared creative and scholarly space. Together, Curtin and Fudan have co-ordinated two successful symposia (one held in Margaret River and the other in Shanghai) featuring both creative and research presentations by Curtin and Fudan colleagues, along with the work of writers such as Linda Javin, Xi Chuan, James Bradley and Ouyang Yu. Since 2016 we have also created a space for rare crosscultural dialogues in our signature one-day writers' festival Creative Conversations that is growing in both scope and audience engagement.

In a range of different modes—personal, empirical, psychoanalytical, poetic—the writings collected here span different times, places, generations, experiences and approaches but perhaps in a way what unites them is some kind of negotiation with what is hidden or slant or cannot be immediately revealed or directly expressed. The rationale taken in negotiating with something hidden is very different in each piece but is nevertheless there.

Novelist Elizabeth Tan's beautifully restrained personal essay 'A life, passing' deals with the complexities of losing a father and also losing parts of her identity in 'passing' as an Australian. This work's deft use of repetition adds to its haunting quality.

'Saturday Evenings', another personal essay by Fan Dai, Professor of Creative Writing at Sun Yat-sen University, wryly and lovingly charts the ups and downs of a female friendship through the complex landscape of social and family bonds in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. Fan Dai's lens is both honest and unsentimental.

The 2017 Miles Franklin winner Josephine Wilson explores her ties to China through the adoption of a daughter in the darkly lit lines of her poem 'Umbilicus', a subtle and rich meditation on the chimera of *the real China*. Wilson's poem finds in both its pre- and post-industrial images of labour an extended metaphor for the work of making life itself. It is a great boon to bring this work to readers in Chinese translation by the highly regarded translator and poet Iris FAN Xing.

Also, featured in this selection are FAN Xing's atmospheric translations of four contemporary Chinese women poets, Wen Wenjin, Zhou Zan, Lan Lan and Ma Yan, that reveal the surreal and playful nature of their works.

CAWC visiting scholar Dr Sam Zhou's detailed and fascinating empirical analysis of the profile and presence of Australian literature in Chinese research contexts is full of revelations that can only be reached through such an approach.

It is through Sam Zhou's contact with his mentor and distinguished Professor Huang Yuanshen that the engaging memoir 'A Passion for Australian Literary Studies' came to us. This recollection provides a unique snapshot of the lived background to Sam Zhou's work in the ways that it recounts barriers to the early study of Australian literature in China, as experienced by this key member of the Gang of Nine. Read on for a stellar cameo by Gough Whitlam.

I hope you will enjoy the rich connections interlinking these creative and scholarly pieces that CAWC is delighted to contribute to this *Westerly* special issue.

For more information on the China-Australia Writing Centre please visit http://cawc.curtin.edu.au

Dr Lucy Dougan Program Director CAWC

A Passion for Australian Literary Studies Huang Yuanshen

Prof. Huang Yuanshen obtained his MA from Sydney University (1981), as one of the first nine Chinese students to study in Australia after China's reform and opening. His work A History of Australian Literature (1997) has remained the most frequently cited work in the Australian studies community in China. He is the founder of the Australian Studies Centres at East China Normal University and Shanghai University of International Business and Economics.

Those engaged in Australian literary studies in China are in particular need of a sustaining passion for their research subject to survive a disadvantaged situation, where major literatures claim overwhelming attention while minor ones are unjustifiably left in the cold. Also, they are hindered by a common stumbling block: the growing material attraction in a commercialised society poses a threat to academic pursuit, drawing them away to potentially lucrative fields. Those who have stayed firm are likely filled with great enthusiasm for Australian literature, or Australia at large. I assume I'm one of them.

My choice of Australian literary studies as a career was fortuitous. Thirty-eight years ago I was somehow sent to Australia for training, instead of Britain. I learned of this mistake from an informal source, though an official of the Ministry of Education testified to it afterwards. We, nine of us, later widely known as 'The Gang of Nine' for academic merit, were enrolled in the English Department of Sydney University. Professor Leonie Kramer, a scholar of distinction and accomplishment, became our supervisor, and carefully worked out an overall plan for the two-year programme. Australian literary studies as an academic strength of both Kramer and the English Department, of which she was then Chairman, gained an unusual stress in the pre-arranged courses.

The first piece of Australian literary writing Professor Kramer assigned for us to read was Henry Lawson's 'The Drover's Wife', a heavily anthologised masterpiece. The story is set in the Australian bush, a representative living area of early settlers, plagued alternately by fire, flood, wild beasts and the illness of domestic animals. It tells of a young

woman combating unaided every hardship conceivable in a primitive mode of life as her drover husband is away to make a living. The story deals with her battle against a snake that threatens the family, the four kids in particular, and gives rise to unending anxiety. The woman, never lacking in fortitude and wisdom, comes out victorious after the all-night vigil. The moment the snake is eventually killed, she, close to tears, begins to miss her husband terribly, wishing that he instead had coped with the crisis and would never again leave her alone in danger.

Surprisingly I was quite touched by the story and my heart throbbed in unison with that of the woman, for all of a sudden I felt lonely and became extremely worried about my wife and two kids, left behind in China. What a powerful story! What a great writer and a wonderful literature! Why shouldn't I introduce Australian literature to Chinese readers who had by then known almost nothing more about Australia than kangaroos and sheep? What's more, I got the advantage of having, as my supervisor, Professor Kramer, a noted scholar and an authority on Australian literary studies. I made a decision—the right one to be sure—on Australian literature as my research focus. Looking back I think I was blessed with good fortune. What if I had been sent to Britain, not Australia, for training! Or if I had not met Professor Kramer who, even if I did meet her, for some reason, had not selected Henry Lawson for comment! If so, the scenario would be altogether different. It is fair to say that Fate, Lawson and Kramer combined to change the course of my life.

Guided by Dame Leonie Kramer, I developed a love, later turned into a passion, strong and adamant, for Australian literature. It is this passion that has driven me all these years over one hurdle after another, often with painful delights and joys, towards every little success in Australian literary studies. Here are a few of the many episodes that show how this ardour helped to tide over the early difficult circumstances I found myself in.

Australian studies in China were almost non-existent when I returned in 1981 from the two years' immersion in Australian culture. I determined to do something to change the status quo, at least in the East China Normal University (ECNU) where I had been working for more than twenty years.

I offered to start an Australian literature course in an attempt to get students acquainted with the culture of what they regarded as a new country. I tried to persuade the syllabus designer, who was vice-chairman of the Foreign Languages Department, to include Australian literature as an optional course, but to no avail. She said she saw no reason to add such a minor literature to the syllabus. The second year, the year of 1982, I raised the issue again. But again I was met with refusal. By the third year

her attitude had somewhat softened after my repeated appeals. I was allowed to have a go on the condition that the course could recruit enough students. My excitement was more than words could tell, as three years' effort had not gone wasted after all. But the ensuing news revealed that it was too early to celebrate what looked like a 'belated success'. I was soon told that no student was enrolled and Australian Literature had to be removed from the list of optional courses. To me it was a hard blow. But was it fate to which, without alternative, I had to succumb? I felt very upset about this unexpected outcome but decided to try again before failure became absolute. So I obtained the permission to meet students face-to-face before the course was to be officially cancelled.

I remember it was the last day of the school term when students were all in a state of post-exam excitement, busy comparing answers of the test papers they had just handed in. The classroom was chaotic and noisy, like a big boiling pot. Nobody was in a mood for a 'preach' no matter who would deliver it. With the least but most effective words I could find, I introduced the purpose of the course, emphasising the enigma of this new literature they had no knowledge of. After that, fourteen students signed their names—not many, but good enough to start the course. I commenced the teaching with Henry Lawson's short stories 'His Mother's Mate' and 'The Drover's Wife'. The artistic power of Lawson quite impressed the students who, by word of mouth, helped to expand the attendance of the course. The class size grew fast until I had 120 students, too many for any classroom available to accommodate them, while the number of students in the American literature course dwindled fast to only eight. To achieve a balance among the optional courses the administrative staff had to limit the maximum size of the Australian Literature course by providing for it a much smaller classroom. One day before I entered the classroom to give a lecture I was surprised to see a long queue of students standing outside. I was about to find out why, when one of them asked, 'Could we just stand here to attend your lecture because it is a full house inside?' At that moment I was stricken with a mixed feeling of sadness and joy. It was sad that just months ago nobody expressed any interest in the course and I had to go to great lengths to hopefully bring about a change. But I was delighted that an Australian Literature course would take root at ECNU from now on.

Perhaps people can hardly imagine that it should have taken three years to initiate an Australian Literature course in a Chinese university. But it is hard fact. Its cause could perhaps be traced back to the beginning of the last century, when most of the Chinese scholars had received a semi-colonial education and were, as a consequence, subjected to what their Australian counterparts described as 'cultural cringe'. This

intellectual trauma was characteristic of slavish submission to American or major European cultures to the exclusion of other cultures, including their own. The cultural cringe well accounts for the barriers we have to leap over on what always appears as a treacherous journey of launching Australian studies in China.

What I considered as the next important thing was to set up an Australian studies centre at ECNU. To achieve this aim, I contacted teachers of such Departments as History, Geography, Education and Economics, and we reached a consensus of first drafting an application to be sent to the president for approval. We naively believed that the matter would go smoothly since an Australian studies centre would in every way contribute to the academic strength of the university. But to our surprise, we met with rejection. When we approached the president for reconsideration of our project he retorted firmly, 'Why should we set up an Australian studies centre when we don't have an American studies centre yet?' We were speechless. But I was debating in my mind: 'Why can't an Australian studies centre come before an American studies centre?' We decided to go on with our research work in spite of the negative official attitude and sought assistance in data collection from the responsive Australian Embassy and Australian Consulate General.

Meanwhile, applications were delivered, from time to time, to the unyielding president, whose answer had been invariably 'no' for years. This situation remained unaltered until one day when the Honourable Gough Whitlam made it clear that he would like to visit the Australian Studies Centre at ECNU, although it had not been officially endorsed. Whitlam, as the Australian sponsor for the establishment of diplomatic ties with China in 1972, was warmly greeted in Beijing on his 1986 visit by Deng Xiaoping, China's No.1 political figure. In Shanghai of course his request was honoured cordially. Without hesitation, our president nodded his approval for our long-rejected application and asked me to receive Whitlam, as Director of the Australian Studies Centre.

We were caught unprepared. Whitlam was coming in a day or two, but we had nothing so far to show him in the form of a centre. First there needed to be a room to accommodate it and then a nameplate to announce its physical existence. So the library of Foreign Languages Department was adapted, as an expediency, to lodge the Australian Studies Centre. Some of the books in it were swapped with those on Australian subjects, which I had brought back from Australia. There was no time yet for us to order a nameplate. By rummaging through a deserted factory, we found a piece of wooden plank, had it cleaned and wrote on it, in Chinese calligraphy, the name of the centre.

Well, in this makeshift room I welcomed Whitlam, pointing to the bookshelves and saying: 'We don't have many books on Australian subjects, but we believe there will be more in the future.'

'I'll get you some,' the former Prime Minister of Australia assured me generously, and he kept his promise, for soon we got three big boxes of books from Whitlam, our first batch on Australian subjects.

This is how the Australian Studies Centre of East China Normal University accidentally came into being after repeated painful failures. The whole thing sounds quite dramatic, like a beautiful lie, but all is naked truth and to it I can bear witness.

The Centre flourished. It soon played a leading role in Australian studies in China and accomplished quite a few research projects (some in cooperation with our Australian counterparts), apart from sponsoring a number of conferences, both domestic and international, on Australian studies. The Chinese Heritage Federation Project, jointly launched by La Trobe University and ECNU, got a grant of \$500,000, the biggest of the year, from the Australian Foundation. A series of books written by scholars of the Centre on Australian history, economy, culture, education and China-Australia relations were in our country the first type of academic work in the respective domain and much sought after by readers, some being government officials, who, for various reasons, were eager to know about Australia. Nevertheless, the initial affliction we endured is unforgettable. The founding process of the Australian Studies Centre ECNU tells how biased the then academic situation was and what unbelievable trouble we had to go through in creating Australian studies.

It is indeed not a solitary example. I got the same negative response when I attempted to set up another Australian studies centre in Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, where I secured my new teaching position. The president of the university firmly said, 'No!' to my repeated petition without stating any reason, or perhaps he never thought it necessary to find a plausible excuse for a matter of this nature. But how was I to find a way out of this hopeless situation? After all, I could not expect Whitlam to come to my rescue every time I was in trouble. God helps those who help themselves. I thought the building of an academic culture of Australian studies would depend upon the founding of an associated centre. But no teacher here had any scholarly background related to Australia or Australian studies. I had to start from scratch. Meanwhile, Australian studies in China crucially needed young blood as the pioneering scholars were receding into their life of twilight.

I thought the first thing to do was to reorganise the research force, although it was a hard task, taking quite a long time and painstaking efforts

to fulfill. I recommended some young gifted teachers of our university for a PhD programme at ECNU where I was still working part-time. In eight years, four teachers under my supervision acquired a PhD degree with a research bias towards Australian literature. They became very active in Australian studies, with their essays published in prestigious journals and papers read at important conferences. Their academic influence was soon felt by scholars nationwide. I then considered it an opportune time to establish an Australian studies centre, a wish burning in my heart for eight long years. To our proposal the obdurate president consented with a broad smile, and delivered a very warm speech of congratulations at the founding ceremony.

The centre, freed from bondage, gathered momentum. We have translated and published a series of ten Australian awarded novels, the first of its kind in China's history of publication. In production now is a series of books on Australian writers, two of which, one on Peter Carey and the other on Helen Garner, have been published already. Members of the Centre are often invited as keynote speakers to conferences on Australian studies, some of them being sponsored by our Centre. The young director of the Centre has been elected Vice-chairman of the Australian Studies Association in China. A number of his articles are accepted by eminent Australian and American journals, a sure sign of his being recognised by fellow researchers abroad. Our Australian studies centre stands in the forefront of Australian studies in China, which I'm more than happy to see because our academic life is rejuvenated with the 'young blood' running so powerfully.

What I have recorded above, chiefly personal stories, suffices to make my point: we require a passion for what we pursue in this particular field to survive all the setbacks we are destined to suffer in an unusual academic environment.

A Critical Survey of Chinese Journal Articles on Australian Literature in China 1979–2016¹ Zhou Xiaojin Zhou Xiaojin is an associate professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai University of International Business and Economics (SUIBE), and a Visiting Fellow at China Australia Writing Centre. He has published widely on Australian literature, and translated twelve books, including works by Doris Lessing, Kazuo Ishiguro, Thomas Keneally and Archie Weller.

According to Ouyang Yu, the earliest introduction of Australian literature in the Chinese language took place in 1906, five years after the Federation of Australia (65). In more than a century since then, Australian literature, transplanted and transcribed, has taken a life of its own in China, with 'Chinese characteristics'², following a trajectory that manifests not only its development in Australia, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the social, economic and cultural environs in China.

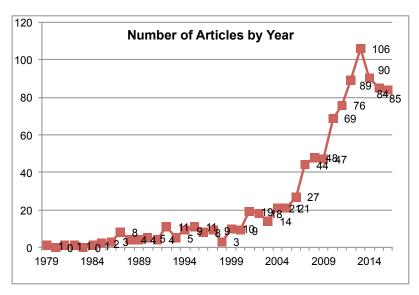
A few academics have outlined, from different perspectives, the trajectory of 'this hard-won success' (Wang Guanglin 51), marking out leading figures such as Sydney University's Gang of Nine, later founding directors of leading Australian Studies centres in China, as well as major events such as the establishment of the National Association of Australian Studies in China (NAASC, now Chinese Association of Australian Studies). It is generally agreed that national-level interest in Australian literary studies began in the early 1980s, and that out of this interest grew Australian studies in other fields, which began nationally more than a decade later.

Instead of offering another historical overview, this paper aims to define some of the 'Chinese characteristics', via a quantitative study of the academic articles on Australian literature published in Chinese academic journals from 1979 through 2016, using CNKI's China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database (CAJD) (cnki.net) as the major source and tool, and Cqvip (cqvip.com) and Wangfang (wangfangdata.com.cn) as supplementary ones³.

A broad, full-text search of 'Australia' and 'literature' in the databases yielded around 1500 articles in total (with duplicate articles from different databases removed), which are then skimmed through. Small introductory

pieces, prefaces, short editorials, articles (often on Australian history, culture or education) that mention Australian literature only in passing, and translated critical works of non-Chinese authors are all hand-picked and excluded from this study, along with a few totally unrelated stray pieces that somehow got into the net. The final valid data consists of 967 academic articles, which are then built into a small, searchable database, including author, institution affiliated, keywords, abstracts, and most important of all, bibliography⁴.

With the efforts of two generations of academics, Australian literary studies in China has achieved commendable outcomes in over three decades, starting with the establishment of the first Oceanic Literary Studies Centre by Professor Ma Zuyi at Anhui University in 1979⁵, and with the ground-breaking work of Sydney University's Gang of Nine, whose foundational influence is still felt today. The number of critical articles published in academic journals has increased from one or two every year in the early 1980s to more than eighty in recent years, indicating the continual growth of scholarly interest as well as academic sophistication and depth.



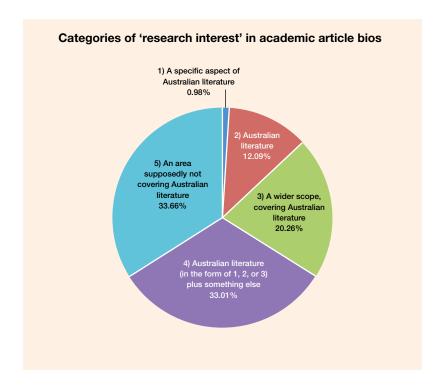
To some extent, growing interest over the decades in the literature of Australia is itself a testimony to the loosening grip of an ideologically-embedded research paradigm that encourages the study of big powers such as the Soviet Union and the United States, and of smaller 'weak'

nations of the Third World. However, the old ambivalence towards Australia, which somehow falls outside of and therefore threatens the decades-long cold-war dichotomy, still lingers on, as suggested by the results of similar searches regarding other literatures in the CNKI's CAJD database with the same parameters: the number of articles returned for literatures of the United States, the United Kingdom, Russian literature, French literature and Japanese literature are respectively 35,163, 29,648, 16,058, 15,369 and 19,679, against 834 for Australian literature, 158 for New Zealand literature, 1,277 for Spanish literature, 2,160 for Arabic literature and 2,021 for Canadian literature. The sway of the nation-state paradigm in literary studies is strong even within the supposedly transnational framework of world literature written in English.

In a society where the value of things is largely measured against their direct contribution to economy, and in an academic community largely dominated by British and American literary scholars, Chinese academics studying Australian literature often find themselves doubly marginalised. The occasional question 'Does Australia have any literature?' is often more upsetting than humourous, because in most cases it is a genuine question that requires some form of an answer, which, unfortunately, the enquirer is not ready to take seriously. It helps to mention *Schindler's List* (not Tom Keneally), *The Thorn Birds* and maybe Patrick White and Peter Carey. But not Coetzee, who is going to make it worse.

In addition to and probably because of external pressure, anxiety over the legitimacy and desirability of Australian literary studies is palpable within the small, friendly academic circle in China. Among the 967 articles surveyed, 306 have information about the authors' 'research interest'. As shown in the following chart, academics writing on Australian literature tend to define the scope of their research in generally unspecific and ambivalent terms.

Out of 306 authors, only forty define their research as 'Australian literature', or in a few cases, as a particular aspect of Australian literature, such as 'Australian women's literature' (2) and 'Chinese Australian literature' (1). Some choose to use wider but perhaps less-committed terms that may cover Australian literature, such as 'Oceanic literature', '20th century English literatures', 'postcolonial literatures', 'foreign literatures', 'comparative literature and world literature', 'English-language literature and linguistics', 'foreign literature' and 'Western literature' (62). More prefer to 'widen' their scope by adding to Australian literature something else, mainly 'western literary theory', 'cultural studies' or 'translation' (101). A surprisingly high percentage of authors (103) opt for an area of interest that generally doesn't include

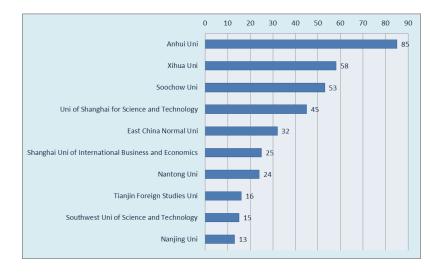


Australian literature, such as 'British literature' (2), 'American literature' (3), and 'British and American literature' (69)! While authors writing on British or American literature generally describe their interest, quite accurately, as 'British and American literature', it is uncommon for academics in Australian literature to confine their research to 'Australian literature'. Instead, they tend toward mainstream labels for their research, often at the cost of confusing attentive readers.

This anxiety over the legitimacy of Australian literary studies and over marginalistion, though perhaps unstated, has nonetheless very real effects. Many of these 'rarest of academic birds' choose to take up a more mainstream area of research in addition to, and often at the expense of, Australian literary studies. The 967 articles surveyed are written by as many as 585 individual authors, with one author publishing 1.65 articles on average, over a period of thirty-seven years. It's safe to argue that the majority of these authors have turned to something else, after publishing one or two articles on Australian literature. With such a great number of 'touch-and-go' academics, we have enough reason not to be optimistic

252 | Westerly 62.2 **253** | Zhou Xiaojin

about the sustainability and expansion of Australian literary studies in China. In nearly four decades, the bulk of research on Australian literature seems to be concentrated in a dozen institutions, often with longstanding Australian Studies centres and staunch members. The leading institutions and the number of their academic articles are as follows:



Among the 585 authors, only thirty-two published five articles or more, with Chen Zhengfa of Anhui University (18), Ye Shengnian of University of Shanghai for Science and Technology (15), Wang Labao of Soochow University (14) and Peng Qinglong of Shanghai Jiao Tong University (13) topping the list. However, with perhaps two or three exceptions, all leading scholars in Australian literary studies in China have other 'research interests', in British and American literature, literary theory, linguistics and second-language teaching, and often with considerable achievements as well.

Some journals seem to be more inclined towards Australia-related work than others. During the time span of this survey, fifty-two articles were published by *Contemporary Foreign Literature*, a journal based in Nanjing University, where an Australian Studies Centre was established in 1991. Thirty-four articles were published in *Foreign Literature*, a journal based in Beijing Foreign Studies University, where one of the earliest Australian Studies centres was founded by Professor Hu Wenzhong in 1983. Playing a major role in the early years of China's Australian studies, the journal also published interviews, translations of Australian

literature and translations of critical articles by Australian academics, along with creative essays on Australian literature and correspondences between Professor Hu and Patrick White. The Australian Studies Centre of Xihua University was founded in 2007, and the University's journal has published a total of forty-four articles on Australian literature since then, which is a commendable achievement since it's always hard for Australian literature to gain ground in China's university journals, which generally cover all fields of social sciences, arts and humanities. A similar case can be made for Journal of Anhui University (17), where the very first Australian Studies Centre was founded by Professor Ma Zuvi in 1979. Australia-related material published by Foreign Literature and Journal of Anhui University, including translations and critical articles by firstgeneration Australian literature academics in China and the translated articles by Australian critics such as Brian Kiernan, Leonie Kramer, Judith Wright, David Martin and Nicholas Jose, was vital in the first decade of Australian literary studies.

For many authors of the articles surveyed, interest in Australian literature seems cursory; however, for those who do stay and build part of their academic career on Australian literary studies, their interest in certain subjects and authors proves long-lasting. As a result, the subjects of the articles are not as diverse as they seem at first glance. Of the 967 articles, 149 list Colleen McCullough in their keywords, with 137 on *The Thorn Birds* and 12 on *The Touch*. Interestingly, nearly fifty of the authors come from the Chinese department⁸, who either use a feminist approach to analyse the female characters in *The Thorn Birds*, or compare the female protagonist with that in *Jane Eyre* or *The Scarlet Letter*. The monotony here might be interpreted as the result of cursory interest and probably of academic expediency too.

Besides Colleen McCullough studies, which I consider a very special case, the most studied Australian writers are: Patrick White (80), Peter Carey (54), Henry Lawson (44), J. M. Coetzee (30), Tim Winton (30), Elizabeth Jolley (27), Brian Castro (25), Alex Miller (23), Helen Garner (23), Judith Wright (21), Miles Franklin (20), Kate Grenville (19), Thomas Keneally (18), David Malouf (15), Nicholas Jose (13), Katharine Susannah Prichard (11), Christina Stead (11), Alexis Wright (10), Sally Morgan (9) and Frank Moorhouse (9).

The most studied works largely correspond to the list of writers, with The Thorn Birds (137) topping the list by a wide margin, followed by: 'The Drover's Wife' (22), My Brilliant Career (18), Oscar and Lucinda (17), The Ancestor Game (16), Voss (14), True History of The Kelly Gang (14), The Tree of Man (13), The Eye of the Storm (12), Coonardoo (11), The Well (9),

254 | Westerly 62.2 255 | Zhou Xiaojin

My Place (9), Birds of Passage (9), The Man Who Loved Children (8) and The Secret River (7).

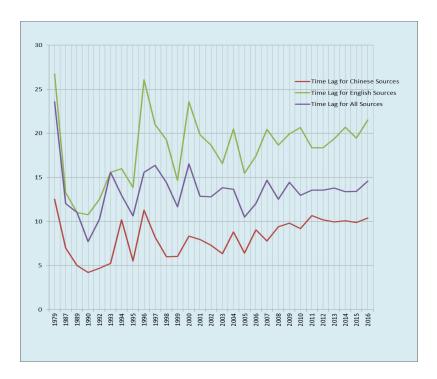
Both lists reveal that the pioneering work in the first decade of Australian studies in China is highly influential even today. In 1978, the People's Publishing House published a collection of twelve Lawson stories. In the years when Australia-related material (or any material) was scarce, the collection was for many the only thing they could get on Australian literature. Professor Hu Wenzhong, Professor Li Yao and Professor Zhu Jiongqiang visited Patrick White at 20 Martin Road at different times, and started studying and translating his novels in the early 1980s. Lawson and White have remained at the centre of Australian literary studies in China ever since. In addition to the early introductions, this is partly due to the widespread and generally accepted viewpoint of Professor Huang Yuanshen, who wrote profusely on both writers in his A History of Australian Literature, in which the Lawsonian realism and the Whitean modernism were used to frame the understanding of a large part of Australian literary history.

The two lists, if contextualised, also reveal the importance of available teaching and research material in China. In the early years, with very few English books and no Internet, the major sources were anthologies (in English) compiled and published in China, along with Chinese translations of Australian writing. In the thirty-seven years surveyed, six English anthologies compiled by Chinese academics were published: Selected Readings in Australian Literature (Huang Yuanshen, 1986/1997), Selected Readings in Oceania Literature (Chen Zhengfa, 2000/2006), Australian Literature: Themes and Selected Readings (Su Yong, 2004), A Selection of Australian Short Stories (Hu Wenzhong, 1983), Anthology of Australian Literature (Hao Zhenyi et al., 1989) and Selected English Short Stories: Australia (Zhang Min, 2007). Except perhaps Coetzee and Grenville who came to Chinese academic attention much later, writers and works on the above lists feature heavily in all the anthologies, especially the first three, which were historic and panoramic in selection and were obviously intended for teaching purposes. The anthologies were essential textbooks for undergraduate courses and for the dozen MA programmes in Australian literature. Out of those courses and programs came a new generation of academics who continued their teaching and research in Australian literature, probably with memories of the major authors whose works they had read, discussed and written about in school. Despite more people travelling on exchanges and better access to printed and digital books from abroad since the late 1990s, some of the textbook anthologies remain important: Huang Yuanshen's *Readings* is directly quoted seventeen times,

nine after 2000; Chen Zhengfa's *Oceania Literature* is quoted nine times since its publication in 2000; and Su Yong's *Themes* is quoted twelve times, all after 2006. Direct quotes from compiled anthologies instead of the original work being studied somehow remind us that even in the 21st century, Australian literature is not easily available to some academics in China, and probably even less so to the general public.

The other source of material in the early years was Chinese translations of Australian works. Except the poet Judith Wright and the novelist Helen Garner, all the 'most studied' writers are also 'most translated'. The earliest was Henry Lawson's twelve stories published in 1978. Patrick White's major works were all translated and published in Chinese, along with Flaws in the Glass and a condensed version of David Marr's biography. Except Coonardoo, all the 'most studied' works were translated and published in China. The Thorn Birds has nine Chinese editions (since 1983) and one English edition, and My Brilliant Career, Voss, A Fringe of Leaves, The Tree of Man, The Eye of the Storm, Oscar and Lucinda, and The Man Who Loved Children were all reprinted in the new century.9 A statistical survey of the articles shows that these English anthologies and Chinese translations are frequently listed in the references.

Publication time of the works referenced by these articles also points to the importance of accessing updated material. Of the 967 articles surveyed, only 851 have proper bibliographical information, in different forms and formats, which can be extracted for statistical analysis. On average, each article cites 7.60 works: 3.90 in Chinese and 3.74 in English. This suggests a generally meagre source of reference material, though some have as many as forty-three items in the bibliography. The updatedness of the works referenced is quantified by the difference between the article publication year and the average time of publication of all the sources listed. The average time difference of the 851 articles is 13.467 years, (meaning that an average article cites sources that are published 13.467 years ago). The analysis shows a marked difference between Chinese and English sources. Of the 851 articles, ninety-five have only English references, while 255 cite only Chinese sources, an unreasonably high percentage (about 30%) for articles discussing a literature in English. The average time lag (between article publication year and the average publication year of sources listed) for Chinese references is 9.48 years, while that for English references is 19.24 years. This means an average author uses Chinese references published 9.48 years ago and English references published 19.24 years ago, showing that up-to-date English sources are noticeably less available than Chinese ones. However, if we break the time lag into yearly averages, we get the following chart¹⁰:



Considering the irregularities in the early decades when some academics could have far better, perhaps 'accidental', access to works in English, we can conclude that more equal access to sources is achieved in recent years. Another conclusion we can make is that Chinese works are always more accessible and more updated than English ones. However, perhaps contrary to our expectations, the chart shows no downward trend. Despite increasing popularity of the internet and growing overseas visits, the time lags remain largely stable since 2000. One possible explanation I can venture is that while the internet might have increased Chinese access to online sources, mainly journal articles and reviews, it hasn't helped much with books, printed or electronic. The overall effect of the internet has not been significant, because citations from journals or newspaper reviews, albeit more available now, are only a small part of the sources referenced by Chinese academics. Of the total 3155 English sources cited, those from journals and newspapers take up about only one-sixth, no more than 500 in total, the rest being book-form sources. The most cited journals and newspapers are as follows. The fact that JASAL, which is freely available on the Web (without subscription to

any database), doesn't top the list because of its availability somehow supports the assumption that Chinese academics may generally prioritise books over journal articles. However, this statement can't be made without a large-scale personal survey.

Australian Literary Studies	77
Meanjin	39
Australian Book Review	33
Westerly	28
Southerly	27
Sydney Morning Herald	25
Antipodes	23
The Age	22
Quadrant	19
Overland	17
New York Times Book Review	16
JASAL	15
Guardian	11
Kunapipi	9
The Australian	9
Island	9
World Literature Today	9

Bibliographical analysis shows that in the thirty-seven years surveyed, various Australian literary histories, published in a span of half a century, remain at the top of the list of most cited single works. Huang Yuanshen's A History of Australian Literature (1997, simplified edition co-authored with Peng Qinglong 2006, revised edition 2014), the only history of Australian literature in Chinese, tops the list of histories, with 151 citations. It is the only one on the list that was written by a single author, a practice quite common in China but very rare in Australia. The list is followed by Elizabeth Webby's The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature (34), published in China in 2003 in English and therefore easily available to Chinese academics; The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature (28), edited by William H. Wilde, Joy Hooton and Barry Andrews; The Literature of Australia (24), by Geoffrey Dutton; The Penguin New Literary History of Australia (22), edited by Laurie Hergenhan; The Oxford Literary

258 | Westerly 62.2 259 | Zhou Xiaojin

History of Australia (20), edited by Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss; A History of Australian Literature: Pure and Applied (14), by H. M. Green; The Oxford History of Australian Literature (13), edited by Leonie Kramer; A History of Australian Literature (11) by Ken Goodwin; and The Cambridge History of Australian Literature (6), edited by Peter Pierce. Some think Leonie Kramer's work has had an undue influence among Chinese academics because she taught the Gang of Nine at Sydney University¹¹, but the list of most cited histories showed otherwise. Except those by Pierce and Webby, the histories on the list were quite 'old'. Their tenacious presence in the articles may be partly explained by the fact that many Chinese academics begin their arguments with a brief introduction to the status of the writer in literary history. Perhaps highlighting the historical importance of a particular writer may add legitimacy to their research in a marginalised discipline.

The other type of works often cited in the articles is, quite expectedly, literary theory. Edward Said's works, in its various versions, are cited forty-three times, topping the list of theory. The Empire Writes Back by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, and Homi Bhabha's The Location of Culture feature prominently in the articles, as well as Graham Huggan's Australian Literature: Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism, suggesting a strong 'postcolonial' reading among Chinese academics. Along with works by Chinese postcolonial theorists such as Luo Gang and Zhang Jingyuan, two translated books, Elleke Boehmer's Colonial and Postcolonial Literature (translated by Sheng Ning) and B. M. Gilbert's Postcolonial Theory (translated by Yang Naigiao) are also among the most cited single works. The other prominent theoretical perspective is feminist or postfeminist reading. Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex is cited thirty-one times and Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own, though published in 1929, is directly quoted by thirteen, followed by the works of Germaine Greer, Carole Ferrier's Gender, Politics and Fiction: Australian Women's Novels and Kay Schaffer's Women and the Bush. Li Yinhe, a sociologist and sexologist at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, is the only local feminist theorist on the list. The popularity of feminist approaches to literature is confirmed by 'key word' survey, which shows a strong and still growing interest in major woman writers, especially Helen Garner. The predominance of these two approaches, certainly a progress from 'the loss of a usable critical perspective (Wang Labao 128), nonetheless presents its own problems, monotony and repetitiveness not the least of them.

Of all the authors referenced, Professor Huang Yuanshen (of East China Normal University and later Shanghai University of International Business and Economics) remains at the very top of the list, with 232

citations, ahead of the rest by a wide margin, as shown in the following table of the top twenty most cited academics, regardless of nationality or language of their works¹². I'm rendering a long list to allow for a broad picture of what has shaped the thinking and scholarship of Chinese academics on Australian literature in the past four decades. Among the forty or so Australian Studies centres, works by academics from East China Normal University and Soochow University top the list of the most cited works on Australian literary studies in China.

Huang Yuanshen	232
Edward Said	43
Geoffrey Dutton	38
Hu Wenzhong	38
Peng Qinglong	37
Elizabeth Webby	36
Simone de Beauvoir	31
Bill Ashcroft	31
William H. Wilde	28
Wang Labao	28
Laurie Hergenhan	26
Bruce Bennett	26
Chen Zhengfa	24
Michel Foucault	24
Leonie Kramer	22
H.M. Green	22
Brian Kiernan	21
Sigmund Freud	20
Stuart Hall	19
Homi Bhabha	16

The last two findings, or rather two absences, are particularly noteworthy. Firstly, a particular group of Australian writers, those of Chinese heritage writing in Chinese rather than in English, somehow fall out of the radar and are therefore understudied. In Australia, they haven't been given the attention they deserve, though academics like Wenche Ommundsen have noticed the issue (83–89). In China, studies of these

writers are on the margin of the marginalised Australian literary studies. Besides the research of Qian Chaoying of Shenzhen University, the only Chinese who studies Australian Chinese writing in Chinese as part of his career, the few sporadic articles about them were written by the Chinese Australian writers themselves (notably Zhuang Weijie) and published in China. The second 'unfortunate' finding is that transnationality is largely absent, in both theory and practice, in Australian literary studies in China. Comparative studies are few, even within the national paradigm, excepting several articles that compare Peter Carey with Charles Dickens, or The Thorn Birds with The Scarlet Letter. Cross-border literary connections. in terms of literary traditions, global publishing and book market, and international mobility of writers themselves, are seldom explored, though continental and American theories are often used to interpret Australian works. Few foreign academics other than Australian have published their work in China. The only cases I know in this survey include a Slovenian academic publishing an English essay on Frank Hardy and a Korean pursuing a PhD in China publishing a Chinese essay on Chinese Australian writing. International collaborations in academic projects are few and Australian literary studies in languages other than English and Chinese are as good as non-existent. The two issues regarding the studies of Australian literature are confronting Chinese academics, but I guess to some extent they are issues for our Australian counterparts as well. Despite all the 'trans-' talk, barriers remain high between disciplines, cultures, nations and languages.

During the thirty-seven years surveyed, commendable achievements were made in Australian literary studies in China. However, as the survey shows, the anxiety over legitimacy of Australian literature studies is still palpable, in the ways researchers describe their own 'research interest', in the large number of academics who chose to leave Australian literature for a more mainstream area, and in the concentration of Australian studies efforts in a few Australian Studies centres, academic journals and leading scholars. While the survey confirms the importance of available teaching and research material in China, especially in the pioneering years, analysis of the bibliographical information of the articles surveyed shows that the internet and growing overseas visits have not contributed significantly to the up-datedness of research material. Despite the hardwon success of Australian literary studies in China, the findings of the survey point towards a future with no assured sustainability, diversity or growth, a future that calls for greater academic efforts and more effective support and promotion.

262 | Westerly 62.2

Notes

- This study is subsidised by the Chinese Ministry of Education (grant number 15YJC752050) and kindly supported by Curtin University's China Australia Writing Centre (CAWC). Part of the data was collected by Zhang Zhihua and Liu Jinlong, postgraduate students at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics. To them, I offer my gratitude.
- 2 Nicholas Jose (3) first used this Chinese catchphrase, quite properly, to describe the development of Australian studies in China.
- 3 These are the major journal article databases in China. Developed and maintained by Tsinghua University, CNKI's CAJD is the largest academic journal database in China, with about 8000 journals (since 1915), and 490 million full-text articles, covering all fields of natural and social sciences, and humanities and arts.
- 4 There was no required format for academic articles before the 1990s. Articles published before that time usually don't have abstracts, keywords, author's bio, or, most vexingly for this research, bibliographies. Quoted sources in English were translated into Chinese, often with omissions of publisher information or even year of publication. They have to be verified one by one. The current format for publication in China often requires titles, keywords and abstracts in both English and Chinese, and a full bibliography, along with an author's bio, which generally consists of name, professional title, gender, place of birth, institution affiliated, research interest and major works.
- 5 For details about the establishment of the first ASC in China, see Ma Zuyi, Li Shijin and Wang Jiantang (121–124).
- 6 Geordie Williamson (2016) uses this phrase to describe Nicholas Birns, 'an American scholar with a special interest in Australian writing'.
- 7 Professor Huang Yuanshen of East China Normal University and Professor Hu Wenzhong of Beijing Foreign Studies University, both from the 'Gang of Nine', have written extensively on Australian literature, but most of their articles were published in book form.
- 8 Academics studying foreign literatures in China generally come from two backgrounds, those from the foreign languages school, and those from the 'comparative literature and world literature' programme of the Chinese school. However, it's very rare to come across an academic of 'Chinese' background with serious interest in Australian literature.
- 9 For a detailed survey on Chinese translation of Australian literature, see Chen Hong (129–134) and Peng Oinglong (24–28).
- 10 A few years in which there were either no Chinese sources or English ones are excluded in the data for this chart.
- 11 For instance, Wang Labao (2000), one of the most devoted Chinese scholars to Australian literature, argued, after surveying fifty or so essays, that Kramer's Oxford History 'was regarded as something of a "Bible" (128). This is not true (or no longer so after 2000), at least in terms of citations by academic articles in China. Wang found that Chinese academics relied too heavily on Australian literary histories because they didn't have a theoretical perspective. I agree with his identification of the problem but am not entirely convinced of his explanation of its reasons. Their citation of Australian histories is not a bow to foreign authorities, but an acknowledgement of the long Chinese tradition of historicising writers and works, in addition to a careful weighing of national situations of the

- time, when few Chinese were acquainted with Australian literature. Biographical studies, close reading, and socio-political approaches to literature, 'theories' that many used in the 1980s, were easily and often hastily dismissed later when critical theories were used or misused, with much hubris but little scepticism.
- 12 The table shows academics whose works are quoted by the 851 journal articles (with proper bibliography) published in China in this survey, not including citations by PhD or MA degree dissertations.

Works Cited

- Chen, Hong. 'The Study of Australian Literature in China in the 20th Century', *Journal of East China Normal University* 6 (2012): 129–134.
- Jose, Nicholas. 'Australian Literature Inside and Out: Barry Andrews Memorial Address', Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, Special Issue: 'Australia Literature in a Global World', eds. Wenche Ommundsen and Tony Simoes da Silva, 2009.
- Ma, Zuyi, Li Shijin and Wang Jiantang. 'Chinese Research on Australia', 'The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs 9 (January 1983): 121–124.
- Ommundsen, Wenche. 'Transnational (II)literacies: Reading the "New Chinese Literature in Australia" in China', Antipodes, 25:1 (2011): 83–89.
- Ouyang, Yu. 'A Century of Oz Lit in China: A Critical Overview (1906–2008)', Antipodes 25.1 (2011): 65.
- Peng, Qinglong. 'China's Translation of Australian Literature (1949–1978): An Academic-historical Perspective', Chinese Translators Journal 35:6 (2014): 24–28.
- Wang, Guanglin. 'A Hard-won Success: Australian Literary Studies in China', Antipodes 25 (June 2011): 51–57.
- Wang, Labao. 'Australian Literature in China', Southerly 60:3 (2000): 118-133.
- Williamson, Geordie. 'Review of Contemporary Australian Literature: A World Not Yet Dead by Nicholas Birns', The Australian, February 20, 2016.

A Selection of Four Poems by Chinese Women

Translated by Iris FAN Xing

Iris FAN Xing is a PhD student at the University of Western Australia. FAN has participated in various translation projects of Chinese and Australian poetry, and she has a collection entitled Lost in the Afternoon (2009). She won the poetry section of the Hong Kong City Literary Awards (2011), and her work can be found in Cha: An Asian Literary Journal, Fleurs des Lettres, Voice & Verse, Poetry Monthly, Chinese Western Poetry and Cordite Poetry Review.

Parasite World

Wen Wenjin

I've received a human's life arrived in the human world on a morning of pouring storm practising over and over how to sleep and wake up

perhaps because *Li Kui*, oh sorry, *Zhong Kui** has helped me make braids many cats hide under my skirt, a dark mess whenever I walk it looks like I'm scurrying

寄生界

温文锦

我得到一条人命, 来到人间 在暴雨如注的清晨 反覆地练习入睡和醒来

264 | Westerly 62.2 **265** | Iris FAN Xing

^{*} Li Kui is a character in the novel *Water Margin* and Zhong Kui is the king of ghosts in Chinese mythology. Both are often portrayed as big men with huge beards and a fierce personality.

可能是李逵,哦不,钟馗为我 编过辫子的缘故 我的裙子底下藏着很多猫,黑压压的 每逢我走路时 像飞跑

Wen Wenjin, now based in Guangzhou, was born in Meizhou city of Guangdong Province in 1982. Wen has been writing poetry since 2004, and fiction and screenplays since 2014. Her work can be found in the Chinese literary journals Today, Chutzpahl, Youth Literature, and Literature Work. Her short story selection Everyone is a Fallacist was published in Party (edited by Han Han). Her novel Saigon Memories was awarded the Fifth BenQ Award for Chinese Cinema Fiction.

To a Poet, my Peer

Zhou Zan

a poem for you must be in a form like this a couplet, as we walk on the streets side by side

it also means, a pause, is a turn in our conversation, a change in topic, turning into another street

slow, is our desired pace, still it shouldn't become a cue, or even an excuse, that's why we are silent

and yes, we've been silent to each other for a long time though we've trodden the same path, been to the same restaurant

today, we have a destination you want to take me to a place, and if I choose to follow

then it means, I won't be silent, I'll need an exit even if we enter the hell all our forerunners have been through 致一位诗人,我的同行 周瓒

给你的诗必须是这样一种体式 两行平行,仿佛我们并肩走在街上

这也意味着,停顿,是在谈话中 转折,就像话题转弯,拐往另一条街

慢,是我们心仪的速度,但也不能 变成一种自我暗示,甚至借口,所以沉默

是的,很久以来我们都互相沉默 就算我们一起走过相同的路,进过同一家馆子

今天,我们有一个明确的目的 你领我去一个地方,如果我选择了跟随

那将意味着:我不再沉默,我需要一个出口 就算我们进入的,是那先行者们都曾领受过的炼狱

Zhou Zan is a poet, translator, literary scholar and theatre practitioner based in Beijing. She has published the poetry collections *Turn Me Loose* and *Writing on Xue Tao's Artisanal Paper*. Zhou's translation works including *Eating Fire*—a selection of poems by Margaret Atwood. She has also published two volumes of collected essays on poetry and poetics: *Through the Periscope of Poetic Writing* and *After Breaking from Silence*.

Silence, Mostly

Lan Lan

silence, mostly
the secret magnetic needle in a flock of geese
so many smiling faces appearing in the crowd
like rustling leaves
...sunshine and birds perching
the joy of life

silence is immoral in silence there is the biggest ear silence can only hear silence's heavy breathing in late night—

更多的是沉默

蓝蓝

更多的是沉默。 雁群中秘密的磁针。

有多少笑容浮现在人群中 仿佛枝叶的喧响 ……阳光 栖鸟 生活的欢乐。

沉默是非道德的。 沉默中有一只最大的耳朵。

沉默只能听见沉默那 深夜里沉重的喘息-

A representative of contemporary lyric poets in China, Lan Lan (pen name of Hu Lanlan) has published more than nine volumes of poetry in Chinese since 1990. Her poems have been translated into English and Russian, among which two collections-Nails and Canyon in the Body-were brought out by Zephyr Press. Lan Lan is also an essayist and writes stories for children.

Nothing is more moving than... Ma Yan

nothing is more moving than beauty, nothing can make me listen more than the sound, no one will be strolling by the sea back and forth, back and forth. the seaside that only happens once, not twice, the sea that only has one person,

only happened once, and it means the arrival of water will surpass the oppressor's power made possible by time. I've fiddled with these synonyms again and again, among them it's the same craft of yours with broken glasses. for these similar components, does it mean anything to be sharp or not? but whenever it's time for bed, things will become more concrete.

再没有比美更动人…… 马雁

再没有比美更动人,再没有 比声音更能使我听到,再没 有一个人在海边来回地走, 来回地走。只有一次海边, 再没有第二次,只有一个人 的海,只有一次曾经可能, 那意味着水的抵达将超过时 间所能赋予压制欲望者的力 量。我曾反复拨弄这些互相 近似的词语,它们之间和你 一样都只是玩弄一种碎玻璃 的手工艺。对干这些同样的 材料,锋利与否又有什么意 义?但每到应当睡觉的时 刻,事情就能具体起来。

Ma Yan, born in Chengdu in 1979, was a Chinese Muslim poet and essayist. She published a poetry collection The Enchanted Food and an essay collection Reading, Tempests and Self-Appreciation. After her untimely death in 2010, New Star Press in Beijing brought out the two-volume Collected Poetry and Prose of Ma Yan in 2012.

268 | Westerly 62.2 269 | Iris FAN Xing

Umbilicus Josephine Wilson

Josephine Wilson's second novel, Extinctions (UWA Publishing) won the 2017 Miles Franklin Literary Award after winning the inaugural Dorothy Hewett Award in manuscript form. Josephine works as a sessional staff member at Curtin University, where she teaches in the Humanities Honours Programme, in Creative Writing and in Art and Design history.

Poems about birth are a dime a dozen, done to death, but then we women repeat ourselves—it is our gift to the world, like knitting, and school lunches.

In the industrial omphalos—
the Zhujiang Delta—
in Shenzhen, Foshan, Donguan
women repeat themselves now
netted and masked,
sorting our circuits and
checking our chips in
the lux and lumen of factory light.

Look! A strangled pond betwixt factory and road! An old man with bamboo pretending it is 1976!

Once a perilous contradiction, now a playful juxtaposition

in hi-tech factories they work in seated rows, but in her town they still bend over to work, like bamboo, like *the real China!* says our guide, surprised at such anachronism

so close to Guangzhou

they stumble down roads shouldering rice, while in open-fronted shops they ply dried mice wound up in wheels Across the bridge a man has tied his child to a pole and walked from the human siren-cry to a bone-shaking excavation to partake in another brute sonic modernisation.

This hotel bed is too hard, this glass is too thin, the light is a watery emission that illuminates nothing bar a stack of condoms for the travelling men who come here for the industrial side of scissors and knives and the odd woman or two.

Outside a full moon, a half moon, no moon at all, just a pulsing stub, the weak beam of the just-born, just left—at birth we presume—'umbilicus wet'.

Somewhere an empty socket in this navel of the world, this pearly delta, somewhere live wires yanked from the plug do arc and spark in the grass, twitching, jumping, pulsing, like a dying globe, like a world, like a navel, like a hollowed-out space for story and myth about where you might have come from and who it was who brought you here—

two eagles, perhaps, dispensed by Zeus from the other side of the world, feathered red by what might be wine, but is more than likely the blood of a woman, hollowed inside.

关于生孩子的诗多得一毛钱一打,早就被写烂了,即便如此我们女人还是喜欢重复自己——这是我们给世界的馈赠,比如针线活,比如给孩子带到学校午餐。

在工业的翁法洛斯*里—— 珠江三角洲—— 在深圳、佛山、东莞 女人重复着她们自己 戴着发罩和口罩, 在工厂灯光发出的勒克司和流明里 分拣着我们的线路 检查着我们的芯片。

看!厂房和公路间挤着一座池塘。 一位拿着竹竿的老人假装这是1976年。

曾经危险的矛盾, 如今有趣的并置

高科技工厂里的他们坐在流水线上 而在她的镇上人们仍旧弓着背做活儿, 像一排竹子,像"这才是中国!"我们的导游说, 惊讶于这样的时空错乱

在离广州这么近的地方

他们扛着米袋蹒跚在路上, 而在敞门士多里人们 卖着缠成一圈的老鼠干

桥那边一个男人把他的孩子 拴在栏杆上然后从人肉警笛声中走开 奔赴一场彻骨的开掘,加入下一场 残酷的震耳欲聋的现代化进程。

这酒店的床太硬, 这窗玻璃太薄, 这灯光稀稀地流泻 除了一沓给为了剪刀和菜刀的

* 翁法洛斯,肚脐的希腊语,希腊神话中大地的中心。

制造工业而来的男人们 以及伶仃的一两个女人 而准备的避孕套外什么都没照亮。

外面一轮满月,半月,或根本无月, 只有这搏动的肚脐眼,新生儿的微光, 刚离开——我们设想降生时——"脐带濡湿"。

某处一个空插座 在世界的肚脐, 这泛着珠光的三角洲, 某处从插座拽落的生命线 亦真会在草丛间卷曲迸出火花, 抽搐、跳动、搏动,如一枚快灭的灯泡, 如一个世界,如一个肚脐, 亦如一片关于你从哪里而来 关于是谁将你带来世间的 故事和神话的空白——

两只鹰,也许吧,受宙斯差遣 从世界的另一端而来, 也许是被酒浸红了羽毛,但更有可能 是被一个内里被掏空的 女人的血。

Translation by Iris FAN Xing

Saturday Evenings¹ Fan Dai

Fan Dai is Professor of English and founding director of the Sun Yat-sen University Center for English-language Creative Writing. She teaches creative writing in English and bilingual writing. In addition to four nonfiction books in Chinese, she has published work in English in magazines in the United States, Australia, and Hong Kong. She is the founder of the Sun Yat-sen University Writers' Residency, which combines writing with literary and cultural exchanges, and the teaching of creative writing.

'From now on, you'll be my *Da Ge*, and I'll be your *Xiao Di*,' Huan said, her eyes glittering, her palms against mine in between our bosoms².

I looked at her solemnly, pressing my palms harder against hers.

I don't remember why we called each other brother, but I remember our commitments to the brotherhood in Huan's high-pitched voice: 'We'll reserve Saturday evenings exclusively for ourselves; we'll keep our virginity till our wedding nights.'

It was July 1980. We were seventeen and just graduated from high school.

Huan had a boyfriend shortly after that and never came close to missing a Saturday evening or losing her virginity. I had a boyfriend three years later, and soon found both pledges unrealistic.

'So this couple was caught in the park the other night. Nothing new about that except they couldn't be separated. Hahahahaha...' Huan burst into strange laughter, knocking her steel lunch box on the desk, the last few grains of rice bouncing wildly as she bent down to catch her breath.

'They had to be sent to the hospital before they were sent to the police station. Hahahaha...' Huan laughed out loud, stamping hard on the floor. We were having our after-lunch chat in our classroom in No. 6 High School in Guangzhou. Huan was the centre of attention as always.

'Why can't they be separated?' I asked.

'Because the woman was so nervous that she... oh, so the man simply couldn't... Hahahahaha...' Huan bent and squatted down, choked by laughter.

'Stop it. It's not funny!' Minjian, my desk-mate, hit Huan hard on the shoulder, her two thin pigtails with messy ends dangling as she winked.

Weihong, the most sophisticated among the four of us, gave a reserved laugh. 'You're sounding silly,' she said. She looked at Huan and then me, indicating what she said applied to both of us.

'I just don't get this,' I murmured in curious humiliation.

'Just think of what people do when they're in love!' Huan stopped laughing, alarmed by my innocence.

'Where could they not separate?' I asked gingerly. It was 1978. Anything to do with men and women was exciting, shameful, and forbidden. Especially when we were only fifteen.

'In the middle. Hahahahaha...'

'In the middle?' I was seriously upset. I could not think of any connection there.

'Can't you see they were doing it when they were caught?'

'Doing what? Were they ki...' I could hear my voice trailing away, too ashamed of the wicked thought.

'No, they were beyond kissing,' Huan looked around to make sure no one was walking past the classroom. 'They were doing the real thing!' she said in a low yet emphatic voice.

'The real thing?' I was more shocked by the existence of the real thing than by my innocence.

'According to my mother...'

• • •

Huan's mother was a biology teacher at Sun Yat-sen University in southern China. She had been our greatest source about the adult world. The university was a small walled city like all other universities in China, where the faculty taught, their families lived, and most people knew each other. Huan and her mother stood out: she was unusually tall, her mother unusually plump. They were always laughing at something.

They were frowned upon for their loudness. Their laughter was considered unreserved, ill-mannered and sluttish, against the grim 1970s, when emotion was repressed, especially when the husband-father figure was missing.

Huan studied in a different primary school from mine, but I had long heard about her and a boy called Hongbing. I saw them going to school once. Huan wore her grass-green schoolbag across her chest like we all did, her hair bundled high up into two pigtails like starving eggplants. She was laughing, her teeth flashing in the sunlight. The chubby-faced boy on her left looked amused, showing a big smile that revealed uneven upper teeth.

I was then twelve or thirteen, the age when boys and girls started to pretend to ignore each other as if they had always been strangers, a typical indication of puberty hitting at a time when sex was a taboo. But Huan somehow managed to do otherwise.

Huan and I came to know each other in Class Four in junior high school. We clicked right away nicknaming teachers. The history teacher was called 11:55 because his head permanently tilted to the right. Etcetera was the math teacher who frequently turned to the expression after counting two or even one thing on any list. Huan would *hahahahaha* every time I came up with something mean and funny, bending her back and crossing her legs.

We nicknamed her mother Purple Sweet Potato after her favourite food. Then we revolutionised curse words. A typical expression would be ta ma de, meaning 'his/her mother's', which is the adjective for the frequently omitted four-letter noun starting with 'c'. We decided that was not fair, and expanded it to ta die de, meaning 'his/her father's' with the omitted counterpart. We perfected it by its short form die de, 'father's', which Huan's high-pitched voice rendered musical and harmless. It sounded so right that Huan and I die de'ed our way between home and school while Minjian and Weihong frowned constantly to indicate that they were not part of the gang.

Die de was to ta ma de as darn was to damn in English. Huan hahahahaha'ed and declared me a linguistic genius, begging for more parallel expressions. She lost no occasion to use die de and hahahahaha'ed. Soon she won the title of Obscene Queen in the school. Not that she had a lot of competition.

I soon realised that Huan did things I wanted to but did not dare to do. It was wonderful to shadow-act behind her, and be safe from the frowns from teachers and peers. I must have been programmed into behaving according to my name *Fan*, which means 'ordinary', having been born into a turbulent political period where one could get into trouble if one acted differently from the crowd.

For a long time, I wondered how Huan could manage by wearing the same pair of dark grey trousers all year long. She had two short-sleeved shirts, one light pink with darker thin stripes of the same colour, the other light blue of the same fashion. When the dark grey trousers were replaced by dark blue ones a year later, I could not help commenting, 'Your trousers must dry very fast, or you can't wear them every day.'

'Hahahahaha... That's what Purple Sweet Potato's colleagues said! Between the two of us, we have four identical pairs. It's economical.' We all had few clothes, as food and cloth were rationed in the 1960s and 1970s. Purple Sweet Potato was certainly creative in a boring way. Indeed, that was the guiding principle for her housekeeping, as they always had one dish, either a very large portion of veggie or meat for the whole meal.

'Don't you get sick of having the same thing over and over?'

'Why would I?' Huan said. 'One gets used to these things, don't you think so?'

We graduated in July 1980. It was the third year since the national exams were re-introduced as the criteria for university admission, unlike the chaotic years of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, when universities were closed for a few years, then enrolled students by their political reliability instead of academic potentials. The admission ratio was 4:100. If one passed, a good job would be guaranteed after graduation; if one failed, the chance of getting a decent job would be slim, unless one chose to study at a vocational school.

That was what Purple Sweet Potato made Huan do, the argument being that Huan tended to be careless in exams and often ended up with low scores. As a result, Huan went to a vocational school for architecture, while I became an English major at Sun Yat-sen University.

Huan would come home on Saturday evenings from her school in the suburb and visit me first thing after dinner. We would sit on my bed, Huan holding and resting my hand on her lap throughout the evening.

'I've got a boyfriend!' Huan squeezed my hand hard. 'He speaks so little that I've nicknamed him "Dead Clam"! Hahahahaha...'

'But how do you know that someone has become your boyfriend? You started school two weeks ago!' I said, withdrawing my hand from hers.

She held it fast. 'He's asked me to be his girlfriend!'

'How can you stand a dead clam? You'll die of silence!'

'I don't mind that. He makes me happy just by the way he looks at me.'

Huan's face radiated like I had never seen before. She had a round face completed by a slightly sharp chin, her eyes protruding a little, as if permanently surprised. Her face was rosy, her skin fairer than most girls. Her teeth appeared small against a good part of her upper gum when she laughed.

Dead Clam became a constant part of our conversations. He was from a rather poor family in Guangzhou. His parents were workers from a factory that made parts for watches, their salaries barely enough to keep things going.

'He said he'd be happy with salty fish and preserved bean curd as long as he's with me,' Huan told me on another Saturday evening.

Those were the cheapest food. I felt sorry for Huan as I imagined her and Dead Clam sitting at a small table in a dim sitting room, chopsticks reaching for salty fish at one meal and preserved bean curd at another.

Over the next two Saturday evenings, Huan told me that they had started holding hands, and they had kissed each other.

'Like what they do in Western movies?'

'Of course not,' Huan said, as if she were insulted. 'It was quick and it was on the cheek. Like the way I kiss you.'

But that was still something.

Huan was the first person who kissed me on the cheek. It came as I suggested the nickname 'Messy Curly' for the curly-haired boy who sat one row in front of me. I remember dodging her instinctively, in shamed astonishment. That would have been condemned 'petty bourgeoisie practice'. Minjian and Weihong pretended they did not see it but their shocked look did not escape me. She also kissed them for I do not remember what, but they dodged her as well. After a few one-sided kisses, Huan stopped the act.

We never talked about the kisses. I had seen Huan and Purple Sweet Potato kissing each other on the cheek a few times. My heart raced a little, envying the physical intimacy absent in the life I knew.

But those were kisses between women, and were outrageous enough for us. Now it was about a man! I had never seen any intimacy between a man and a woman except in Western movies.

Western movies were just becoming accessible in the 1980s, not in cinemas, but in institutions such as artistic troupes and English departments like where I was. Our all time favourite was *The Sound of Music*. The most unforgettable moment came when Maria and Captain von Trapp kissed each other—

The classroom became intensely quiet. I was very embarrassed but failed to look away. We itched to talk about it after class yet no one dared, until the most outspoken of us muttered something:

'I can't believe they did that! That's disgraceful!'

That triggered immediate responses.

'Yes, that was shocking!'

'How could the actor and actress still work together after that?'

The rest of us nodded, muffling their words in frustrated excitement.

Huan brought Dead Clam to our Saturday evening the week after. I held my breath in disbelief when they arrived hand in hand.

Dead Clam was about 5'9". He smiled a quiet smile that was quickly sealed by thick lips that would pass for sexy these days. He withdrew his hand tentatively but Huan held him tight.

'Hello!' I said, wondering whether I should shake hands with him.

'Hello.' Dead Clam appeared more awkward than me. He smiled again, broadly, his teeth shiny white in contrast to his skin.

We both looked at Huan for help.

'Why don't you go home so Da Ge and I can have our Saturday rendezvous?' Huan said, letting go of Dead Clam.

'Ok, I'll see you on Monday.' Dead Clam smiled a goodbye to us.

As he closed the door behind him, I began to feel sorry for him. 'Do you think he's a bit hurt?'

'Not at all, we'd already spent some time together on our way here. He doesn't have much to say anyway.' Huan's pitch raised: 'So how was your week? Did any men get interested in you?'

'No. You asked the same thing last week.'

'But this is a new week and things could happen!'

'Nothing happened.'

Nothing should happen, as we had been officially told not to develop any romantic relationship while at university: it would be a bad distraction. Besides, most of us still found it strange to interact with the opposite sex as adults, having had no verbal exchange with them throughout high school.

Maybe that was why people like Huan and me got really close.

. . .

On February 14, 1984, the young man who had sat opposite me for half a year in the library asked me a question about an English exercise. He held my hand by May.

Huan was curious and demanded to see Jigang on the next Saturday.

'Nice to meet you!' Huan greeted Jigang in her usual loud voice.

Jigang looked a little uncomfortable. 'Nice to meet you too.'

 ${}^{\backprime}$ I bet you know Da Ge and I have always kept Saturday evenings to ourselves.'

'Yes, but I was hoping some flexibility would be allowed,' Jigang smiled. 'I'll go to the library and come back when your meeting is over.'

Huan glared at Jigang's back until he was out of sight. 'Somehow I'm just not too sure about this guy,' she said, her eyes protruding more than usual.

'She's a bit too loud, but you certainly know her better than me,' Jigang said when I asked him about Huan.

It would not be wise to let the two meet again.

'I know a phrase for your behaviour,' Huan said at my first attempt to use Saturday evening to see Jigang: "zhong se qing you".' It meant favouring the opposite sex over a friend of the same sex.

After graduating in 1983, Huan started working for her uncle's construction company. I began my graduate studies at Sun Yat-sen University in 1984 and became an English teacher at the same university in 1987; Jigang went to Peking University.

Jigang and I got married in 1986. Huan broke up with Dead Clam the next year, after a six-year steady relationship that never went beyond holding hands and kissing on the cheek. She did not seem sad.

'Dead Clam doesn't have passion for anything. I don't mean he has to have ambition and all that. I just can't stand a boring life.'

I urged her to look for someone new.

Yet Huan started introducing colleagues to her girlfriends. One of these girlfriends was Chenmin, a doctor working in a marine hospital in Guangzhou.

Huan arrived one Saturday evening wearing a mysterious look. 'I just watched a porno film with Chenmin!' she whispered, though there was no one else around.

That was impressive. Such films were banned. By the late 1980s, more Western movies had made it to the cinema; kissing between lovers was no longer exclusively Western. A Chinese movie called *Love in Mount Lu* told the story of a Chinese American who lost herself in the beauty of the mountain resort in Jiangxi Province. She kissed the cheek of the Chinese man she fell for. It caused such a sensation that it became historical in the movie industry. The movie still shows in Mount Lu; some old-timers are still sorry that the actor and actress did not marry each other.

But porno movies were a different story. One could get into real trouble if found watching them.

'Was there anything shocking?' I was more curious than worried.

'You wouldn't believe it, the things people do,' Huan said in disgusted excitement. 'Women screamed with such painful looks! Chenmin insisted they were having a great time! Oh, my! You should see the way they spread their legs so shamelessly! Chenmin said she was getting all wet!'

'She said that?' That was the first time I heard of a real person talking about her own sexuality.

'What do you expect? Doctors say everything. And she asked me whether I was getting wet.'

'Were you?' I asked, hating my curiosity.

'No way! I found the whole thing gross and grotesque!'

'Except when you're in love with the man, I'd say.'

'I don't know about that. Purple Sweet Potato said men are dirty animals.'

. . .

Purple Sweet Potato never had any good things to say about men. She divorced when Huan was a few months old. She made her ex-husband promise not to bother them and rejected child support from him.

Purple Sweet Potato said he stole lab equipment and brought it home. She wouldn't want to live with a thief.

That was all Huan knew about the man who gave her life.

'I'm going to meet someone tomorrow,' Huan said one day in May 1978, after Minjian and Weihong had gone home. She and I lived in adjacent buildings at the time.

She never sounded so serious.

'It's my father I'm meeting.'

Imagine meeting your father for the first time at fifteen!

Her hands were nervously playing with the corners of her blouse.

'I don't know what to expect. It's a strange feeling.'

I said I could meet her after their meeting if she needed to talk.

When we met the next day in the playground a few minutes from our homes, Huan was uncharacteristically quiet.

'He held me for a long time. He never thought of getting married again. He wanted to get back with Purple Sweet Potato so I could have a complete family. I felt sorry for him. He gave me this watch...' Huan said, biting her lips.

'Do you like him?'

'I don't know. It's so hard to have a father all of a sudden.'

Huan paused, swallowing hard and holding her head high, her eyes crystal bright.

'I wish I hadn't seen him but I can't stand not having seen him. You know how that feels?'

I tried hard to imagine, shaken by the complexity of life, shaken that Huan seemed so different from her hahahahaha self.

She heard no more of him until mid-1981, shortly after she met Dead Clam. He asked her to visit him in Fuyun³, a small town in south-eastern

China. We lost no time nicknaming him Old Fu using the first word of the province.

Huan came to see me first thing after the trip.

'How did it go?' I asked when I could no longer stand the silence.

'He works in a hospital in this small place. Everybody's nice to him.'

She paused. 'The town has very little to offer. But he's lived there for sixteen years!'

'Did you tell Purple Sweet Potato about that?'

'I did. She couldn't care less. She's got a heart of stone when it comes to him.'

'I don't get it. Didn't he tell you that the Red Guards damaged a lot of things and he brought the lab equipment home to protect it?'

'But Purple Sweet Potato never bought that. She called him a liar instead.'

That resonated with stories I had heard about some family members turning against each other during the Cultural Revolution. In fact, Purple Sweet Potato reported Old Fu. As a result, he was expelled from the university and sent to Fuyun.

'He still talks about getting back with Purple Sweet Potato. It must have been hard for him. I could tell from how... the way he...' Huan hesitated, her eyes rolling in search of the right words, '... held and touched me.'

'The way?'

Huan would not look at me.

'He held me very tight and... felt me.'

'How?! Where?!'

'He begged to feel me, and felt me everywhere like... he apologised and he was breathing heavily. He said he never touched a woman after the divorce. He said he wanted to give me the love he hadn't had a chance to give for eighteen years. He told me not to be afraid. He's my father and he wouldn't do anything to hurt me.'

'For heaven's sake, he didn't go too far?!'

'No,' Huan said, her eyes begging me to stop. 'He was close but he didn't. I couldn't move. I couldn't move. I held my breath until I was almost out of breath. I wouldn't know how I'd react and what to think of him if...' Huan stopped short to catch her breath. I was speechless, shaken by images that I did not dare to formulate.

'Did you tell Purple Sweet Potato?'

'No! She'll kill him or me or both.'

I think about this from time to time over the years. I could not decide who I felt more sorry for, who suffered more, and who was to blame more.

• • •

In 1995, Huan set up a company with an older colleague nicknamed Pig Leg who once had swollen legs. They saw opportunity for interior design and remodelling as high-rise buildings mushroomed in Guangzhou in the mid-1990s.

I was in the States working on my Master's degree in human geography. Huan wrote once a week, telling me how much she missed me. She took comfort in visiting my four-year-old son Dai who was under my mother's care. She said she spent a lot of time in the office waiting for phone calls that never came, while Pig Leg was out visiting potential customers.

 $\hbox{`I come to work only to kill flies,' she wrote. `We're giving it two years.'}$

'You should take advantage of the time and find a boyfriend,' I wrote.

'I've been looking but you know how it is.'

She entertained herself tracing old classmates from the vocational school.

'Guess what? I introduced Master Fatty from my internship days to Clay Pot and they've fallen in love!' she reported in another letter.

Shortly after 1996, Huan contracted the first project for interior design. 'I can't believe it, this is so profitable! It can keep us going for a few months!'

That was the beginning of many projects. By the time I returned in March 1997, Huan and Pig Leg were loaded with money, driving a jeep when private vehicles were few and far between. It was soon replaced by Grey Wolf, a grey car that got stuck with its colour.

We were excited to see each other again after two-and-a-half years. Huan kept calling me *Da Ge* in her sweet tone, her beams brightened up by two dimples.

She told me that Pig Leg bought one office and two apartments under their names, after she refused to take fifty per cent of the company's profit. 'The money came too easy and it's mostly his work,' she explained. 'He said housing is an investment that can't go wrong.'

That was when commercial housing sounded stupid and unnecessary to the average person, as the price was far beyond what one's salary could pay, and accommodation was assigned by the work unit and rent was low.

'Is anything going on between you two?' Pig Leg, married with two children, was twenty-one years older than Huan. But I asked anyway.

'No, no, no. He's like a father and he's a great friend. If it weren't for him, I couldn't have survived the accident.'

Huan was in a hit-and-run accident in May 1989. Her left leg literally turned a full circle as she came to and tried to stand up. I couldn't stop my tears when I saw her wrapped in layers of white cloth in the hospital.

I was pregnant then and could not help on a daily basis. It was Pig Leg who organised a team of colleagues and friends to take care of her for two months.

'Now Pig Leg needs my help. His son has bone cancer in the left knee.' He was only eighteen.

'He's having an amputation tomorrow. I promised to be there for him. I'm good morale for him. I limp a little, but I still live a normal life.'

Huan took care of him for a good half year, especially in the last month of the boy's life, when a tumour at the back of his head developed into the shape of a pie, inching its way towards his face. His parents were too heartbroken to stand the sight; relatives were too terrified to go near him.

Huan was not a fraid. 'I remember how he looked when he was healthy. I know how soothing it was to have some one next to me when I felt helpless.'

She held his hands till his last breath. 'I don't want to die' was the only thing he said for days. He said it so many times that she still heard it months afterwards, haunted by the dimmed hope in his eyes, as he shrank day by day, beyond the reach of love and medicine.

• • •

'Do you remember Jiangyan? The quiet tall girl who was so harmless?' Huan said as she sat down one Saturday evening in 2001. We had skipped some Saturday evenings. Our lives had unfolded in such ways that interruption was inevitable.

'Can you believe she was a branch leader of Falun Gong? She refused to give up the practice, and lost her job as a result. Her husband suggested a fake divorce for the good of their daughter, only to tell her that it was for real after they went through the papers. He took all their money and the apartment. When she was taken to jail, she was actually pleased to have a roof over her.'

She had just come back from Jiangyan's home. 'The eight-year-old kept asking when mum would come back. I asked the ex-husband why he couldn't wait till she went out of prison even if he really wanted the divorce. He wouldn't look me in the eye.'

A shadow swept across her face. 'He reminded me of Purple Sweet Potato!' Huan's face turned pale. 'I'd still have a family if not for her.'

She paused for a while. 'In fact, I've been thinking of moving out. We just had another fight. Can you believe she read another letter from Old Fu?'

Purple Sweet Potato loved reading. She read everything, including every single letter sent to Huan, and she always gave her opinions.

She pronounced Dead Clam a boring writer. 'Nothing literary or romantic or ambitious,' she concluded after five letters. 'Trust me, you two won't get anywhere.'

Purple Sweet Potato read them, sometimes before Huan if she saw them first, in spite of Huan's repeated protests.

'You're my daughter. You don't have any secrets from me!'

Huan told her it was not a matter of secrecy but privacy.

'This house doesn't believe in privacy. Privacy is Western shit. Period.' Huan did her best to put up with Purple Sweet Potato until she interfered with Huan's response to Old Fu, who migrated to the US in the early 1990s. Purple Sweet Potato was furious about his plan for Huan to join him.

'Tell him to stop fathering you. You're an adult.'

'He's only making a suggestion. Why does it bother you?'

'Me? Bothered? No way! I just want the best for you.'

'How can you be sure your way is the best?'

'Because I'm your mother!'

'That doesn't make you right!'

Purple Sweet Potato turned purple with rage. The argument went on until Huan threatened to move out and Purple Sweet Potato said that it would suit her just as well. But both softened at the prospect, not ready to let go of each other.

After that, they were careful not to start a fight. Things went well until Purple Sweet Potato interfered with the reply letter to Old Fu about accommodation arrangements for Huan's visit to LA in three months' time.

Get that chick out of the house before I arrive was the response she wanted Huan to give about Old Fu's girlfriend.

'What's with her? Old Fu is becoming an old man! Why can't he have someone before he's too old?'

I didn't want to think ill of Purple Sweet Potato. Life hadn't been easy for her. Huan was all she had. But she couldn't stop her from joining Old Fu. It would be like losing her daughter to him and to a foreign country.

I sympathised with Huan too. She was trapped between her parents' love. The three had not been much of a family but nonetheless remained a family.

• • •

284 | Westerly 62.2 **285** | Fan Dai

Huan moved out of Purple Sweet Potato's apartment at long last, to live with her aunt and her cousin, her uncle having left after the divorce. She was learning English, waiting to immigrate to the US, a prospect she was never enthusiastic about yet curious enough not to abandon.

She was forty-two years old.

'Can you believe what I'm doing?' Huan said on one Saturday evening. She now had to take a forty-five minute ride to visit me. Our Saturday evening meetings had become even less regular.

'I just heard that Dongming has cancer. No, I never told you about him. He and I were not the best of friends at the vocational school. He'd made quite a bit of money. Now his wife has taken control of the money and filed for divorce. He's become so depressed and so poor that he's given up treatment.'

'So you offered to lend him money and...'

'You're my Da Ge after all,' Huan's hand pressed mine harder appreciatively. 'If he owes me a lot of money, he'll develop a strong will to live to pay me back.'

'Good logic!'

'Hahahahaha...'

Dongming was in remission for about three months, then he fainted one morning.

Huan felt obliged to help when Dongming asked whether she could do a couple of night shifts in the hospital. She ended up doing all the night shifts because everybody in the family said they needed a good night's rest for their jobs. She picked up the medical bills when the family said they did not have the money.

It was then she learned that Pig Leg had sold their two apartments behind her back.

'That's not possible! He can't do that without your ID and consent!'

'But he has my ID.'

'How could he have your ID?!'

'There're things in our business that require both of our IDs. So I just let him keep mine to minimise complications.'

Pig Leg had been planning to retire. He was tempted by a profitable project which needed a jump-start with no advance payment. He took the risk in spite of Huan's reservation. Then he was told that there was no money for the project, while the suppliers and workers pressed for overdue payments. They threatened to kill him if there was further delay. The apartments were Pig Leg's last resort. But he could not bring himself to ask Huan about selling them.

Huan couldn't care less about the money but she was shaken by Pig Leg's betrayal.

'I don't know who else I can trust except you!' she cried. She had stopped working and lived on her share of the rent from the office and the apartments. Now she had less to depend on.

Her phone rang. Dongming had just passed away.

Huan bit her lips, her eyebrows coming close to each other in a deep frown.

Pig Leg kept calling in the next few weeks to say that he was sorry, that Huan could have all the rent from the office, that he would compensate her if he could find another project.

A few months later, Huan's immigration application came through. She was off to the States before she had a chance to say goodbye.

She came back two months later. Old Fu's girlfriend had made her feel unwelcome: Huan hated to wait for her intentional late pick-ups, the fact that she made Old Fu ask for her share of rent and living expenses that Old Fu would later apologise for...

Huan would call me every two or three weeks now. She did not give me her number. Her aunt had all these rules about living in the apartment, such as no incoming calls and a 10pm curfew. Huan stayed online often, and had met a Singaporean man in a chat-room.

'He wanted to see me, so I gave him your number.'

'Why my number?'

'Because I don't know whether I can trust him.'

But what makes it ok to let him have mine? Somehow I could not bring myself to say it. I wasn't used to arguing with anyone, let alone Huan.

The man never called. When Huan visited a month later, I was still upset and felt awkward. But she was too preoccupied by her worries to notice it.

She had just sent Purple Sweet Potato to a nursing home.

'She's losing balance and fell a few times. She talks about strange things and insists that I want to poison her. She tells everyone I kicked her out of the apartment. She says I'm going to die a virgin.'

'You know she doesn't mean any of those things. She's losing her mind.' 'But it hurts. To hear her trash me, to see her fading away, to lose the Purple Sweet Potato I knew.'

I looked at Huan. Her round face had become larger. Freckles and wrinkles had crept in. A few lines had formed around the corner of her eyes. Her skin had lost its lustre. I had not taken a good look at her for a

long time. I had gotten so used to her helping everyone, and to ignoring her misery.

'At least she's still alive. She's over fourteen years luckier than my parents.'

'But yours knew you had a family. Purple Sweet Potato worried about me, but she never talked about it.'

'Perhaps you should look for someone more seriously.'

She and a man had been writing to each other. He was doing research in Europe.

'Are you talking about meeting each other soon?'

'Not really.'

She was forty-three years old.

Somehow, I felt responsible. I needed her to be happy, to have a family of her own.

In the meantime, I was busy with bringing up Dai, with my PhD studies, which I completed in 2004, and with mounting work. Huan visited less and less. She would call every few months. I asked her about the friend in Europe. He wanted to come and see her but one thing or another stopped him. She asked when I would be less busy. I said I seemed to get busier all the time...

Another half year went by. Huan came one Saturday evening.

Purple Sweet Potato died two weeks earlier.

Her hand felt cold.

'I was ten minutes too late for her last moment.'

'She wasn't living a quality life. She must be carefree and happy now.' I could not find anything better to say.

'Yes. But I took her for granted. I thought she'd be around forever. *Da Ge*,' Huan said in a little girl's voice, laying her head on my shoulder. 'I'm so afraid of life without Purple Sweet Potato.'

My heart quivered. I patted her on the shoulder. 'I'm still here. You can always count on me.'

• • •

Life went on for some time before I realised I had not heard from Huan for longer than usual. I became anxious. I regretted not having asked for her number. The only way to reach her was through an email account that I hadn't checked for a long while. It was created only for us. In the beginning, she had written long and endearing messages in Chinese; I almost always replied in short ones in English, and she said she could

practise her English that way. She stopped writing after she went to the States, when everything became complicated with Old Fu's girlfriend. I had gotten used to the quiet and desolate inbox and then stopped checking it altogether.

There were five messages from her. In every message, she told me how much she missed her *Da Ge* and asked her to write back. In her last message, she said that she wanted to leave some of Purple Sweet Potato's ashes on the Sun Yat-sen campus, so that she could feel her whenever she went back. She had asked where she could spread the ashes but was told she could not.

'How can they say *no* to that? She worked there all her life! She won't be in anyone's way! So I did it anyway. I dug a small hole on the Western Playground and buried some ashes there. I felt relieved. I know she'd like me to do that.'

Huan stopped writing because I failed her. I failed my *Xiao Di* badly. She gave up because I had given her up.

I felt guilty. Immensely guilty. What kind of *Da Ge* had I been? Yes, I'd been upset about her giving my number to the Singaporean, but I could have found a way to talk about it with her. I should have realised that she would need me in her mourning days...

But I took her for granted. For too long.

I must respond to her long-neglected messages.

But I felt too ashamed to do that.

289 | Fan Dai

I miss Huan, the Huan of different times. Her two bouncing pigtails at twelve. The glasses of round and light-orange rims she wore at high school. The hair cut short like Purple Sweet Potato's when she started working. The clearest image was her in a pink T-shirt matched by flowery shorts with green and yellow patterns that revealed her legs of uneven lengths, a dented mark on the left one after the accident. It made me think that she had forgotten to change before leaving home. She had become overweight. She never paid much attention to her appearance. She stood out all the more wearing a bag that read *Serve the People*, a quote from Chairman Mao that was widely seen in the 1960s and 70s. She had said that she hardly saw those bags around any more so she bought ten in one go.

How could I have lost my *Xiao Di* after all these years? How could I not notice Huan's absence on Saturday evenings for weeks and months?

I know I could find Huan if I try. Somehow I don't. I find myself missing her differently than before. I realise that we have drifted apart for one reason

or another. I have learned to take it as a natural course of life. But I dare say that I now appreciate her all the more.

I begin to wonder whether I was drawn to her because of her free spirit, or because of her compelling friendship. I have become a bit like Huan over the years, the Huan who did things as she saw fit, regardless of what others thought, the Huan who was compassionate towards fellow human beings, who was fun-loving and <code>hahahahaha</code> ed in spite of the fact that her life was far from perfect...

Thank you, Xiao Di.

Notes

- 1 To protect the privacy of the main character, 'Huan' is used instead of a real name.
- 2 Da Ge: older brother; Xiao Di: younger brother.
- 3 The name of the town has been modified.

A Life, Passing Elizabeth Tan

Elizabeth Tan is a Perth writer and a sessional academic at Curtin University. Her work has recently appeared in The Best Australian Stories 2016, Pencilled In, Tincture, Review of Australian Fiction, and Seizure. Her first novel, Rubik, was published by Brio in April 2017.

My father passes when I am twenty-eight. My father, a small papery man, the smell of tobacco deep in his skin, born in Singapore and buried in Midland, in a graveyard much like one he'd liked as a boy—stumbled upon when he rode the wrong bus—a peaceful place, he'd said, because all the headstones were the same, uniform heights and shapes.

I tell my sister that at least our dad had many adventures, and she says, 'I don't know if he saw it that way. He said to me, *I feel like I've been fighting all my life*.'

My father passes, and over the next month people come up to me and say that he sponsored this family or that family when they migrated to Australia, that he was the reason they migrated in the first place; they say he paved the way for Asian lawyers in Perth. People talk of my father before he was my father, before he was Charles the migrant—a dockyard worker in his teens, a scruffy long-haired rebel, a ringleader of sit-in protests, a cash-strapped hitchhiker peddling counterfeit watches and blood.

I am born in Perth a few weeks after my father's own father passes, well after my due date—my mother says it's as if I knew that things were already stressful, and I was waiting for a more convenient time to appear. I am christened Elizabeth Jia-Chi Tan but my father also calls me Penguin because of the waddling side-to-side way that I learn to walk. I am born soft around the edges, and seem to stay that way—a pliable, flightless sort of child, Charles's third, the baby.

My father passes, and, at a memorial service, his friend wonders why an anti-colonialist would name his daughters *Elizabeth* and *Victoria*; indeed, our father's decision to leave his beloved Singapore for Australia is a topic of bitter reflection in our childhood. He scrunches his face up at Western food; he never permits us to sleep over our friends' houses; when he discovers I have a white boyfriend, he asks my sister if she can

introduce me to any nice Chinese guys. He refuses to give his blessing to my sister and her white fiancé.

My father and mother never teach us Hokkien (let alone Mandarin); it is instead their preferred language for arguing with each other when their children are within earshot. Nevertheless, I come to understand two important expressions:

- 1. *ciak peng*: it's time to eat (literally, 'eat rice')
- 2. *ang mo*: white person (literally, 'red-haired')

But, with age, we start to understand our father's suspicion—or, perhaps, we always-already understood it, in encounters so mundane that they slip from memory: passed over as a teammate, a customer worth attending to, a friend.

In Year 3 my French teacher asks the class if our parents speak a language other than English at home—when I say Hokkien, she says, 'Do you mean Chinese?'

My father passes, and his casket is adorned with banksias.

My father passes, and, at the family barbeque after his funeral, my uncle rubs my shoulder and says, 'You'll always be his penguin.'

In primary school I am ashamed of my Chinese middle name—I lie and say it is Jennifer; after too many years of muddled pronunciations I have my middle name removed from my university records. My sister says that the 'Chi' is an anglicised approximation of the actual pronunciation—the *ch* sound is closer to *tz*. She tells me that the first character means a precious piece of jewellery; the second character means auspicious, lucky. I practise saying my name and I can never get it right. My own name cannot fit inside my mouth.

Every child of a migrant learns this without knowing how they learned it: you have to do more than pass. You will be an exemplar, whether you like it or not. So I strive, and excel, and my reputation not so much precedes me but is perhaps decided for me: my Year 1 teacher balls up my letter to Santa and hurls it across the room in front of the entire class because it isn't sophisticated enough. In high school I am unwittingly drawn into rivalries with smart boys who track my test scores like stock market speculators; I am nicknamed *Squid*.

My father passes, and we play hits from The Beatles at his funeral.

My father passes, and his friends in Singapore sing 'The House of the Rising Sun' in his memory.

The first time I don't pass is in Chinese school, worrisome hours on a Saturday afternoon, a test returned with a red 30%. My sister rises quickly to the advanced classes while I flounder alone in indecipherable

characters; my pencil strokes lean like poorly built houses on stilts, as if blown over by the broad Australian vowels my mouth cannot help but create.

English: the only way to prove myself. 'You speak very well,' says a customer at the cake store where I work in my early twenties. When I inform him that English is my only language he back-pedals, 'No, I mean, you speak very well, very clearly.' At university I sense that my classmates are quick to turn away from me when it is time to form groups for assignments—'Make sure you answer a question in the first class and speak loudly with your Australian accent,' my boyfriend at the time says, and though he jests I wonder if this is the strategy that I've already unconsciously adopted my whole life: speak up early, demonstrate Australianness quickly. Is it real or imagined, that softening in strangers, once I speak and they realise I am one of them?

My father passes, and my Mum says to my sister, 'I didn't get to tell him that all is forgiven.'

My father passes, and I have to wonder what my mother was like before she was my mother, before she was Cynthia the migrant, Cynthia the wife of Charles. I wonder what my mother is doing in alternative timelines—Cynthia the mathematician, Cynthia the cross-country runner, Cynthia the artist.

Cynthia the mother of Timothy, Vicky and Elizabeth is an ambiguous figure, a closed oyster, brittle syllables and silence. It is only with food that she can show love, thrusting boxes of chicken rice or sushi into our hands, piling the steamboat high, scraping the last of the stir-fry onto our plates because there's only a little bit left you might as well finish up.

How devastating, then, that in the last eight months of my father's life, he could not eat.

In our childhood, my mother, embarrassed by the Singaporean cadence of her voice, will make me or my sister order pizza on the phone.

My father passes—this is a common euphemism, 'to pass'. What I mean is: my father dies. For me to pass as an Australian, a little bit of my father has to die, and a little bit of my mother has to die, and a little bit of me has to die.

I am a euphemism, a stand-in for an unpleasant reality.

My father passes and, too late for him to see it, I have a piece of fiction published in *Best Australian Stories*. As I hold the golden volume I want to know what he might make of it, his daughter passing unquestioningly as *Australian*. At no other moment do I feel more keenly the sum of my parents' sacrifices.

My father passes, and language fails.

I am born shortly after my father's own father passes, at the convenient moment. I grow into a chimera, an omen of good fortune instead of disaster. In my dazed penguin walk I follow my sister and brother through the life our parents fought to give us; like my high school namesake I spread my many arms and leave my mark with ink. We are travelling towards a place that is peaceful but not immune to heartbreak; the soil is hard, the sun is hot, the vowels are wide. I sign my work with my first and last name, printed small and careful, following as much as possible a straight horizontal line—such hard-won letters, uniform heights and shapes.

${\bf Remembering\, Singapore}$

Rose van Son

Rose van Son loves language. Her work has been published in many journals; she has won several awards and was a Perth Poetry Festival Poet, 2015.

she says it reminds her—dishes so deep, sweet rigatoni red

I can see them now she indicates her hands

stretch wide her arms... & I wonder why

her voice disappears down the phone line, tuned from high

—a note on a keyboard hanging...

surprised how it moves me this imaginary note

how it echoes her voice far away

294 | Westerly 62.2 295 | Rose van Son

Insha'Allah Rachel Watts

Rachel Watts is a Perth writer of fiction, essays and book reviews. She has had work published in Island, Kill Your Darlings, The Big Issue and Tincture Journal.
She has a Master's Degree in creative writing. She is currently writing a novel.

Never say of anything: 'I will do this tomorrow,' without adding: 'If God wills'.

The Koran, 18:23-24

If Dad suffered anxiety about moving his wife and three daughters to a Muslim country, he didn't let on. In many ways, my parents shared my ten-year-old naivety. On our first weekend in Karachi we ventured to an open-air market to buy things for the new house. We had a guide but he didn't let on that we were spoken of so aggressively by onlookers until afterwards. A man spat on me, his saliva lingered in my hair at the back, viscous under my exploratory fingers. We soon left.

Our introduction to this world was shaped by violence. Before we could begin our new life in Karachi, the Gulf War prompted Dad's company to evacuate women and children from the city. Stay in Perth, we were told. In hindsight, they were over-cautious. But in 1991, that edict affected us nevertheless. We were only in Perth for a holiday but found ourselves needing long-term accommodation and hasty school enrolment. I wrote a letter to Saddam Hussein, explaining the inconvenience of his Middle Eastern aspirations to our family. I received no response.

Of course, it all came down to oil.

My dad was a geologist. His work in oil exploration brought us to Karachi, but I don't know that oil was his passion. Mum says that he only took geology at uni because he'd heard it was easy. But there's more to it than that. I remember him when I think of the drift of the continents, the inexplicable vastness of geological time. We still have a bag of his fossils somewhere, scattered leaf impressions that will outlive us all. Maybe for Dad geology was a place where the earth held the secrets of millennia, wearing tales of old violence and bearing the fruits of new life. When my parents separated and Mum moved to Perth, Dad stayed on the subcontinent.

He converted to Islam before marrying my stepmum. He and Suharsi met in Jakarta, another overseas posting Dad took for work. Unlike Karachi, Jakarta is a city as modern as any other. We didn't attend the wedding, my sisters and I, so his steps into this new culture, this new world, are closely linked in my mind to yet more steps away from us. The photographs show him dressed in bright Indonesian fabrics embroidered in gold, with kohl lining his eyes. Part of me wonders if the whole thing was a joke on his part. But the look on his face says he took it very seriously.

The world is green and beautiful and God has appointed you his trustee over it.

(Mohammad, via Davies, 2007)

In discussing this piece in a workshop, I am told that Dad reads like an abstract concept. 'Where's his voice?' a colleague says.

I've spent twenty-five years wondering the same thing.

Dad stopped being a full-time parent to me when I was eleven. He was away for so long, then he died, as if to spite us. At the time, I raged. And now, sixteen years have passed since his death and I'll never know more about him. If we can't speak ill of the dead, perhaps when we speak of them we can give them a life we want them to have. Give them faith. Give them the courage to do better. Can I, honestly, write my dad, a geologist, Australian, and Muslim as a good father? I desperately want to give him that.

It's the late 1990s and we're on a holiday in Bali. We have driven to the top of a volcano for a day trip. It's the kind of day trip a geologist would take his daughters on. There aren't any restaurants we're willing to brave for lunch. We walk around the eroded volcano rim, Dad points out old lava flows, and then we pile back into the car to drive back down the mountain.

'Hey, I've not put the car into gear yet,' Dad says five minutes into our descent. This is the kind of thing he does. Like the way he marvels at cruise control, lifting his feet, 'I'm not doing anything, look!' He has a great sense of fun.

'What do you mean?'

'The car's on but the engine's not engaged, we're just rolling.'

'How far can we get just rolling?'

'Let's find out.'

Kilometres, as it turns out. The earth descends, we gather speed. The earth flattens out, we slow down, willing the car to carry its momentum through traffic, through villages. Slow vehicles get in our way, threaten our gravity-assisted descent.

'Beep beep, we're rolling,' Dad says. Every other motorist and pedestrian becomes an unwitting part of our game.

There's a donkey in the road. Only in Indonesia.

'Beep beep, we're rolling,' Dad says, swerving around it without touching the brake. The car crawls.

Eventually we enter a built-up area. The game is coming to an end. But it is a funeral procession that stops us. We give way out of respect. It's over.

He may have worked for the oil industry, but he was a bit of a mystic, my dad. I still harbour a love for crystals, for solidity of stones, a yearning for the earth, that I attribute to him. For me that is enough religion, a desire, clear as cool water, to find health and safety in the bones of the planet. There's solace in that, and hope. And towards the end of his life, as he enthused about home-grown, organic vegetables he never had the space or time to plant, I want to believe Dad felt that too.

The word Islam comes from the Arabic root word meaning peace, purity, submission and obedience (Davies). As a faith, Islam means submission to the will of God (Davies). The word submission carries with it negative connotations in our Western mindset. But when I consider it alongside the heat and pressure under the earth's crust, it feels like a relief. To submit is to acknowledge that you are so small. That you do not have the answers. To submit is to relax. To find peace.

In the Islamic faith you do not 'convert' strictly speaking (Davies). All people are born of the one God. When you become a Muslim you just acknowledge this and submit your will to him and his laws. You speak the words, faithfully, and they become true. Your submission recreates your identity in the world.

It was Mum who took us to church, to Sunday school. Dad was a passive observer in these things. I don't think of him as a religious man. Perhaps there was no deep epiphany for Dad, it was just part of marrying Suharsi, so it never occurred to him to mention he was now part of the Islamic faith. In a way, he had already been part of the Islamic community for many years by virtue of his relationship and his living in that world.

When we lived in Karachi we often heard people say 'Insha'Allah', or 'God willing'. It's a reminder to not assume what the future will hold. That every coming moment is a gift from the Almighty. I shouldn't have assumed there'd be time to know my father better. I regret now, not asking him what this religion meant to him, what he felt about the word 'submission'. And in some ways these lingering questions are representative of the dialogue between the West and the Muslim world. So many things remain unanswered, purely because neither party realises they need to be said. Or because we're scared to ask.

Had I known, I might have asked him what it meant to him that he would be buried in a Muslim cemetery. His body turned to the side, to face Mecca, as though in sleep.

God is gentle and loves gentleness in all things.
(Mohammad, via Davies, 2007)

Size and significance are distorted in a child's mind. The culture and religion we stepped into in 1991 was not a big thing to me. The muezzin, or call to prayer recited five times a day, sounded above the blocky houses, regular as breathing. Soothing, safe. In times gone by the muezzin would be sung by a blind man, to prevent fear of him looking into neighbouring yards (Davies). Karachi was a city out of time and that's where children live, outside of events. I'd love to go back there. But I suspect the place I'm thinking of never existed.

The world my dad lived in doesn't exist anymore either. He died before the iPhone was born. He never heard of Facebook, or of Beyoncé. He never lived in a world in which terrorists fly planes into skyscrapers. My youngest sister has never lived in a world in which they haven't. This is the way the generations drift apart, like continents, slowly losing shared meaning.

In Karachi our house had an iron gate that could close off the bedrooms in case of home invasion. There were guards that sat in the driveway and scared away intruders. But security was only a passing concern to my child eyes; the guards spent more time playing cards or watching a tiny TV by the kitchen door.

'Dad?' I'm ten years old and we're getting ready for school. Dad's walking down the wide marble hall to the front door. We have a cleaner but the hallways always smell like lingering dust. It's in the air, in the DNA of the city.

'Some days when you go to work, do you ever feel nervous and not know why?'

'Yes.'

Even at the time his response surprised me. It didn't sound like a platitude to satisfy a child. I wish I could go back to that moment and probe him for more. Was he talking about a specific day? Was he just trying to shut me up? Or was he, like me, suffering a nebulous anxiety, in that brief moment before stepping out the door and entering the world.

If Dad were alive now, marrying, converting to Islam, choosing to submit, would he be placed on a security watchlist? Would he be denied his Australian nationality? The violence in Syria, the sectarian aggression

within Islam, seem frightening but indistinct to me. They rage confused, like my parents' arguments overheard from the next room.

To God belongs the East and the West. Whichever way you turn there is the Face of God.

The Koran, 2:115

When we travelled with Dad, airline passengers weren't expected to take their shoes off at security. But in Karachi security meant something different. Our Walkmans were opened by airport staff and the AA batteries confiscated. There were no metal detectors. As girls we were ushered into a quiet curtained cubicle and given a pat-down by hijab-wearing women. I remember those women fondly for reasons I can't explain, even to myself. Both acts enraged Dad on occasion. I recall him flinging batteries away in anger, refusing to close the curtain that protected our sacred pat-down from his male gaze. I see in those acts a sense of ownership. But also something cultural. Something Western. Something white.

There's a resistance in the expat community. As white girls in Karachi, we were visibly 'other', singled out for attention which was neither positive nor negative. We were openly stared at. This is how some women must feel in Australia now, the gaze that passes over their 'foreign' attire, expressing neither friendship nor a willingness to understand. Held at bay, mistrusted, othered.

Apparently, the more devout a Muslim Australian is, the more they see Islam as consistent with Australian social norms (Dunn). The Muslim world extends from Morocco to Indonesia, from Kazakhstan in Central Asia through to Africa. It is vast, diverse and steeped in tradition. According to the wonderfully titled *No-Nonsense Guide to Islam*, tradition is the soil from which the tree of Islam takes its nourishment to grow and flower (Davies). Tradition is the soil. What of the Muslim who spends his career looking at places under the soil, who has no family or cultural tradition upon which to base his faith?

If I could go back and talk to Dad about it, I would ask him about the way people identifiable as Muslims are targeted by airport security today. How people with Arabic-sounding names go under Westernised monikers to get work. I would ask him how he feels about that, a man who is a Muslim, who would never be stopped at the border. Who raged at confiscated batteries but would never be suspected of a terrorist act. Could he share the experience of the faith while carrying that privilege? Was he just an expatriate living in Islam?

As you are, so you will have rulers over you.

(Mohammad, via Davies, 2007)

It occurs to me belatedly that Dad did raise religion with me at one point. This was before he met Suharsi. He was married to Barbara, a British woman. Dad's company had shut down its Karachi office and he was transferred to London for a year or so before moving to Jakarta. We were in McDonald's down the street from his new home in Bethnal Green, in London's Inner East. Bethnal Green didn't look like anything out of *EastEnders*. As a matter of fact, when we were there in the mid-1990s Bethnal Green was starting to look a bit like Karachi. By 2011 the area was 45 per cent Muslim, 18 per cent Christian (Office for National Statistics).

Across the road from Dad's terrace house there was a tube station in which a couple of hundred people were trampled to death in a panic during the Blitz. At the bridge at the end of his street they used to hold public hangings. I looked up and saw ghost corpses hanging against a grey sky, decades gone. Every country has its own history of violence. It is in the earth.

Dad was drunk. We were eating burgers on a Friday night and he leaned over the plastic table and asked me if I believed in God. My sisters were outraged at such a question.

'Well, you see,' Dad said. 'You come to a certain age when you wonder about the big things, like where your next dress is coming from.'

I still don't know what he was trying to say. Perhaps he was giving voice to a resentment of the financial burden we represented. But I think he was sizing me up as a proto-adult. Perhaps he wanted to see some spirituality from me, faith in something other than Michael Jackson's *Dangerous*. We might have been sitting at the same table but we were not in the same place, the meeting of minds happens infinitesimally slowly, in geological time. I wouldn't be able to ask him about his wedding photos, about his funeral, still in his future, around a table in McDonald's. Perhaps he didn't mean anything at all. But words carry weight.

It was during the same visit, perhaps even the same evening, that I lay in bed and overheard him downstairs tell Barbara that I would never be a journalist.

'She'll be an agony aunt,' he said. 'She's only interested in little things.' He was wrong, I spent ten years as a journalist. But he was also right, I worked in community news, and reported suburban minutiae. Little things add up to big things. The world is formed with layers of sediment, each contributing its minute substance to the whole. I suppose my dad taught me that.

Believers, those who follow the Jewish Faith, Christians and Sabaeans—whoever believes in God and does what is right—shall be rewarded by their Lord; they have nothing to fear or regret.

The Koran, 2:62

If I could choose one word to describe writing memoir it would, in fact, be 'agony'. So perhaps Dad's words were prophetic. And it is in the religion of the Prophets that I find the unity of faith. The god of the Muslims is the same god of the Jews and the Christians. We all know this but still I am surprised to see it written in the Koran. Our daily experience, the tribes we want to separate humanity into, make the practice of religion so distinct, so separate. The tone of the Koran is equal parts familiar, from childhood Bible readings in cool Catholic churches, and scarily foreign, from a land where donkeys bray in the night and places have unpronounceable names.

I take a break from this agony of putting words from my past on the page, the torture of realising I didn't know my Dad that well, not at all, and I go to the supermarket. I pay a machine with a touch screen, using a credit card with a contactless chip and think that it's another thing Dad never saw. I have this thought often. On my way home, I walk past a man wearing a long kameez and expensive-looking thongs, talking on an iPhone on the footpath. He is speaking in Urdu.

This confusion of languages, of identities, is where I am at home. I suppose my dad taught me that too.

Thus God restores the dead to life and shows you His signs, that you may grow in understanding.

The Koran, 2:72

I wasn't aware Dad had become a Muslim until he died. One night we went to bed with a father and in the morning we woke up without one. Mum had the awful job of telling her three daughters that their dad had died of a heart attack in the emergency room of a Jakarta hospital.

It is Muslim tradition, born of public health practicality, no doubt, to bury the deceased as quickly as possible. The community granted an exception for us, allowing us to get on a flight to Jakarta. I had twisted my ankle the weekend before in an ill-advised sprint while wearing high heels. My memory of the journey is of limping, as quickly as possible, to reach connecting flights booked too close for comfort in our haste.

The notorious Jakarta traffic stopped for the hearse. I remember wanting to get out of the car and express my fondest gratitude to every driver who gave way to us. Some of them might even have been rolling. To this day I give way to hearses. Big things are made up of little things.

We didn't realise we were taking his body to a Muslim cemetery. Looking back, we probably should have. Suharsi didn't attend as she was pregnant, and it was prohibited. Traditionally, women wouldn't be permitted at the gravesite at all, though the rules can be bent. We stood by an open grave as an imam said words in a language we couldn't understand. And just as we expected Dad to be left to his eternity, his coffin was opened. Men reached in and adjusted his body, turned it to the side, and replaced it in the box. Someone hissed an explanation—Muslims are buried on their right side, facing Mecca. A note my sister had placed inside fell out and lay forgotten on the soil, was rescued by a stranger, and tossed into the open grave. All eyes followed it into the cool cavity. Eventually Dad was lowered, delivered into the earth. Delivered home.

As Dad was laid to rest, a goat walked up to a wreath of flowers by the grave and cheerfully started to eat it. Only in Indonesia. For some reason, I felt that Dad would like that. And it seemed appropriate to smile.

Works Cited

Amer, Khawaja. Population explosion: Put an embargo on industrialisation in Karachi. 6 October 2013. http://tribune.com.pk/story/614409/ population-explosion-put-an-embargo-on-industrialisation-in-karachi/>. Davies, Ziauddin Sardar, and Merryl Wyn. The No Nonsense Guide to Islam. Oxford: New Internationalist Publications, 2007.

Dunn, Kevin, Rosalie Atie, Virginia Mapedzahama, Mehmet Ozalp, Adem F. Aydogan.

The Resilience and Ordinariness of Australian Muslims: Attitudes and experiences of Muslims Report. Sydney: University of Western Sydney, 2015.

Office for National Statistics. 'Area Bethnal Green: South, Religion'. 2011. Neighbourhood Statistics. http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.

Modernism En Route
Robin Hyde's Sino-Australasian
Writings
Yingjie M. Cheng

Yingjie M. Cheng is a PhD candidate at the University of New South Wales. Her research focuses on 20th-century Australian and New Zealand women writers and their engagements in literary modernism.

Robin Hyde (Iris Guiver Wilkinson, 1906–1939), celebrated as a major New Zealand poet, novelist, and journalist, wrote at a time when New Zealand provincialism started to give way to nationalism. Although she looked into questions of culture and identity high on cultural nationalists' agenda (Hessell 118), Hyde neither ended up engaging in the diehard nationalism of other New Zealand writers nor remained discouraged by 'a masculine tradition' at work behind the nationalist literary culture of the 1930s and 1940s1. Instead, a modernist creative sensibility runs throughout her novels, journalism, and poetry written in the 1930s. Comparable to Katherine Mansfield in composing modernist psychological fiction, Hyde wrote from the 'inner centre' of the human mind and was succeeded only by Janet Frame (Jones 168). With the help of her modernist style, Hyde also managed to better negotiate literary topics such as place and identity. Unfastening the fixity of both, Hyde's writings outrival the 'constrained, more confined' (Williams 5) cultural nationalism. Few in the cultural nationalist period realised that a fresh modernist approach was developed in the 1930s, but it is exactly these modernist creative ideas that continued to prosper even after the decay of the nationalist fervour (Caffin 387). Robin Hyde's Sino-Australasian writings, in particular, bridge the interstice between cultural nationalism and the then budding neo-romanticism in New Zealand literature, and 'promise' a cultural and literary identity transnational in scope.

Advocating internationalism on her part (Murray 30), Robin Hyde literally carried out a life 'on the road'. Born in South Africa, she came with her English-Australian parents to Wellington about a year after her birth. Shifting among different posts in journalism, she spent most of her early life travelling in New Zealand. By the time she embarked for London at the age of thirty-two, Hyde had also crossed twice to neighbouring Australia. Semi-autographically recorded in *The Godwits Fly* (1938),

Hyde's two trans-Tasman sojourns seem to have helped invigorate her modernist perception of place and identity. For her later trip to London, she followed a circuitous Sino-Australasian route, which she recorded in her writings and which gave further shape to her modernism. A hybrid national and cultural identity facilitated by this prolonged transnational trip is soon reflected in Hyde's travel book *Dragon Rampant* (1939) and the posthumous *Houses by the Sea* (1952) as well as some of her later poems². In some of the texts discussed here, Hyde's focus on the female experience (the female body in particular) fosters a similar sense of fluidity and remains emblematic of female literary modernism at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Labelled as a 'camouflaged autobiographical' novel (Towel 19), The Godwits Fly fictionalises Hyde's own life from childhood to early womanhood. With its effaced narrative voice, The Godwits Fly can be categorised as modernist psychological fiction comparable to that written by Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf. Hyde shifts the point of view among different characters (Jones 167) and weaves a 'complex subjectivity' (Murray 187) in the novel. In the meantime, through a fragmentary and mosaic representation of the travelling space and therefore a modernist delineation of the Australian farm and city, The Godwits Fly explores the trans-Tasman interspace and transcends national boundaries.

In the chapter titled 'Follow the Boomerang', Augusta Hannay (the mother), after a fight with her husband, returns to the childhood home—a family farm in Melbourne—with her three young children. In immediate contrast with their penurious New Zealand life, the Australian farm seems heavenly: 'The fruit was so cheap, barrows and stalls of piled-up, luscious colours, raw orange, slashing purple and gold'; 'Rock melons were piled up outside, streaky, stripey piles'; and, there is 'a red-painted machine, turning a handle. Thin streams spouted from its sides, one milk, one cream. This was rather magnificent; in Wellington they never had cream except on Christmas Day and birthday' (*The Godwits Fly* 55–57). Material prosperity, nevertheless, fails to picture Australia as a tangible entity. Instead, the plethora of food remains out of line with the desolate landscape.

Countries on the map are misleading. True, Australia was coloured plain red, like New Zealand, but it was so large, and the names of such odd products, pearl-shell, molasses, trepang, were printed in little letters round its coast, that somehow you would have expected it to jump out at you like

a Jack-in-the-box, saying, 'Here I am, I'm Australia.' Instead, it was plain, indifferent and lonely, with a few startled night-birds flying out of its armpits, and the high gig-wheels turning in deep ruts. (55)

Contrary to the Australia outlined on the map, the real land is hard to delineate. The 'indifferent and lonely' country features separateness and irregularity. With a formidable landmass and a variety of living forms, 'Australia kept coming clear in bits and pieces, seemingly unrelated to any whole' (56). The disconnectedness between localised and definable Melbourne farm life and the vast Australian space—between a cartographic finitude and an unknowable reality—unfolds the strangeness of the place. On their way from Wellington to Melbourne, 'Tasmania drips with tiny waterfalls, like fringes of glass beads. *Then it has vanished, and one-of-the-uncles is finding seats on the train*' (55, emphasis mine). From the Tasman Sea, through Tasmania, and to a Melbourne train, Eliza's contact with the trans-Tasman interspace and with Australia turns out to be disrupted. Everything remains in motion and emerges in an unidentifiable form. A fixed sense of place vanishes.

In the novel, more than a decade later, Eliza embarks on her second trans-Tasman trip. This time, pregnant yet unmarried, Eliza goes alone to Sydney to deliver her baby. Here, Hyde writes through the pregnant female body to break open the fixity of place and identity. At first, Sydney is an intimidating place. To Eliza, 'crossing a Sydney street was an orgy of cowardice; exhaustion, when you reached the safety of the far side' (194). Quickly admitting, though, that 'I wouldn't feel like this if I weren't ill,' Eliza soon replaces her feelings of strangeness with a moony, dream-like impression of the city.

It is light very early in the Sydney mornings, not with a clear, sharp burst of light but with a humid grey veil. At noon the torpor is intolerable. The moist colours of the fruit reach their peak of incandescent brightness; then they bloat, like dead things, and commence to rot. (197)

Veiled in dim morning light and sunk in an air of lethargy, the city of Sydney verges on being a transitional zone. Streets run along 'from nowhere to nowhere', 'like those sentences in conversation that you never remember' (197). Purposeless roads and houses—unfamiliar and monotonous—obscure boundaries between reality and imagination and deprive the Australian city of its distinctiveness. The enigmatic city relieves Eliza's unease about her circumstance. Looking now at the

impending child-birth, Eliza thinks of it only as 'one of the inevitable, irritating punctuations which break the long sentence of life' (197). Relying upon a mosaic delineation of the city to release the confined corporeal female body, Hyde presents in a modernist gesture 'what it was like to be' a woman rather than 'what had happened' to a woman. She 'rewrites' the story of her (protagonist's) life 'from the inside out' and presents a type of 'modernist excursion' similarly made by early twentieth-century female writers such as Virginia Woolf, Jean Rhys, and H. D. (Kelley 25). Looking for the 'smell of the (New Zealand) gorse', Eliza comes out at last on a sea place, 'cliffs cracking immense over the pearl and ebony fans of the waves, which spread and dissolved far below' (*The Godwits Fly* 201). At the fringe of (un)familiarity and with now an unfettered female body, the fixity of place (the New Zealand locality) again 'dissolves'.

By virtue of modernist representations of Australia through Eliza's two trans-Tasman trips, Hyde cultivates a fluid national identity in the novel. Eliza's mother Augusta regards Australia as an eclectic space that replaces her 'beloved, unattainable England' (25). Going back to Australia is for Augusta going back to 'old times', like 'biting into the warm cheek of' (55) an Australian pear. To Eliza, however, Australia is a place of uncertainty as well as possibility, where the New Zealand locality is tested and transformed. Back to New Zealand from Sydney, Eliza soon becomes 'no more of me you knew' (208). The central metaphor of the novel is that New Zealanders who remain in their country are like incomplete godwits. The death of Eliza's platonic lover Timothy in London and her own deferral of a trip to the north indicate nevertheless that there are probably 'no complete (northbound) godwits'. It is rather the trans-Tasman interspace that transforms a fixed 'New Zealandness'. As Allen Curnow writes,

If New Zealand's littleness cramped that 'elasticity of pride', there was always the capacious term 'Australasia'. Little as it means on either side of the Tasman Sea today, it meant a great deal to the New Zealand poet or journalist of the nineteenth or early twentieth century. (27)

In *The Godwits Fly*, Robin Hyde highlights an Australasian proximity. Extending her creative horizon not so far away, yet distant enough, Hyde contemplates the nationalists' concern about place and identity in a modernist manner.

In January 1938, Robin Hyde left Auckland for London on her planned Trans-Siberian route (Auckland, Sydney, Hong Kong, Kobe, Vladivostok, Moscow, Warsaw, Berlin, London). After crossing the Tasman Sea and

boarding a vessel of the Australian-Oriental Line in Sydney, Hyde changed her mind and decided to explore by herself war-ridden China. Arriving at Hong Kong, she then travelled north by sea to a chain of Japaneseoccupied Chinese cities. Back to Hong Kong almost half a year later, Hyde boarded a freighter to Singapore, and there she finally went on her planned trip to London. Hyde started writing Dragon Rampant (originally titled Accepting Summer) in October 1938 and finished around Christmas that same year. Although *Dragon Rampant* maps a trajectory of Hyde's route taken in China, the narrative in the book 'refused to place us (the readers) in the privileged position of armchair omniscience' (Hardy, in Dragon Rampant xvii). Those hazy geographical details shrouded the real situation. Jane Stafford notes that *Dragon Rampant* deploys 'the literary devices of modernism, using instability, decentring, shifting discourse, and a fractured view of the world' (191). Formal experimentations aside, Dragon Rampant's modernist creative discourse resides equally in its mosaic and symbiotic delineations of China and New Zealand, in which reality and memory intermingle and the transnational distance is re-negotiated. At several places within the book, Hyde's focus on the female body again enhances her modernist perception of the world around her, as 'outward journeys into foreign spaces are complemented by inward exploration' in the works of modernist women writers (Kelley 3).

During her train trip from Canton to Wuchang, Hyde caught sight of the Chinese land from the carriage window. The Chinese land seems full of life through Hyde's detailed account of its colour mix, and it evokes memories and emotions.

Never was a land so be-sunned. Yellow is taken up, deepened and shaded in the outcrops of millions of wild azaleas, which streak hills and valleys. Colours apparently keep their tribes, for after the yellow come long strands of salmon pink, after there an apricot colour, and, at last, turning the green hills into wine-sopped napkins, the wild red azaleas. It is a colour like blood from a wound, yet it strikes back. Memory, thought, and enchantment are pierced, and flow out to meet it, and what can bring them back from the Chinese soil again? (*Dragon Rampant* 152)

The land embodies a shared memory of anyone who beholds it. In the manner of a permanent fusion, blood pierced from a wound taints the bloodless earth and can never be re-extracted. 'Memory, thought, and enchantment' remain parts of the identity of an onlooker, who, by sharing

them with the land, manages to identify with the unfamiliar space. To Hyde, land not only connects with the human body, but is integrated specifically with the female body. In the first part of the chapter titled 'Harvest Bird', a dialogue goes on between a pregnant woman and a wheat field. The woman and the field (land) in the dialogue are curiously interpreted as sharing a 'common fate as feeders and breeders of men' (Hardy, in *Dragon Rampant* xviii) or being intermingled with each other (Clayton 54). Metaphorical and transcendental comparisons between childbirth and wheat-harvest are ways of suggesting that Hyde is using the female body as a reference point for her modernist 'excursions' (Kelley 25). In contrast to earlier criticism, in which Hyde's writings are debased as showing an obsession with 'writing the female body', and which groups her into 'the Menstrual School' (of poetry)³, Hyde's reference to the female body (child-birth in particular) in *Dragon Rampant* helps to attach the unfamiliar Chinese land to elements of familiarity.

On one side a character says 'Ground,' and on the other, another character says 'Sky.' That is what we do not know, but there is some meaning in it, ground and sky. It's what we are all made of, men and wheat. (*Dragon Rampant* 268)

The ground and the sky, analogised to molecular forms of life, share the same reproductive power with the female body. To whom the ground and the sky belong does not matter any longer. The unfamiliar is rendered familiar as Hyde uses the procreative female body to bridge gaps of cultural dislocation. Attending a performance in Shanghai, Hyde familiarises the strange space again with quick reference to the distinctive female experience.

I closed my eyelids: yes, that could overcome the strangeness, and press down for ever into the brain. I didn't understand 'The Rain Prayer', but it understood me. To be possessed of things is more sacred than to possess them [...] Chinese and foreign people side by side in darkness, the unborn safe again, blind, only dimly sentient, in their earth. (74, emphasis mine)

The safety of 'the unborn', a maternal concern universally shared and magnified in the turbulence of war, is here guaranteed by a regained sense of place. Afflicted with the condition of war, Hyde feels nevertheless peaceful and secure in the war-ridden city. 'Rain', 'earth', and 'land' are eradicated of any regional colour, mobilised so as to include common emotions and collective memories. Even if the Chinese song evades her, Hyde has the feeling that 'it understood me'.

China also serves as a transitional and transcendental zone to Hyde because it stands for an all-inclusive third space. A world globe in Hankow Park surprises Hyde by showing New Zealand on the plate. The international façade of the Chinese park disproportionately yet intriguingly miniaturises the world—'the big stone models of the Arc de Triomphe, the Houses of Parliament, London, the Eiffel Tower, George Washington's birthplace' (190). Hyde further takes China as a place where possibilities and perspectives abound.

Foreign artists often say Chinese landscape has no perspective. I wonder if Einstein, taking a look up and down these gorges, would feel that they have another perspective, his fourth dimension, and that the best of the country's art is simply co-related to this? (151)

Hyde indicates that China is full of perspectives compared with the New Zealand she knows as still and petty. Abundant in dimension, fragmented, yet extensive, China turns out to be a mobile space.

Hyde's recollection of New Zealand, lacking in facts and rising from a dream-like memory, couples with her 'hazy' account of China. On meeting a fellow New Zealander in Shanghai, Hyde recalls the house of this acquaintance in New Zealand as in 'a vague memory, far away, then clear' (70). Guided to the apartment where this old acquaintance is supposed to be, the Chinese house arouses her fuzzy memory of New Zealand. Time and space intersect through the juxtaposition of two places temporally and geographically remote to each other.

Almost every night, lying in the red padded quilt, I dreamed about New Zealand, dreams so sharp and vivid that when I woke up, it seemed the black-tiled houses that were a fairy-tale. I was restless for these dreams, and turned for them from the early shadow of sleep, like a drug addict for his drugs. (97)

The quilt is the real, softened Chinese present that Hyde enjoys. Lying beneath it, she drugs herself to old fantastical memories of New Zealand. Jumping from the image of the quilt to memories of a distant home, Hyde's narration binds together China and New Zealand.

Noticeably, the practice of border-crossing in *Dragon Rampant* connects with another briefly described trans-Tasman trip. Upon arrival at Port Jackson, Hyde reminds us of her previous trip to Sydney with a description of the newly erected Harbour Bridge.

The shadow of a great curve, like a wing, passes over my face and arms—the shadow of Sydney's harbour bridge. It is new since I came here last. By description it sounded a hellish screech of steel, but in early morning, its shadow wine-dark through the porthole, instead of being antipathetic it is like a still song, like a bow drawn without the flickering of arrow; a bow made by man, with man's traffic for its shafts. (20)

The overwhelming image of the bridge underlies a geographical fixity that Hyde attempts to discard. The mosaic picture of Sydney from her earlier trip transforms into the concrete and steel structure of this landmark construction, indicating that a mobile space is yet outside Australia. According to Clayton, Hyde evades her New Zealandness in *Dragon Rampant*, revealing her 'wry sense of self as a New Zealand woman writer and the compromising reality of being a westerner committed to China' (52). Gesturing towards a mobility which China as a distant foreign country could provide, Hyde was 'dis-inventing herself, trying to make herself anonymous, breaking down the boundaries of a given identity' (Hardy, in *Dragon Rampant* xvi). The reason why the China represented in *Dragon Rampant* looks strangely familiar is that Hyde writes from a modernist perspective and replies upon modernism's capacity to 'efface conflict and comply with exoticism and even prejudice' (Montgomery 502).

While living at her Milford bach, Hyde had started writing *Houses by* the Sea and she proceeded with the work throughout her year-long trip to London en route through China. During this period, Hyde's technique of 'imagistic writing' emerges in her poetry, where 'a scene can be described in brief flashes, so that an effect of immediacy, of being actually present, is conveyed' (Partridge 99). Diana Bridge similarly remarks that Hyde instinctively conjoins a different people and another cultural tradition with her own in the later poems (105). Leaving New Zealand, according to Lydia Wevers, emancipates Hyde's imagination and prompts her to produce poems that are compelling in both imagination and thought (in Selected Poems xviii). Viewed from a distance, New Zealand as a fixed homeland is reconstructed in Hyde's poems by means of a mosaic memory. Hyde carries along with her an ongoing/unfinished sense of modernity possible only through 'travel and contacts' (Clifford 2). Hyde's modernist creative sensibility as showcased in her poetry-writing⁴ unites New Zealand with its Pacific neighbours, like China.

In the third session of *Houses by the Sea*, a short poem titled 'Faraway' exhibits a creative vision extended via Hyde's transnational trip. The poem, written in Hankow (China), recalls images of a New Zealand

childhood through an impressionistic approach. At the very beginning Hyde writes, 'Now, in this place, I remember Faraway' (Young Knowledge 382), specifying a piece of memory re-enacted in both temporal and spatial senses. 'Faraway' is a house in Hyde's memory, or imagination, which is deserted, uncanny, and mysterious. The house remains intangible, for its details are patched together, fragmentary and distant. A montage of lively and seemingly moving images—'hilltops', 'pine wedge', 'snow in gig-ruts', and 'wild turf'—appear to be hazy and vapoury, like traces of one's memory. 'Empty', 'haunted', and 'obscure', it is a place where only 'the child, the stranger' dare to enter. Because of its uncanniness and inaccessibility, 'Faraway' stands as a mobile space able to be reconstructed time and again in the poet's mind. The house is thus not so much a permanent dwelling as a portable construction, ready to adopt new meanings and different façades. Recalled from China, New Zealand is no longer an abode of past memory, but a hybrid space that promises mobility and new identities. Hyde's modernist representation of the house creates a mental landscape that transforms the fixity of reality into fluidity. 'A sense of otherness' fashioned in the poem (Wevers, in Selected Poems xvii) both distances New Zealand and opens it up to a creative context unbounded by New Zealand's locality.

The mosaic and mobile appearance of home space accords further with Hyde's poetic delineation of China. In 'What is it Makes the Stranger', Hyde's poetic accounts of China are interspersed with memories of New Zealand.

Coming to your land, I saw little boys spin tops.

The girls marked patterns in chalks about your street—
This game I might have told them at five years old.

A man sold peanuts, another warmed hands at his brazier,
A smiling mother suckled the first-born at her breast.

On a roof-garden, among the delicate red-twigged bowing of winter trees.

winter trees,
The small grave bowls of dwarf pines (our pines grow tall,
Yet the needle-shape hair is the same), one first star swam,
Silver in lily-root dusk. Two lovers looked up.
Hands, body, heart in my breast,
Whispered, 'These are the same. Here we are not so strange—
Here there are friends and peace.
We have known such ways, we in our country!' (336–337)

Similar shapes of pine trees and hopscotch marks on streets connect China with New Zealand. 'Here we are not so strange'. China with its flowing images parallels New Zealand. An impressionistic and imagistic juxtaposition of China and New Zealand shortens the distance between the two. Little boys and girls, the street vendors, and the mother figure drift away from the eyes like quick, floating pictures. As Hyde puts it,

What is it makes the stranger? Say, oh eyes!
Eyes cannot tell. They view the selfsame world—
Outer eyes vacant till thoughts and pictures view them,
Inner eyes watching secret paths of the brain. (336)

Images can simply run into one's 'outer eyes'. Involuntarily observed, they are mosaic graphs disconnected from human knowledge and reality. Unconscious tracking of reality is only meaningful when one's 'inner eyes' associate them with the 'secret paths of the brain'. To Hyde, these secret paths are the connections between China and New Zealand.

I too am sold into strangeness, I too will look out of windows, thinking, 'How fair!' or 'Strange...' (Is ringo their word for an apple?) But in my heart will only dissolve, re-form, The circling shapes of familiar things. (332)

Distanced from her home country, 'the circling shapes of familiar things' are dissolving, but similar objects easily call them back. Allen Curnow points out that Hyde found 'in the poems of her China pilgrimage the loose, irregular forms that suited her best. They allowed her to speak her mind—which regular metres always distracted—and made room for her own kind of sensuous detail' (58). Shuttling between past and present, memory and reality, and strangeness and familiarity, Hyde reaches an intermediate state that allows her to negotiate her New Zealandness. More significantly, the 'loose, irregular forms', in contrast to her early 'regular metres', stand for a modernist literary discourse necessary for the establishment of a new, hybrid creative identity.

Stuart Murray observes a 'postcolonial orthodoxy' in Hyde's 'destabilizing of narrative authority and representation of place'. He holds that Hyde attempts to convey a 'radical and multi-faced conception of New Zealand' and is 'more than prepared to stand up to those who deemed her version of place illegitimate' (169, 198). Even Allen Curnow once recognised that by 'incessant writing, incessant change', Robin Hyde 'fought to free her vision from the literary swathings' (58) in New Zealand. Searching for a hybrid cultural and national identity by reaching out from New Zealand, Hyde constructs in her works a visionary home that is not 'of colonialist metropole-periphery relations' (Elleray 36). A sense

312 | Westerly 62.2 **313** | Yingjie M. Cheng

of mobility reflected in Hyde's writings of the late 1930s cumulatively unfolds her modernist creative technique and sensibility, and at a certain level overshadows her own earlier avowed contempt for the 'moderns'⁵. Modernism aligns with Hyde's pursuit of mobility and adaptability, or, conversely, mobility has the 'capacity to produce modernisms that resist colonialism' (Montgomery 504).

Mobility has always been an intriguing topic within modernist studies. The modernist writing careers of James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound are all fuelled by their travelling experience in northern metropolises such as London, Paris, and New York. Their paths of movement delineate a trajectory of literary modernism within or close to the imperial centre. Modernist writers from geographically marginalised sites sometimes, however, moved in very different ways from their metropolitan counterparts, and this has had an important impact on the formation of their styles. Susan Stanford Friedman argues that contact zones outside the imperial centre can also generate cultural hybridity. 'Porous' and 'permeable' borders are mutually constitutive, and modernisms outside the imperial centre reveal a more globalised modernity emerging simultaneously (36). Robin Hyde's Sino-Australasian writings, together with her voluntary practice of 'mobility', make possible literary modernism outside the imperial centre and on a synchronous basis with her northern equals. Early antipodean women bound for London had few options for sea route: the two primary routes entailed visiting, on their way to England, more British colonies and territories than any other imperial subjects (Woollacott 1005). In Hyde's case, she took an even more unusual route, including in her trip geographical coordinates outside Anglo-European imperialism. Focusing further in some of her works on the female experience and the female body, Hyde is also an example of how women writers manage to challenge the 'masculine conception of writing' (Murray 197) within New Zealand cultural and literary nationalism. As her own fictional substitute, Eliza, in The Godwits Fly claims, 'wherever you went, you came to the edge of it' (49). Exploiting the mobility of her life and career, Hyde comes to the edge of her fixed national and cultural identity as a New Zealander and gives voice to a different version of national literature that foregrounds the extensibility of New Zealand's national and cultural identity in the Pacific as well as in the world.

Acknowledgements:

The author of the essay would like to give special thanks to the reviewers and editors for their enabling comments and a most generous sharing of their academic and editorial expertise. The author also owes her thanks to Emeritus Professor Elizabeth Webby, Professor Lydia Wevers, and Dr Fiona Morrison for their comments on an earlier version of the essay presented at the 2017 ASAL conference. Related research was funded by the UNSW/CSC joint doctoral programme.

Notes

- 1. Kai Jensen, in Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature (1996), argues that New Zealand literature in the twentieth century has been heavily shaped by a masculine tradition in which writers 'combined literary skill and artistic sensibility with a reassuring range of manly activities, from hard drinking and practical work to sporting excellence and military distinction' (169). Jensen suggests that 'this excitement about masculinity was the central, distinctive feature' of New Zealand's nationalist literary culture of the 1930s and 1940s. 'Masculinity supplied the material and the style of literary nationalist works' and at the same time was 'deeply discouraging' to all women writers 'but the most determined' ones (170, 102). Jensen also mentions that it is in James Bertram's 1953 Landfall essay, 'Robin Hyde: A Reassessment', that a change is indicated of women writers' connection/conflict with this masculine tradition in New Zealand literature (102).
- 2. The most recent and comprehensive collection of Hyde's poetry is *Young Knowledge: The Poems of Robin Hyde* (2003), edited by Michele Leggott.
- 3. 'The Menstrual School' comes from A. R. D. Fairburn's 1935 letter to Denis Glover. It is a satirical term used to describe the cultural nationalists' concern about the so-called feminised nature of New Zealand literature as reflected in the works of some established women poets of the time. In *Her Side of the Story: Readings of Mander, Mansfield & Hyde* (1999), Mary Paul points out that the reason why Hyde remains 'a problematic figure to discuss' is because constructions of her creative identity 'have not gone through a critical sorting process' (128). Titled 'Robin Hyde: From Incoherence to Immersion', Paul's chapter on Hyde suggests that nationalist readings in the 1940s and 1950s remained 'on the doorstep' of Hyde's work which was taken then to be 'incoherent' to its major readership, whereas feminist re-readings of Hyde in the 1980s and 1990s remained 'immersed' and made an 'enthusiastic' interpretation. Paul notes that 'Hyde's reception has been dramatically marked' by a 'kind of shift of "dominants" throughout the decades (127).
- 4. Hyde's creative position as a modernist poet forms the chief basis for the current discussion. Further references can be made to Michele Leggott's research on the poetry of Robin Hyde, together with a journal feature, 'Robin Hyde and New Zealand Modernism', coordinated by Michele Leggott and Ann Vickery and published in How2 in 2001. The journal itself is a continuation of HOW(ever), a publication for experimental women's poetry launched by Kathleen Fraser in 1983.

314 | Westerly 62.2 **315** | Yingjie M. Cheng

5. Hyde's criticism on the 'moderns' applies specifically to the modern poets, whom she regarded as cultural elites lacking in social involvement. This can be traced in her journal fragments written between 1934 and 1935, collected in Mary Paul's Your Unselfish Kindness: Robin Hyde's Autobiographical Writings (2011) (176). In Susan Ash's 1989 critical introduction to Wednesday's Children, similar antimodern statements are quoted from Hyde's article 'The Modern Trend: Some Points about Poets' published in The Press (October 31, 1936).

Works Cited

- Ash, Susan. 'Introduction.' Wednesday's Children, New Women's Press, 1989. Bertram, James. 'Robin Hyde: A Reassessment', Landfall, September, 1953. Bridge, Diana. 'China, Imagined and Actual, in Robin Hyde's The Godwits Fly, Two
- Bridge, Diana. 'China, Imagined and Actual, in Robin Hyde's The Godwits Fly, Two Journal Entries and the "China" Poems' in Mary Paul (ed.), *Lighted Windows:*Critical Essays on Robin Hyde. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2008: 89–106.
- Caffin, Elizabeth. 'Poetry 1945–90.' In Terry Sturm (ed.), The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991. 385–445.
- Clayton, Megan. 'Accepting Summer: Robin Hyde in China', Journal of New Zealand Literature: JNZL, 16 (1998): 45–57.
- Clifford, James. Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Curnow, Allen. 'Introduction' in Allen Curnow (ed.), *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*. Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1960.
- Elleray, Michelle. 'Turning the Tables: Domesticity and Nationalism in Wednesday's Children' in Mary Paul (ed.), *Lighted Windows: Critical Essays on Robin Hyde.*Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2008.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. 'Cultural Parataxis and Transnational Landscapes of Reading: Toward a Locational Modernist Studies' in Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska (eds.), *Modernism*, vol. 1. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007. 35–52.
- Hessell, Nikki. 'Journalism and High Culture: Robin Hyde among the Cultural Nationalists' in Mark Williams (ed.), *A History of New Zealand Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 112–124.
- Hyde, Robin. Dragon Rampant. Auckland: New Women's Press, 1984.
- —. The Godwits Fly. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1970.
- —. Selected Poems. Lydia Wevers (ed.). Auckland, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- —. Young Knowledge: The Poems of Robin Hyde. Michele Leggott, (ed.). Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003.
- Jensen, Kai. Whole Men: The Masculine Tradition in New Zealand Literature. Auckland University Press, 1996.
- Jones, Lawrence. 'The Novel' in Terry Sturm (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*. Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991. 105–202.
- Kelley, Joyce Elizabeth. 'Excursions into Modernism: Women Writers, Travel, and the Body' Doctor of Philosophy, the Graduate College of The University of Iowa, 2007.
- Montgomery, Harper. 'Carlos Mérida and the Mobility of Modernism: A Mayan Cosmopolitan Moves to Mexico City', *The Art Bulletin*, 98.4 (2016): 488–509.

- Murray, Stuart. Never a Soul at Home: Literary Nationalism and the 1930s. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998.
- Paul, Mary. Your Unselfish Kindness: Robin Hyde's Autobiographical Writings. Otago University Press, 2011.
- ——. Her Side of the Story: Reading of Mander, Mansfield & Hyde. University of Otago Press, 1999.
- Partridge, Colin J. 'Wheel of Words: The Poetic Development of Robin Hyde', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 5 (1968): 92–104.
- Stafford, Jane. 'Robin Hyde's *Dragon Rampant* and 1930s Travel Writing' in Charles Ferral et al (eds.), *East by South: China in Australasian Imagination*. Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005.
- Towel, Elizabeth. "This Imperfect Part of Truth": The Godwits Fly, Childhood Memory and Fiction, Journal of New Zealand Studies, 22 (2016): 19–31.
- Williams, Mark. 'Introduction' in Mark Williams (ed.), A History of New Zealand Literature. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Woollacott, Angela. "All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself": Australian Women's Voyages "Home" and the Articulation of Colonial Whiteness', *American Historical Review*, 102.4, (1997): 1003–1029.

316 | Westerly 62.2 **317** | Yingjie M. Cheng

If You Hear a Baby Crying Gav Lvnch

Gav Lynch works at Flinders University. She has published stories in Meaniin (forthcoming), Bluestem Magazine (2017), Griffith Review (2016), Best Australian Stories (2015), Breaking Beauty (2015) and Sleepers Almanac 8 and 10 (2013-15), academic papers, non-fiction, and a novel (2006). She was Fiction and Life Writing Editor at Transnational Literature from 2011 to 2015.

Phillip Lopate: 1987, | The essay attempts to surround something—a subject, a mood, a problematic irritation—by coming at it from all angles, wheeling and diving like a hawk, each seemingly digressive spiral actually taking us closer to the heart of the matter...

Imagine looking out of a tenth-floor apartment in Hong Kong during a tropical downpour—hot air swirls between the Midlevel towers; pollution shrouds the far side of a harbour, ringed by cobalt mountains; the water looks grey; the air thick with carcinogens, dangerous to a baby—when a black kite, squawking, mournful, seeking, plunges from a great height through one open window and out another. Your daughter, a new mother, drops her breast pump on the couch. Why had he—she bad-mouths her husband—opened the windows wide enough that a bird could come in, bringing filth and shit and disease, in the vicinity of her baby. You swoop on Lopate's idea. Your response to messy post-partum emotion might become a little riff or an essay elicited by the neo-mania of your university workplace. Innovate: make anew. You have flown from Australia during mid-year break, to share the happiness of birth and circumvent the stress that attends it, and because academics marking end-of-semester assignments can when a daughter has a baby in a foreign land. After the mother settles, you open your laptop to mark essays.

X: In hot pursuit, across the South China Sea from Australia, come a series of emails from a precocious first-year creative writing student, let us use the moniker X, disappointed that you and a double marker have withheld a High Distinction grade from a final assessment piece. You

take off your Lau Lau hat and shift your duty of care to the vulnerable student. Neither fledgling must fall, nor even come to harm. You cannot rid X of authorial desire, whereby a writer identifies self with work, for it is inevitable. Students must always be on their guard, X once told you, against academics that reshape original work into the forcemeat of the academy, rendering it unsaleable for the market. And if you go in too hard: Wou-wei, disappointment and loss of value will ensue. You understand thwarted ambition but too much sympathy could blunt X's pencil and compromise the standards of your institution. You reply to X's implied criticism using playful but appropriate discourse.

You tease your daughter. Imagine how much worse it would be if the bird had scooped up the baby and flown away with it, as Zeus in the guise of an eagle stole Ganymede, the most beautiful boy in the world. Not much of a story to tell in China, she confides, after a human has tried to snatch her friend's baby boy in a crowded Beijing market. But why give a thought to birds when you've risked a baby's lungs in a city with the highest rate of respiratory illness in the whole of China, even surpassing Shanghai, where you had visited her the year before and where the smog was palpable; where you viewed the faint outline of the amber sun through a soft haze between the skyscrapers in the business district where she lived and worked. None of your business: what adults do with their lives, when they have flown your coop and nested in a dirty eyrie. Wherever she pops out a baby, you will fly in because you are her mother, and because your own mother did the same for you: flying across two gulfs and a peninsula to spend one week soothing you, the lactating nurse, another to smooth out household chaos. Pfft.

X emails you a new story that pointedly compares his aborted writerly hopes for the previous assignment with Macbethian infanticide, the downgraded manuscript being the baby and you and the co-marking professor, monstrous midwives: drabs who abhor the market. An idea, an image, a dream—all ruptured by assessment—and, along with them, X's process of authorial individuation. The outcome for the Macbeths' baby is no more material.

You know that X needs to show you and the double marker that you made a mistake and prove it by producing ever more original writing; that identity is more than the writing, but that you are the signifiers of successful engagement with the university. It is your responsibility to prevent X biting the tit, to stifle demand feeding before postgraduate studies. You don't open the file. You put it aside until nightfall.

318 | Westerly 62.2 319 | Gay Lynch Imagine, all day long, you try to read the baby's physiognomy—his cupid-bow lips—from whence have they come? Experiences chase fleet-footed across his satin face, fleeing from somewhere deep within his ancestral consciousness. Frequently his face fills with earnest intelligence. Much more than either of his parents he resembles a wizened old man. He casts rueful half-windy smiles over his mother's shoulder and in your direction. Smitten. Never lose your sense of wonder, you told your own children but it seemed that they knew this all along and so does he. Loud sounds, sudden quiet, people exiting the room bring fearful glances from the baby: nose-wrinkling, eyebrow-raising, mouth down-turning, screams of terror. How does he know what can go wrong—does blood ferry fear? The blurry materialisation of his mother's face precipitates lip-smacking delight, drunken eye-rolling, curling fingers and vacuous smiles that might eventually turn into language. High on the smell of milk and skin he mouth-roots any flesh, he pants and whimpers.

Your thoughts shift back and forth between your daughter's fine production to X and to Shakespeare's 'Finger of birth-strangled babe' / 'Ditch-deliver'd by a drab' (*Macbeth* 1.7.54–59). Neither you nor the professor *should* be described as drab but you see X's connections with Macbeth, a play about unbridled aspiration. Thinly disguised by alliterative prefixes, by rhyming slang and gender reversal, two literary obstetricians—Dr Gaylord Lynch and Professor Crawl—deliver X's fictional baby.

One of the doors opened and in came Dr Lynch. He was an immense, well-put-together man of fifty, with every mark of aptitude and humanity.

'Maria,' he said with a small smile. 'Don't worry, it'll be over soon. Let me see it.' 'Everything's looking wonderful, my dear. I'll have the finished product in my hands soon enough.'

Maria shook violently and clutched at the bed sheets. She writhed and arched her back in agony.

'Shh, shh, I can see it. We're very nearly there, Maria. Just a moment or two more and you're done.'

Dr Lynch turned and said to Professor Crawl, 'she's really working very hard, Jerome'. (X: 2010)

X's response to grading is predictable, common and cathartic. The work is dark and playful. You think of the great pleasure taken by Roland Barthes in writing, as distinct from acting the writer. Susan Sontag reminds you that Barthes 'praises teaching as a permissive, not a coercive, space

where one can be relaxed, disarmed, floating' (A Barthes Reader: xxx). Ten storeys up in a haze of happiness and hormones you feel quite floaty.

Dr Lynch was impeded by the umbilical cord. He stopped and ran his hand along its length. 'Well,' he said, 'this is running on a bit, isn't it?' Before Professor Crawl could even blink, Dr Lynch bent over, took the cord into his mouth, and severed it with his teeth.

'Good lord...' breathed Professor Crawl. Well, he assured himself, Dr Lynch has been known for his unusual techniques. (X: 2010)

But has X gone too far, disrespected you and Professor Crawl? Will there be a request for a third marker? You will counsel X not to lose a Distinction on a gamble for the third mark will prevail.

Imagine a close to 360-degree view of the Sheung Wan. Your knees tingle and your head feels light. As your entire legs dissolve you grip the aluminium sill. You read once that fear of heights arises not from fear of falling but from fear of jumping. The hospital chimneys are belching smoke through the barred grid of the baby's room; well, steam perhaps, rather than the poisonous side-products of nuclear medicine. Slope inspectors armed with clipboards and phones make slow progress along the fence line that prevents pedestrians falling over the edge of the cutting between two slices of mountain onto Hospital Road. Only a young engineer will find them reassuring, in the face of tearing rain and sliding mud driven by monsoons, because she knows about footings, specialises in concrete, spent most of her Honours year designing earthquake-proof buildings.

'They know what they're doing, Mama,' she says. But you are not reassured. She has more faith in science than you in Humanities. What if they make a mistake, if one of them is slack or over-ambitious?

You chuckle over the disclaimer to X's new story:

I hope you take this piece in good humour. I assure you that it is in no way intended to be detrimental toward you or Professor C. There is, of course, the risk that it may offend, despite my protestations—it may have been safer had I decided to let this story lie unwritten.

PS. This story is completely unrelated to the recent birth of your grandchild. Any relations that can be drawn are completely coincidental, I promise you. (X: 2010)

320 | Westerly 62.2 **321** | Gay Lynch

Imagine that before you arrived your daughter hopped up and down the stairs each day, her baby's heartbeat synchronised with her own through the thin silk of a Chinese sling, counterbalancing his weight against the slope. Now she leaves the baby behind to bolt from the apartment to shop, or run six kilometres along the mountainous Wan Chai Green Trail, to answer emails in Starbucks; to test whether she still owns an identity outside her new creation. Perhaps she steals away to illicit lunches of pork dumplings and sweet sausage with her husband in the business district.

And so you mind the baby while reading creative writing transported across the sea by email or saved on your external drive. Set free by the new-tech baby monitor, from prodding and poking the mysterious little animal for signs of respiration, you ignore him long enough to mark up drafts on your laptop, while comforting gurgles and snuffles travel through the speakers until, eventually, he opens his lungs to rage in wakeful consciousness at his abandonment.

X employs black and deeply felt humour; it applies to a babe born strong enough to survive but not thrive to the drabs' satisfaction, an outcome that destroys the natural order of X's fabulation. You should not forget that this assignment has not failed—'you have not dashed the brains out'—but merely marked at D instead of HD (*Macbeth* 1.7.54–59).

Imagine you must take responsibility for X's baby as well as your daughter's. You balance on the balls of your feet as you lean out from the shower window into the dense warm night air above Sheung Wan. Traffic honks. Churning incense wafts from a temple somewhere further down the slope, as far away as Hollywood Road perhaps. You hear the rise and fall of conversations between Cantonese-speaking smokers, on the ground-level car-park driveway, onto which you accidentally drop your bottle of shampoo.

'You can't do that here, Mum,' your daughter berates you. 'What if it landed in a pram? Imagine the force of such a missile. You could have killed a baby.'

You try to deflect your daughter's single-minded seriousness. 'I'm sick of washing my hair every day.'

'His little head stinks,' she concurs the very next day, dabbing for dirt on his downy head, with muslin cloth and spit, as you set out early to eat dim sum on Caine Road.

Can you operate within an environment of such robust criticism, with such rigid rules? Of course you can—you are a writer. For surely, all writers have been badly treated by publishers, overlooked, ignored, dismissed because no-one understands their work; become time-poor;

because they teach complaining ingrates, some, not X, owners of grungy charm, full sleeved, faded blue tattoos, passports tattered with overuse and a sense of entitlement, writing *Bildungsroman* instead of fiction. Over and over again, writers have been short-listed and then abandoned on a whim: space, balance, voice. What happened to writer empathy? While teacher/writers know how criticism feels, academic Lucy Neave states, some experienced practitioners depend on feedback on raw drafts, and others don't elicit commentary until they're done. She finds criticism cruel but illuminating, still believing in communities of practice. She reads and critiques draft texts as 'sites of possibility' (4). You read X's story as a writerly text full of complexities and ambiguities and even as your correction pen hand itches you experience authorial desire.

Shanghai wisdom decrees that *you* can live without praise but have a mortal fear of criticism.

Imagine you eat, shower, read and pace through insomnia as you think about babies. The curling stem of a pink orchid frames the kitchen window where you boil the kettle for black Chinese tea and to secretly sterilise, old-fashioned style, yet another baby soother flung by its owner to the floor. At 11pm, the road below the apartment is quiet, the hospital roof provides a steampunk setting for night-time imaginings: massive concrete bunkers, cannisters the size of rainwater tanks, and insulation tunnels crawling like annelids between pipes and cables. Above you and across the concrete canyons, tenants glide like goldfish, past yellow squares of light that make them visible to everyone including to you. They too, fold nappies and sit like zombies in front of wide-screen television sets, tap on keyboards balanced on their laps—while they make friends on Facebook, examine PhD theses perhaps—and stare through their window, as if the fact that the rest of us can see them is of no consequence. You dare not take a sleeping tablet for fear that you will jump through the open window.

Perhaps Ann Lamott has cheered X on. She advises her students:

that they should *always* write out of vengeance, as long as they do so nicely. If someone has crossed them, if someone has treated them too roughly, I urge them to write about it. ... Use these memories. ... Personally, I would write about this partly out of a longing to make sense of it all ... and partly out of vengeance. (226–227)

322 | Westerly 62.2 323 | Gay Lynch

X has done exactly this. Out of his suffering has arisen new work. Simultaneously heartened and dismayed, you are not displeased with X's new baby, knowing also that platitudes at the birth of subsequent children will not comfort bereaved parents. For now, X chooses not to revive the flat child, rather creating a medieval drama.

'Doctor, doctor,' rasped Maria; 'Why do you leave with my baby? I'm in pain, I am sick, and I'm confused.'

The doctor darted out the door and slammed it shut behind him, screaming as he did it, 'Do not tell me such things—SHOW ME!'

And Maria began to wail silently. (X: 2010)

Imagine then you begin to doubt yourself: reader, writer, mother, pedagogue and Lau Lau to a baby. Even though you and X have defused tension by email, bringing the separate discourses of creativity and criticism into sympathetic contact, as Barthes might suggest productive and pleasurable, you own the power and should never let dirty kites, guangchang kidnappers or ambitious students snatch babies for their own purpose. You blame Lamott or perhaps your lack of foresight in setting her text for first-year study for all this *Sturm und Drang*. You hear over-breathing. Rain. Static. Perhaps all three. You press all the buttons on the baby monitor and run.

In the second story, X projects grief and anger against a marker, morphing you into something gleefully sinister, monstrous in its creative expression but then—dissembles and denies—'it was a TOTAL joke' (2010).

There in Dr Lynch's attire was what Professor Crawl could only liken to a troglodyte. It was bent over, misshapen; the hair had grown longer, sharper, crueller; the claws had thickened and sharpened; and blood, presumably from the umbilical cord, dripped droplets down his shirt. One hand curled into a ball, and the other wrapped tightly around the bloody foot of what must have been Maria's baby. (X: 2010)

Later, no doubt, *X will* create a sibling from the original body parts and surfeit of emotion. And this is okay. Only real life is more horrible.

Imagine a toddler boy pitches to his death from a twelfth-floor apartment. Pearl TV News at 7, footage shows police bundling his grandmother, Lau Lau, a round little figure with a practical haircut and a drab lightweight coat thrown around her shoulders, into a paddy wagon to be charged with criminal negligence. She had been cooking the family meal when

the boy escaped through a door—left open, perhaps by another family member—and made his way to the hallway garbage disposal chute, where he climbed from an upturned bin or a table, through a small window just above his height, and launched himself into the filthy air.

Watching the clip, you and your daughter clutch each other in distress. 'Wǒ ài nǐ.'

'How could this be?' you ask number-one son-in-law. 'Was she not cooking their dinner, minding their child?'

'She was responsible,' he replies.

'Oh pooh,' you croon, and croon again, hands to your mouth, transfixed by the event that has entered your shared living space. Is the new father's severity a sign of tenderness, his wish to be vigilant over his own child?

'We remind people,' the newsreader intones, 'to watch their children.'

The message repeats at the bottom of the screen in Cantonese subtitles. You turn back to marking creative writing assignments, a cruel process and judgmental, in a world you understand much better.

X's electronic voice also carries grief and suffering and a formality that masks pain.

A moment or two later there came an intake of breath. An odd silence was born alongside it, a silence that existed beside the baby's cries. Professor Crawl had never heard such a tiny thing emit so loud a noise. It was desperate to be heard, demanded attention. (X: 2010)

Fabulist or not, the child of this student has briefly been held; its creator has 'given suck' to it and this instils in X a ferocious protective impulse (Macbeth~1.7.54-59). Kevin Brophy argued in 2008 that 'creativity intersects most forcefully and most problematically with institutional practices at sites of assessment' (219).

You mark up X's new draft with professional comments and minor questions, offer praise for overcoming lost ardour, for creating words in the face of criticism:

The analogy is a good one: comparing the disappointments of delivering a creative idea, to childbirth, and pedagogues to obstetricians and midwives. The story shows your original and edgy style. If you wanted to run with it I think you could make it work even better. Try reading it to someone who has nothing to do with our group. (Lynch: 2008)

324 | Westerly 62.2 **325** | Gay Lynch

L. C. Knight's famous essay underlines how deeply the loss of a child/idea/image undermines natural order in *Macbeth*. Perhaps you will show your class the cheap clay figurine of a writer painstakingly scratching his quill across parchment that you purchased at Man Mo temple market, whereby you will acknowledge the pain of creation.

Imagine, late one afternoon, you descend three steep, shade-filigreed staircases with your daughter to buy flowers and sandalwood chicken, the baby swaddled and cocooned in his silk sling, sleeping against her breast, to Hollywood Road, where you can find antique shops, galleries and arty coffee shops. Banyon trees with blackened trunks fan over the mossy steps, their roots insinuate fissures and sprawl over leafy stonewalls. You get caught up in the rush of people navigating the crowded pavements, finishing work or changing shift, picking up dinner from the American Groceries Supermarket or promenading in the cool evening air. In a small park you see women, young and old, tethered to their battery-run cassette recorders, angle their beautifully carved heads, their chins winged by glossy dark hair, as they reach up to part the sky with graceful fingers, practising fluid tai chi.

Imagine you hear the cries of a metaphorical baby—struggling writer, X, you—and that they wring your heart. Using a baby as a metaphor for creative writing might be considered at best ironic and at worst manipulative. Barthes believed in combining 'at the same time theory, critical combat and pleasure' (in Bensmaia 75). There has been no overt conflict. But have you failed in your duty of care? Even with permission and de-identification, nine years after the email exchange, you run the risk of exploiting a candidate now engaged with a PhD. At the time of writing, X was afraid of overstepping boundaries—of going too far—even as authorial desire demanded succour. It's the kind of thing that worries most writers—you perhaps?—how much they can trust collegial relationships.

Imagine you read, feet up on your packed suitcase, baby curled on your chest, his downy polluted hair nuzzling your chin as he shifts and snuffles, sighs. You hear his parents bickering over the need for a maid, gathering dishes, and deciding who will accompany you to Central Station to catch the airport shuttle. At close to midnight you weep when parting from your daughter in her dressing gown, when you kiss her baby, and when you board your plane home.

Imagine you wait for the next baby, planned in Hong Kong, conceived in Malta, delivered by an Anglo-West Indian midwife in Battersea, London. Are you telling a story? Perhaps you are—in faint hope that your text is writerly rather than readerly, and inconclusive—an 'essai', an attempt, to pin down our fears about babies and writing.

X: I'm confident you'll agree with me when I say, it would have been a waste of a great idea. I certainly wouldn't plan to publish, or anything like that. Well, now that we've got *that* cleared up, I'll see ya when you get back. (X: 2010)

Many thanks to Mario Pilla for his permission to quote from his creative piece and correspondence, and the contribution it makes to this piece.

Works Cited

Barthes, Roland. 'Inaugural address to the *College de France*. First holder of the Chair of Literary Semiology, 1977.' In Susan Sontag (ed.). 'Writing Itself: on Roland Barthes'. *A Barthes Reader*. New York: Hill & Wang, Strauss & Giraux, 1982.

Barthes, Roland. Reda Bensmaia (ed.). The Barthes Effect: the Essay as Reflective Text. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Trans. Patricia Fedkiw, Foreword, Michele Richman.

Brophy, Kevin. Creativity: Psychoanalysis, Surrealism and Creative Writing. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998.

Lamott, Anne. Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life. New York: Anchor Books, Random House, 1995.

Lopate, Phillip. 'Introduction', The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present. New York: Anchor Books, 1995.

Lynch, Gay. Email to Mario Pilla. Flinders University, BCA Creative Writing Workshop.

Neave, Lucy. 'Being Read: How writers of fiction manuscripts experience and respond to criticism'. TEXT, 18.1 (April 2014). Sourced at: http://www.textjournal.com.au/april14/neave.htm

Pilla, Mario. Semester 1, BCA Creative Writing Workshop, 2010. Email to Gay Lynch, in private possession, 2013.

Shakespeare, William. Macbeth. 1.7.54-59.

326 | Westerly 62.2 327 | Gay Lynch

AlligatorwoodShey Marque

Shey is Coordinator of Hospital Poets Australia with The KSPWC. Her poetry has twice won the KW Treanor Poetry Prize and is published in Westerly, Meanjin, Cordite and other Australian journals. Her chapbook, Aporiac, was published in 2016 with Finishing Line Press, USA.

Walk with me and I will show you sweet gums where painted birds pummel us with trinkets like Caravaggio tossed artichokes then I will push you backwards to her bark coaxed to forget with sap from early buds lulla lullaby lulla lullaby

her lu lu tong* will open your veins wide
the scent of crab-apple and ambergris
and many autumn hands settle on skin.
There's something of Judith about the scene
impressions of a woman passing by
only moments ago perfume hanging

alongside the dried beds of a river seed heads on stalks and you caught by the hair.

Xié xie Belinda Hermawan

A UWA graduate (Law and Arts, 2009), Belinda works in Digital Communications for writingWA and is also a former president of the Fellowship of Australian Writers WA. Her short fiction has appeared in Going Down Swinging and she is regular contributor to Seesaw magazine.

The restaurant is full of people speaking different tongues, so loud it's hard to pick out who is speaking, or if any of them are even saying words. Our table is the only silent one. My hands grip the underside of the chair as if I am trying to eject myself out of this situation. I usually think in English with interjections of Mandarin, but in this moment all I'm registering is noise: the all-encompassing chatter of patrons punctuated with howling laughter; the percussion of chopsticks on china; the click of the dim sum trolleys as they're wheeled around like silver tuk-tuks navigating traffic overseas.

Thinking about thinking, and thinking about not speaking, and not speaking what I'm thinking. It's making me feel nauseous.

'Strange wallpaper,' he mutters, picking up the teapot and pouring himself some jasmine tea. It comes out mostly clear, undeniably not yet brewed.

This is the first thing he's said to me, other than hello. The wallpaper is indeed strange: peeling and unmatched, with each wall a different colour and a different bloom. You'd think they bought the last of every roll at the decorator's and applied it themselves.

'Yeah, tacky.' My response is awkward, like handing over a badly wrapped gift.

Setting up this meeting was a mistake. I should never have used Facebook to broadcast the news that I was going to be in Melbourne for a book signing. Every 'friend' who had ever made the move from Western Australia to the east coast suddenly descended on my page, asking me to come by for a drink or otherwise extolling the virtues of Melbourne. It's so awesome. Not like boring Perth. Move here! It's the hub of Fashion/Literature/Law/Banking/Hipsters. An ex-pat community, lecturing me from across the country, mystified at my WA-grown success.

Then there was Damien. Who, in response to my direct message about my trip, said we should *probably catch up*.

 $^{^{\}star}$ Lu lu tong—Chinese herb from the fruit of a Liquidambar / American sweetgum (Alligatorwood)

I was dually offended at the half-hearted sentiment—the use of the word 'probably'—and the fact that he thought our connection was tired enough for 'probably' to actually fit. Either way, I wasn't strong enough to say *probably not*, and so here I am, reflecting on how we never were, while he eats a fried sesame ball as fast as possible so that he can get this over with.

I'm not sure if he ever thinks about the dinner during our final year at law school where I confessed my feelings. He has probably erased it from his memory bank. It was at a standard Chinese restaurant on a main road not too far from university. There were novelties that warranted reliving: the inclusion of an Asian-inspired burger and fries on the menu; the flickering lantern above table eight; the cranky lady at the counter whose fingers flicked counters on an abacus before sliding a credit card imprinter (a relic!) to collect payment.

In my memory, he promptly dismissed my 'preoccupation' as a temporary infatuation and insisted we were best of friends and nothing more. He needed me to continue in this best friend role. I remember being so shocked at his casual indifference that I didn't feel the pain until days later, when my jaw ached from the constant pressure of being wired shut. Speaking up had been the wrong move.

I'm jolted out of this recollection when a trolley comes to a sudden halt next to us, the waitress speaking rapid Cantonese. I shake my head at the offer of porridge and respond in the affirmative for the *shao mai* dumplings, *har gow* dumplings, chicken feet, and *char sieu baau* buns. The waitress slams down the baskets with efficiency, marking down the choices on the slip of paper on the table before dashing away. I'm ravenous but load my plate up slowly, still hoping for conversation.

Damien stabs a dumpling with his chopsticks. I think of the oddity of his name. His mother picked it up in an Irish romance novel in the doctor's waiting room when she was pregnant and still learning English. It doesn't sit right on him, especially when pronounced *da-mein* in his mother's accent. I assume she still says it that way. Maybe he still complains that *da-mein* sounds like a noodle dish.

Could be worse. I met a Chinese woman today at a signing who said her Western name was Verandah. I repeated 'Miranda?', then 'Veronica?'. No, it was Verandah, because someone had told her mother it was a beautiful word.

To Verandah. Hope you enjoy the book! Xièxie nĭ. Tiffany Tan, Melbourne 2017.

Later that night in my hotel room, I sit up in bed with a fresh copy of my third novel, reading the copyright page in the dim light from the flat-screen TV. I run my fingers over the words, checking the publishing house's address and my 'moral right' that has been asserted and 'all rights reserved' and the National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry. I flunked Intellectual Property in law school. It frightens me to not know how to protect myself from copycats and plagiarists, because I put time and effort into this story, this particular pattern of letters from the English alphabet, all a hundred and ten thousand words, peppered with occasional Mandarin.

If I needed to, I could always hire a lawyer friend, maybe even one who lives here. Truly, I have nothing against Melbourne. I too like its heart, which pulses under the ground, urging you to do more, try more, educate and expose yourself. Sydney is the next stop of my tour and it isn't like this; its corporate air is like a brochure, static and unfeeling. Its repetition of chainstore clusters all over the CBD makes for tiresome book signings.

As for Melbourne so far, I spent hours on fashionable Chapel Street yesterday and a few more today in the city centre, enjoying the trendy stores and the food. I always take note of how Chinatown feels integrated into the city, boundaries so soft that they're almost invisible. I went for a casual stroll from a bookstore to the library and was met with the scent of Asian groceries after crossing an ordinary street. The spice, the sweetness. Acrid but familiar. Odd fruits and sauces. Herbal medicines and remedies. Cakes light but still cloying somehow. In reach were the Chinese newspapers, proudly available in a newsstand outside the windows bearing kung-fu movie posters faded to blue by the sun. I glanced back at the road I had crossed and spotted a dumpling restaurant and a bubble tea outlet I hadn't seen when I initially walked past.

It was extraordinary how ordinary this was for Melbournians.

If I really had to think about it, I would tell you I'm scared of big cities, of being a small, dual-career fish in a big, cultural pond. It's so easy to be forgotten. If you've ever been to Perth (which you haven't if you're from Melbourne or Sydney... or anywhere remotely interesting), you'll know that there are only two degrees of separation there. If you're a success, everyone goddamn knows about it because it's like a big country town. You can't go anywhere without bumping into someone who happens to know someone else you know. It's kind of easy this way. You don't have to explain yourself as much. The city fills in the context for you, dredging up the past and pulling on your commonalities. You can just be. Nothing to prove.

How do you know Lauren? I went to the tenth-grade dance with her brother! And Gary? He used to live across the street from me when I was a kid. He was on the Olympic sailing team for Rio! Went on a date once

with that Tiffany Tan who was in the paper the other day. Her new book is about a Year Twelve going missing in Vienna during a school music trip and everyone trying to find her. Tiffany says it's fiction, but I have a friend who was in the year below her at school and she says it probably, actually happened. You know how those private girls' schools are. All secretive and shit—they'll never admit they lost a student for twenty-four hours. You should read it.

The trouble with two degrees of separation is that it's dangerous when there's a part of you that's better hidden—at which point you pack it all up and move to a city where not many people know you, like Damien did.

But if you can manage to accept it's okay for any version of yourself to be dropped in conversation, or picked up off a bookshelf, then you'll be okay. The version of you that's been bastardised, or glorified, in someone's memory isn't real.

Then again, I failed IP. I can't remember if 'passing off' is the act of misrepresenting or the tort protecting traders from misrepresentations. I want to ask how the common-law tort operates in the face of IP legislation, and whether it's only relevant for unregistered trademark rights, which is what my memory is telling me.

I laugh to myself. People in Perth will know I'm no good at this type of law. People in Melbourne don't even know I'm a lawyer.

I sleep poorly. It could've been the five coffees I had throughout the day, but it's more likely because of dinner with Damien. I'd asked him if what they said back home was true: that he felt the Perth legal community was too small for him to comfortably co-exist with all of his well-liked exes. He responded by stacking the empty dim sum baskets on the table and glaring at me. That basket tower was the totem of our emptiness. I was not an ex. I was an 'oh', as in 'oh, I was never in love with her and never will be'. Damien only speaks English, so can only think in English, therefore there's no chance of me being represented by any other character.

I repeat oh, oh, oh in my head as I recall the other details: the lucky golden cat that sat on the counter at the restaurant with its continuously beckoning paw as we split the bill; the lucky eights on the number plate of the Mercedes parked on the street as I waited for my Uber to arrive; and Damien silently telling me on that footpath to not push my luck, to just hop in the Uber and stop being a missed opportunity and stop thinking of him as one too.

In the dead of the night, I decide to give Sydney more credit. It was at a writers' festival there that I first learnt of the link between the law

and fiction. A visiting author from the United States—an Asian defence attorney in his late thirties—had explained the advantage of legal training. We are taught to interrogate for 'facts' until we can record a story, piece together what apparently occurred. An affidavit is one witness's story, deconstructed into numbered paragraphs and with opinion smothered. A judgement handed down by a court starts off with a recitation of facts, setting the scene for the dissection and findings that follow.

He said that rather than looking at writing as a silly pastime, one to be ashamed of (especially at family gatherings), it should be seen as an extension of the profession many of us Asians were pushed into.

This blew my mind at the time. I had never thought of the law as strengthening my writing; I thought it had hindered my creativity. I realised that the links I draw, the way I analyse causation and damage, is done with a lawyer's mind.

Romantic feelings do not follow logic, yet can cause staggering damage if improperly handled.

I feel empty again. Because of Damien.

I will repair myself with fiction.

In the morning, I chug two cups of coffee when I get to the airport and slowly make my way to the departure gate for my flight to Sydney.

At one point, a mural on the wall thanks me for visiting the state of Victoria. There's a stand in front of the mural with little coloured papers, reminiscent of a lottery booth, and I see that it's a competition entry box. I could win a trip for two to next year's Australian Open. All I have to do is fill in my details and nominate my reason for having visited Melbourne:

- 1. Business
- 2. Holiday
- 3. Visiting family or friends
- 4. Sporting event
- 5. Concert
- 6. Other (please state)

I feel compelled to enter, and confidently place a '1' in the appropriate field. There's a cheery expression of gratitude in big bold letters at the bottom of the form—THANK YOU—except my brain translates it into Chinese and for a moment I feel the city is thanking me from deep down, without smugness, for finally learning why people seek wisdom from the east.

Thank you. Xié xie. Thank you.

A Review of The Permanent Resident by Roanna Gonsalves

Jen Bowden

Jen is a writer and journalist currently based in Perth. She lived and worked in Edinburgh, Scotland, for ten years and has written for a number of UK newspapers and magazines including The List, The Guardian and The Scotsman. She is currently the Arts and Events Editor of scoopevents.com.au

Roanna Gonsalves. 2016. *The Permanent Resident*. Crawley, WA: UWA Publishing. RRP: \$24.99. 280pp. ISBN: 9781742589022

It's rare to come across a book that deals so explicitly with questions of identity in a way that is readable and engaging. Rarer still to find one that combines this with interrogations of nationalism, white privilege, death, birth, female sexuality, female orgasm, domestic violence, abortion, miscarriage, marriage, divorce, religion, sexual assault, infidelity... the list goes on. In anyone else's hands being confronted with such a myriad of experiences on a page would be too much to endure, but Roanna Gonsalves writes with such subtlety that these ideas are absorbed almost by osmosis, as character and situation unwind in each thoroughly engaging short story.

The Permanent Resident, is, as you might expect, an explicit exploration of migrant experience in Australia. The narrators are all migrants, coming to the country—mainly from Goa in India—to find their place here. Yet this explicitness is unravelled gently, teased out through a host of other issues experienced by the female protagonists of these stories. In style, tone and subject matter The Permanent Resident is reminiscent of David Szalay's All That Man Is, but Gonsalves brings more longing to her stories, a clearer understanding of female experience and a sharper prick of knowing regarding her subject.

Gonsalves writes with subtlety, passion and determination; though her language seems ordinary and accessible, it is still crafted and pensive, opening up the depth of these characters and their wide-ranging experiences. The protagonists often remain unnamed—anonymous; we do not know them and they do not reveal themselves to us. They are unidentified representatives, the voices of those who slip under the radar on a daily basis. Here they are given power through the telling of their

tales. It is a place where these characters can speak up and take the lead.

Choosing the short story as the form for these explorations of migrant experience was a clever move: the similar-but-separate feel of each episode in the collection mirrors the experience of each individual narrator entering, working in, and trying to find a home in Australia. Difference is just as important as similarity; those who arrive are perceived as 'other' to those who migrated to the country many years ago and have 'settled' into life here. In 'Full Face' the protagonist journeys to Australia with her husband to start a new life, initially staying with friends of her family who migrated to Australia many years ago. On arrival at the airport, greeting her friend, the protagonist notes how 'This gossamer welcome was a sign that I would feel at home in Australia, with the certainty of her toned body hugging mine, her shiny hair, smelling so Australian'. Already, in the first story and the first migration experience, boundaries are defined. Indian women with permanent residency, once migrants, are perceived as Australian now.

As much as migration and belonging are central themes in this book, so too are relationship conflicts. High wires of tension are trodden between men and women, husband and wife, employer and employee, travellers and settlers, white and Indian, newly arrived Indians and 'Australianised' Indians. In this book, difference is key where similarity is desired.

It's not all about migration. One of the more striking stories in the collection 'Friending and Trending' is a bluntly confronting examination of how we, in modern society, pass over reality in favour of online relationships and connections. In the story, a young married couple from Goa are relaxing at home when the husband's new Bose speakers arrive. There is a consistent tension between reality and technology as the story develops; the pregnant wife is bleeding, a fact that is ignored by both her and her husband as technology dominates their attention. There are some telling lines that exemplify how anything beyond liking, sharing or commenting on Facebook or Instagram is beyond their comprehension:

He came from a long line of perfect pregnancies ... So when she began to bleed on the very same day that the new Bose speakers were delivered, he didn't know what to make of it.

The alienation within the relationship bluntly shows the disconnect that devices have created in their lives. The husband cannot even sense when his wife is in pain: 'She exhaled deeply. It was a soul cry. He mistook it for indigestion', yet once his Bose speakers are up and running, he understands all too well 'the purity of their cries'. It's a deeply unsettling, but necessary, story.

334 | Westerly 62.2 **335** | Jen Bowden

To explore such experiences, purposefully, unashamedly and with skill enough to make them readable, demands talent, something that Gonsalves clearly has in droves. The only disappointment in *The Permanent Resident* rises from it ending so soon.

A Review of *Billy Sing*by Ouyang Yu Rebecca Harris

Rebecca Harris is an English and Cultural Studies Honours student at the University of Western Australia (UWA). She is currently Regional Project Support at writingWA and an editorial committee member for Tenderfoot, a creative arts journal at UWA. She was previously an intern at Westerly Magazine and Margaret River Press.

Yu, Ouyang. 2017. *Billy Sing: A Novel*. Melbourne, Victoria: Transit Lounge. RRP: \$27.95, 144pp. ISBN: 9780995359444

Warning: This review contains spoilers.

Ouyang Yu's latest novel, *Billy Sing*, is unusual. What might seem to be an accurate account of William Edward 'Billy' Sing's life is, in actuality, a historical fiction that goes beyond just the retelling of his military career. In a small number of pages, Yu effectively amalgamates a trio of themes—race, war and the Australian landscape—to present a unique narrative that depicts the triumphant but conflicted life of a 'half-caste' Australian in the late 19th to early 20th century.

We follow Billy as he transitions from child to adult. Born in 1886 as the 'Australian son of both "Mother England" and "Father Cathay" in rural Queensland, Billy suffers a lonely and troubled childhood as he is subjected to racial abuse, due to his mixed race. This was around the time when Chinese miners were immigrating to Australia for the gold rush. It led to multiple tensions between Chinese and European miners (Drake 104). In his loneliness, he becomes proficient in shooting and in 1914, he enlists for the army, where he goes on to have a triumphant career and is accepted for who he is. He marries a Scottish woman named Fenella and they return to Proserpine where he is celebrated as a war hero. However, this happiness is short-lived as his wife leaves him, and he reverts to his pre-war, outsider position. To end this sad tale, Billy dies alone in his hut, during a sensual and frightening dream.

Although this synopsis is largely biographical, Yu engages many prose techniques that make this narrative unusual, unique and a far cry from the

336 | Westerly 62.2 337 | Rebecca Harris

conventional biography. He employs first-person narration to emulate the spirit of Billy, making this intention clear in the prologue:

And I'm doing exactly that, living in another existence, through another individual, to tell the tale, a tale of my own life. (9)

Through this voice, Yu shapes his prose around historical benchmarks in Billy's life to 'resuscitate' his experiences for us. One example of Yu's exceptional merger of fact and fiction is when Billy's wife (supposedly) leaves him:

When I woke up from the dream, she was gone. I searched everywhere ... It was almost as if another dream had begun after my dream of the Flower Woman. All I had to do, I thought to myself, was to wait till I woke up ... (125).

Historically, it is uncertain whether Fenella ever made the passage to Australia. Yu's use of dreams to navigate this ambiguity, whilst also characterising Billy's desperation, is clever.

While Yu resuscitates Billy's experiences for us, he also provides a three-dimensional scope of the cultural issues of the era. A notable example is Yu's revival of Billy's experience as a victim of institutionalised, or 'educational', racism:

... Mark initiated a topic on Australia's future, as part of the arts subject, and he introduced it by inviting the students to comment ... 'It should be a eugenic one in which all the lesser beings are removed, such as the Chinaman and the Abos.' He got five out of five ... 'Australia's future is bound to be white, as white as a snowball, never to be tarnished by any colour, black, brown, yellow ...' ... When it came to my turn to answer, I simply said, 'I don't know.' I got zero out of five because Mark hated my guts for it. (37–38)

We wince on his behalf as he is forced to endure and partake in this offensive discussion. We also gain an insight into the attitudes that led up to the White Australia policy. Additionally, we extend this to our current cultural context, as although we would like to think that Australia has progressed from these fictionalised thoughts, these opinions are eerily reflective of the contemporary hate-rhetoric towards multiculturalism. In this sense, *Billy Sing* can become more than a historical fiction on Billy's life. It can also be an accessible historical document that opens conversations on Australia's racist past and contemporary parallels.

Despite Yu's clever prose, I have one misgiving. A reviewer for *The Saturday Paper* observed that the book contained a lot of 'damp and dissolute and decayed' images such as blood, semen and faeces (J. R.). Although this is probably symbolic and realistic to the subject matters of race and war, I found that these were, at times, uncomfortable and unnecessary. As an example, Billy comes across his Captain, who, while ejaculating, 'held it like a hose, swaying it from side to side, in an act of spraying, as if he were sprinkling his fluid over a bed of flowers ...' (81). Although it probably reflects the loneliness of the soldiers, I do not think that scenes like these amplified Yu's artistic purpose.

Billy Sing is still an elegant rendition of the sad but poignant life of William Edward 'Billy' Sing. It is also a vivid and accessible enunciation of the 19th and early 20th century. Yu's capsizing of literary conventions allows him to pack multiple hard-hitting themes into a brief space, and his ability to make it a compelling read reinforces his mastery as a novelist.

Works Cited

Drake, Jack. The Wild West in Australia and America, Boolarong Press, 2012. Google Books, https://goo.gl/Q2AQvT

J. R. 'Billy Sing.' The Saturday Paper, 8 April 2017, https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com. au/2017/04/30/billy-sing/14915736004449

338 | Westerly 62.2 339 | Rebecca Harris

WA Writers United

Westerly is part of WA Writers United, a collaboration of literary organisations in Perth. Westerly subscribers will benefit from member discounts on tickets for all the following events—just mention WA Writers United when you book!



December

- 3rd Katharine's Birthday, KSP Writers Centre, 11am 4pm.
- 8th OOTA Christmas Party @ Fremantle Arts Centre Gardens, 12.30-3.30pm.
- 8th FAWWA Annual Christmas Party @ Mattie Furphy House, Swanbourne.

January

- 26th Author Talk with Canadian poet Talya Rubin, KSP Writers Centre, 6.30pm.
- 29th Voicebox Poetry Reading, Café @ The Rose, North Fremantle.
- 30th Peter Cowan Writers Centre opens for administration.

February

- 2nd 'Liminality', WA Poets Inc. at Scarborough Community Centre, 7-9pm, free event.
- 10th 'So You Want to... Express Other Voices' with Tineke Van der Eecken, KSP Writers Centre, 1–4pm.
- 14th 'Love Poetry under the Stars', WA Poets Inc., Mattie Furphy House, Swanbourne, 7-9pm.
- 14th 2018 'Poetry d'Amour' Love Poetry Contest, WA Poets Inc., details at their website.
- 24th Open Mic, Poetry and Prose, KSP Writers Centre, 6.30-9pm.
- 26th Voicebox Poetry Reading, Café @ The Rose, North Fremantle.

March

- 20th 'Ros Spencer Poetry Contest' closes, WA Poets Inc., details on their website.
- 23rd Author Talk, KSP Writers Centre, 6.30-9pm.
- 24th 'The Semantics of Silence: writing poems that breathe', workshop with Jackson, OOTA Writers, Fremantle Arts Centre, 1.30-4pm.
- 26th Voicebox Poetry Reading, Café @ The Rose, North Fremantle.
- 31st Deadline for Submissions to Westerly Magazine, June/July issue.

April

- 7th Short Story Writing Workshop with Laurie Steed, OOTA Writers, Fremantle Arts Centre, 1.30-4pm.
- 14th 'So You Want to... Ramp up Research' with Rashida Murphy, KSP Writers Centre, 1pm-4pm.
- 27th Open Mic, Poetry and Prose, KSP Writers Centre, 6.30-9pm.
 Also late April (date TBC): Press Club for ages 11-17, KSP Writers Centre,
 9.30am 3.30pm.
- 27th 'True Connections' poetry and art exhibition opens (runs to May 9th), Vic Park Centre for the Arts, East Vic Park, 10am-4pm daily. Details via WA Poets Inc. or at: http://www.creativeconnectionsaape.net.au/

28th 'Vic Park Slam', WA Poets Inc., at the Dutch Trading Company, East Vic Park,

7-9pm.

30th Voicebox Poetry Reading, Café @ The Rose, North Fremantle.

May

6th KSP Open Day, KSP Writers Centre, 10.30am - 3pm.

15th Literary Dinner featuring Kaaron Warren, 80s Theme, KSP Writers Centre,

6-9.30pm.

19th 'So You Want to... Find the Story' with Kaaron Warren, KSP Writers Centre, 1-4pm.

25th Author Talk, KSP Writers Centre, 6.30-9pm.

28th Voicebox Poetry Reading, Café @ The Rose, North Fremantle.

June

9th 'So You Want to... Publish Online' with Wild Weeds Press, KSP Writers Centre,

1-4pm

24th Deadline for 2019 Established KSP residency applications, 5pm AWST.

25th Voicebox Poetry Reading, Café @ The Rose, North Fremantle.

29th Open Mic, Poetry and Prose, KSP Writers Centre, 6.30-9pm.

Ongoing

Peter Cowan Writers Centre offers regular workshops with experienced facilitators between March and November. See their website for all details: http://www.pcwc.org.au

WA Poets Inc. are running the 2018 'Summer of Love'—regular love poetry online at https://www.facebook.com/PoetrydAmour.wa/ and culminating in their events on the 14th of February (see above).

The Fellowship of Writers WA will be running a number of events across the year, dates TBC. They also offer residencies. See their website for details: http://www.fawwa.org/events

OOTA Prose classes with Helen Hagemann and Poetry classes with Shane McCauley are ongoing, on alternate Fridays. Contact: www.ootawriters.com

 $WA\ Poets\ Inc.\ host\ a\ variety\ of\ poetry\ events\ throughout\ the\ year,\ visit\ their\ website\ for\ updates;\ www.wapoets.wordpress.com$

KSP Writers Centre offers three private cabins for writers to retreat, with substantial discounts for members, plus ten different writing groups meeting on a regular basis. Contact: www.kspwriterscentre.com

For more information on any of these events, please contact the host organisation.

Peter Cowan Writers Centre: www.pcwc.org.au

KSP Writers' Centre: www.kspwriterscentre.com

WA Poets Inc: www.wapoets.wordpress.com

Voicebox: www.voiceboxpoets.com

OOTA: www.ootawriters.com

Westerly Magazine: www.westerlymag.com.au

Westerly **Submissions**

Westerly publishes fiction and poetry as well as articles. We aim to generate interest in the literature and culture of Australia and its neighbouring regions. Westerly is published biannually in July and November. Previously unpublished submissions are invited from new and established writers living in Australia and overseas.

Submission deadline for June edition: 31 March Submission deadline for November edition: 31 August

Submissions may be sent via post or submitted online. Unsolicited manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All manuscripts must show the name and address of the sender and should be typed (double-spaced) on one side of the paper only. While every care is taken of manuscripts, the editors can take no final responsibility for their return; contributors are consequently urged to retain copies of all work submitted.

Poetry: maximum of 5 poems no longer than 50 lines each.

Fiction and Creative Non-Fiction: maximum 3,500

Articles and Essays: maximum 5,000 words with minimal footnotes.

Minimum rates paid to contributors:

Poems: \$120. Stories and essays: \$180. Reviews: \$100.

Postal submissions and correspondence to:

The Editors, Westerly, English and Cultural Studies, M202 The University of Western Australia, Crawley, WA 6009 Australia

tel: (08) 6488 3403, fax: (08) 6488 1030

email: westerly@uwa.edu.au

www.westerlymag.com.au

Online submissions at westerlymag.com.au should be attached as RTF or Word documents. Please include a brief biographical note and postal address in the submission form.

Work published in Westerly is

cited in: Abstracts of English Studies, Australian Literary Studies Annual Bibliography, Australian National Bibliography, Journal of Commonwealth Literature Annual Bibliography, Arts and Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents/Arts & Humanities, The Genuine Article, Modern Language Association of America Bibliography, The Year's Work in English Studies, and is indexed in APAIS: Australian Public Affairs Information Service (produced by the National Library of Australia) and AUSTLIT, the Australian Literary Online Database.



Subscribe to Westerly

or subscribe online at www.westerlymag.com.au

☐ Two-year subscription \$80	
One-year subscription \$45	l
One-year student concession \$40	
Overseas one-year subscrip	
Purchase single copies \$24 .	.95 plus \$2.50 postage
Personal details	
NAME	
ADDRESS	
EMAIL	TEL
Payment by Credit Card (Mast	ercard or Visa only)
NAME OR CARDHOLDER	
SIGNATURE	EXPIRY
Payment by Cheque	
Cheques should be in	AMOUNT \$
Australian dollars only, payable	

Send this subscription form with your payment to:

Administrator, Westerly Magazine, The University of Western Australia M2O2 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley WA 6009 Australia

62.2

Volume 62 Number 2, 2017

Since 1956, Westerly has been publishing new writing from Western Australia.



Front cover image

I Dewa Putu Mokoh, *The Antique Shop*, 1991. Chinese ink and acrylic on canvas, 80×60 cm. Courtesy of Mary Hill and the late Chris Hill. Image by Brad Coleman/John Curtin Gallery.

'If You Hear a Baby Crying' Gay Lynch Imagine, late one afternoon, you descend three steep, shade-filigreed staircases with your daughter to buy flowers and sandalwood chicken, the baby swaddled and cocooned in his silk sling, sleeping against her breast, to Hollywood Road, where you can find antique shops, galleries and arty coffee shops. Banyon trees with blackened trunks fan over the mossy steps, their roots insinuate fissures and sprawl over leafy stonewalls. You get caught up in the rush of people navigating the crowded pavements, finishing work or changing shift, picking up dinner from the American Groceries Supermarket or promenading in the cool evening air.

With writing and ideas from

The Melbourne-Seoul Poetry Exchange, the China-Australia Writing Centre, John Mateer, Rina Kikuchi, Fan Dai, Shane McCauley, Roanna Gonsalves, Elizabeth Tan, Dennis Haskell, Isabelle Li, Fiona Morrison, Agustinus Wibowo, Timmah Ball, Yujing Liang, Shane Strange, Ella Jeffery and many more.

ISSN 0043-342X



AU\$\$25.95, postage included (within Aus) www.westerlymag.com.au/shop