

Oceans

New writing from  
Western Australia

Guest edited by  
Prema Arasu

In this Issue

Jessica White  
Luoyang Chen  
Yakup Niyazi  
Luisa Mitchell  
Sam Mayne

# Westerly



**'archipelago'**  
Kathryn  
Gledhill-Tucker

Drawn from memory, the coast is fragmented into short shards of elsewhere time and salt water tongues. Particled memories that turn stones and beach glass over onto themselves and into smooth islands. A heaven mess of sand and salt calling into itself, out and under.

## Westerly

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Oceans

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The oceans are a vital component of our planet's system: they regulate climate and sustain diverse ecosystems that are fundamental to societal wellbeing and economic development. This special edition of *Westerly* Magazine, sponsored by the Oceans Institute (OI), brings into focus our profound human connection to the ocean through a compelling compilation of poems, essays and short stories.

Our relationship with the ocean is both intimate and complex. Yet, the combined crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are transforming these waters at an unprecedented rate. These changes pose significant challenges to the stability of our societies and highlight the urgent need for a deeper understanding of and respect for our marine environment. The OI, situated among the world's most diverse marine ecosystems and exploring some of the least charted oceanic regions, is uniquely positioned to contribute to this conversation. Our location in Western Australia serves as a gateway to an area of exceptional marine biodiversity, spanning both tropical and temperate waters, and holds immense scientific, ecological, spiritual and cultural significance.

Exploring this understanding through ocean literature symbolises the transdisciplinary uniqueness that the OI can harness by engaging scholarly voices across a range of disciplines, including the humanities and arts. This edition of *Westerly* underscores the critical role that creative and learned voices play in articulating our connection to the ocean. By featuring works that reflect on the ocean's profound impact on our lives and its vulnerability to environmental threats, we aim to foster greater awareness and inspire action. This special edition emphasises the vital role of the ocean in shaping our cultural and ecological landscape.

**Professor Christophe Gaudin**, Director, Oceans Institute  
October 2024

The ocean not only surrounds us—it is in us. We are seventy per cent salt water. When our faces are submerged, our mammalian dive reflex is activated, slowing our hearts and conserving oxygen. This is the same reflex that allows sperm whales to dive three kilometres below the surface to hunt giant squid.

Like whales, we too must return to the ocean. Away from the metaphorical ocean of ancient myth, away from the sublime ocean of the Romantic Imagination, and into the depths of the ocean that begat our early ancestors. In the churning waters of critical theory, this return has been termed 'the oceanic turn':

an interdisciplinary transition to what might be called 'critical ocean studies' that reflects an important shift from a long-term concern with mobility across transoceanic surfaces to theorizing oceanic submersion, thus rendering vast oceanic space into ontological place. (DeLoughrey 32)

Drawing upon the material feminism and multispecies entanglements of Donna J. Haraway, Astrida Neimanis, Stacy Alaimo and others, *Critical Ocean Studies* is a post-Romantic, post-Capitalist recognition of the materiality and agency of the sea. Steinberg & Peters' proposed 'New Thalassology' similarly draws particular emphasis on the ocean's movement and depths, foregrounding a new 'wet' ontology in its geographical construction (247). As 'a material and discursive entity', the ocean 'necessarily rejects transcendent and binary approaches by advocating for displacement, transformation, submersion, reorientation and entanglement' (Tien & Burmann 82). Rather than add to the waves of scholarship that risk reducing the vast realities of the world's oceans into ontological thought machines, however, this volume seeks submergence through creative practice. All the artists and writers here submerge

themselves in different ways. In Nicole Hodgson's case, the plunge is literal ("I feel like I'm part of the ocean": The inter-connected world of the ocean swimmer' 42). For geoscientist Devin Harrison ('Lander Lament' 29), the deepest trenches of the ocean are seen through the eyes and ears of a remotely-operated lander while he floats kilometres above on the research vessel *Dagon*.

It is unsurprising that nineteen of the twenty-six contributions to this volume come in the form of poetry. The ocean, or, perhaps, its imperceptibly slow rise in human consciousness, is a hyperobject, a term Timothy Morton defines as a thing spatially, temporally or geographically 'massively distributed in time and space relative to humans' (1). The poetic form, according to David Farrier, has the ability to aestheticise and explore concepts that elude straightforward language due to their scale. Poetry, he writes, 'can model an Anthropocenic perspective in which our sense of relationship and proximity (and from this, our ethics) is stretched and tested against the Anthropocene's warping effects' (5). Caitlin Maling's poetic sequence on stromatolites reaches into the ancient past of these billion year old living fossils while contemplating their underwhelming presence as a minor tourist attraction on the WA coast.

Alongside established WA writers like Maling are several brilliant debuts, including three of my colleagues from the Munderoo-UWA Deep-Sea Research Centre: Harrison, alongside fellow geoscientist Yakup Niyazi ('The Many Names of Blue Water' 38), and marine biologist Elrond Garcia ('Water Moves' 86).

I owe my deepest gratitude to all involved in bringing this collection together. Thanks to the *Westerly* staff: Daniel, Shalmalee, Sarah and the interns who ushered it all to print, and to the philanthropic donors of the UWA Oceans Institute for the financial support which made this project possible. My special thanks go to the Director of the OI, Professor Christophe Gaudin, for including multidisciplinary projects such as this within the mission of the OI. Finally, thanks to my supervisor and the Director of the Munderoo-UWA Deep-Sea Research Centre, Professor Alan Jamieson, for making it possible to pursue creative projects such as this.

**Prema Arasu**, October 2024

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This Special Issue is an exciting and important collaboration for *Westerly*. Thinking with and about the ocean is an inescapable aspect of the Western Australian experience, and the works gathered here, dextrously curated by Prema Arasu, offer glimpses, scents, sounds of the sea. I hope you emerge from your reading feeling as salty and inspired as I did.

But, before you commence that reading, here are some very necessary thank yous on behalf of the Magazine. We are, first and foremost, enormously grateful to UWA's Oceans Institute, to their supporters and donors, and to Professor Christophe Gaudin and Professor Alan Jamieson. This watery version of *Westerly* would not exist without you.

To the *Westerly* team—Shalmalee Palekar, Sarah Yeung and Melissa Kruger—and to the interns who worked on this issue—Joseph Cook, Kyle Orton and Christine Vuong—thank you. To Keith Feltham at Lasertype and to Becky Chilcott at Chil3, and to Big See for the wonderful cover art, thank you too! As well, I'd like to thank the funding bodies who support *Westerly* in other operations: Creative Australia, Culture and the Arts WA (through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries), The University of Western Australia and the School of Humanities there, and the Arthur Finn Bequest.

To all the writers whose work we are privileged to share here: thank you too. Special mention must go to those who are more used to publishing academic work: your poetry and ideas are warmly welcome on our pages! And, finally: a massive, hyperobject-sized thank you to Prema Arasu. This issue was your brainchild, and it is a wonderful contribution to *Westerly's* ongoing consideration of life in the west.

**Daniel Jukes**, October 2024

from 'John Port Beach' facing north-east—  
a family gardens seaweed before  
a thrum of boasting jet skis

wet-suited aunties drape salted curls  
through the bellies of bloated baskets

pouting from horizon line—trestle  
bridges pin Garden Island to the mainland

dune shrubs knot urine mangled hair  
over cautioned limestone lips

we silently trace the bubbled mapping  
of the Kwinana industrial area—  
a pair of seals plaiting the edge of the reef

**Orange Grey Whales (BOOM)**  
Stephen Chinna

Between the ages of six to fifteen Stephen Chinna lived in Margaret River. These two poems form part of a larger collection about this period of his life. He has worked as an actor, theatre director and academic among numerous other occupations. He has directed some forty plays and continues to write poetry and songs.

the winternight is still  
even the birds are sleeping  
but every five to six seconds  
without fail inevitably  
*BOOM*

lying in bed alert  
listening for the rollers  
a maritime nocturne  
inexorably  
*BOOM*

some six miles distant  
on to the flat plateaus  
those iceberg granite slabs  
displaying their flattened backs  
like orange grey whales  
basking in the shallows  
*BOOM*

booming inland moving  
through filigree channels  
along limestone tunnels  
honeycomb hollows  
festooned caverns  
lying cold awake  
counting off seconds  
*BOOM*

maritime power  
shaking the land matter  
bouncing fat echoes  
through subterranean grottoes  
the lacework cliffs  
capillaried cathedrals  
every five to six seconds  
*BOOM*

**Drowning (At the Mouth)**  
Stephen Chinna

---

and one holiday morning  
while out at the Mouth  
one hot summer morning  
a rip took me out sweeping  
past the orange grey glistening  
granite flat whale slopes

where standing there solo  
in trousers and singlet  
a scarecrow fisherman  
a longline in water  
a lean smoke in mouth  
nonchalantly watches me  
sweep past through the chop  
head bobbing arms flailing  
no doubt hoping  
I won't disturb his fishing  
by snagging his line  
or drowning or something

but I found my way back  
to the shoreline sloping  
panting and gasping  
grasping and groaning  
staggering up  
the drag of the beach  
and the lone scarecrow fisherman  
long bony feet planted  
on the glistening granite  
orange grey iceberg

flat wet whale slope  
carried on fishing  
another smoke in the mouth  
perhaps a tailor on the line  
maybe during that time  
and no doubt pleased  
in a non-demonstrative  
nonchalant low-key sort of way  
that I hadn't interrupted his day  
by drowning or something

## The Sky, the Sea Kerry Greer

Kerry Greer is a poet and writer based in Western Australia. She received the Venie Holmgren Prize for Environmental Poetry in 2021. She was awarded second place in the 2024 Elizabeth Jolley Short Story Prize run by Australian Book Review. Kerry has been shortlisted for the Calibre Essay Prize, the Woollahra Digital Literary Award, the Newcastle Poetry Prize, the ACU Poetry Prize, the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize and more. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Cedar Crest College. Her debut poetry collection, *The Sea Chest*, was published by Recent Work Press in 2023.

I.

Above the sky, the sky goes on  
deeper into itself—  
just as the sea is still the sea in all its layers.  
He wanted me to need him the way he needed me,  
the way it made him hurt for me. Beautiful  
and broken, he said I was, and that he could help,  
but I should check in with him—tell him how  
things were going during the day, what ways  
could he be of use,  
where could he meet me at a crossroads?  
He said, *I love you* and *I love you* and *I love you*  
like a chorus, a chant, until I was so far outside myself,  
unbound, I could not see the way back down  
through the black and the blue to where I had lived.

I was way out with the comets and their long light-tails.  
It hurt to find the darkness of the sky at night  
inside my chest, a bowl from which no echo  
could be sent back.  
I would have to take his hand.  
I would have to say, *I love you too*.  
I was drowning or I was untethered  
in blank space.

Either way, there was no air, no way to breathe  
without reaching, replying to his voice  
travelling through darkness,  
hourly, minute-deep—

*How are you?*  
*Where are you? I miss you,*  
*miss you too, so much.*

II.

To need the air, to need to speak.  
I might be in the water or the dark,  
which are the same thing, when trying  
to find the surface after the white wave  
and the white wave and the next  
white wave. Which way is up? Which way hurts the least?

Sometimes he spoke in lullaby, pure image  
as sound. The over and the over and the over  
again of his body, his arms enfolding me.

*Quiet now. Quiet. Let me hold you,*  
*my Love. Listen. It is cold first, only for a minute,*  
*then it's warm.*

He had a soft voice. On his head he wore a crown of foam.  
He said he loved me. He said he couldn't live without me.  
He bent me to his lips,  
so that I could pay the proper respect.

III.

It wasn't that the sky and the sea  
touched as a hand on a pane of glass.  
The hand moved through the glass  
at times, like a mother wanting her child  
back from the other side of the window.

He said, *Open your mouth,*  
tilting my chin with the cold  
tips of his fingers. He liked to kiss  
a certain way.

He said, *Open your mouth*,  
and I breathed him in.  
There was a violence to it.  
The sea entered. The sky  
existed as shadow and light  
afterwards. The layers became a mirror  
of blue—similar, not the same.

In the image, I moved darker  
than I'd ever been in life.  
The way the water distorts  
the hue and shape of objects.  
You could be running, and yet  
everything is very slow. Liquid expanding  
to touch the edges of what keeps it whole.  
Like kissing someone  
so that they will let you go.

IV.

Again and again: the glass  
ceiling of sky against sea,  
wave after wave on the long  
white shore. No difference was made  
in days or weeks or months—his longing,  
pulling me as surely, as roughly as the tide.  
Maybe in aeons, maybe in ages to come  
I would be let go, some piece of debris  
strewn on the sand as if dropped from the sky,  
unable to walk or to speak,  
unable to remember who I had been.

V.

The worst part was, when he was gentle,  
I loved him, and when he was angry,  
I remembered watching the slate waves  
coming to pieces in a storm,  
how I had gone there in despair or grief  
because it helped me  
to see the violence of the sea.

VI.

*Where are my other parts?*

I asked. But he didn't answer.  
I remembered many things I'd loved—  
a boy with a stubborn flick of corn-coloured hair  
at the crown of his head, a house where we lay in bed  
and watched the wind move through the pink flowers  
next to the window. The scratching of the thorns  
along the glass in the night, waking me,  
how I thought of myself as a child thinking  
of a witch waiting in the dark, my own dark head  
turning on the pillow to find sleep,  
or to imagine walking into the bedroom  
of my mother, her hair a web of night across the pillow,  
the whiteness of her face to match the moon,  
its worry, its sorrow—how I needed help  
but couldn't seem to speak.

VII.

I was running for my life  
away from him. Ocean  
at my back, my thighs,  
my empty interior spaces. The tide  
is miraculous until you want the moon, until you want  
the moon nothing else matters.  
If I return now, nobody will recognise me—  
neither friends nor lovers. But the moon  
my son will see—my son the moon will see  
mist on the dawn horizon, how it lifts  
and lifts a veil. Anything that evaporates is briefly, lightly,  
free and flying upwards, through the layers—  
higher and deeper into the dark  
beyond the dark.

**The fisherman**  
James Salvius Cheng

James Salvius Cheng was born in Myanmar, though he now lives and writes in Western Australia. When not writing he works as a doctor. His fiction and poetry appear in *Meanjin*, *HEAT*, *Island*, *Mascara Literary Review* and other places.

In the small hours, see the locular body  
sacked for wine and bread, suckling eggs  
and broad water, floating, incandescent,  
lit upon the backed-up waterweed,

a still and wide-eyed goodwife,  
a life, it leapt, you killed it  
and her arms showed red you killed it  
and a dozen mouths run  
you killed it.

**Seawall**  
Sam Mayne

Sam Mayne is a writer-researcher living on Wadjuk Noongar Boodjar. She writes *Weird*, short fiction about being human (and not!) in the midst of the Anthropocene. Her work has been featured in *Westerly*, *Gramarye* and *Strangely Enough*, among others, and is upcoming in *Antipodes* and *Limina*.

They lived by the sea.

Cy had become very good at telling the time, with ever-increasing accuracy, by how close the water was to the top of the woolly black stain on her bedroom wall. If it lapped at her wrist when she placed her hand on the very edge of the stain—so that the tiny cosmos of mould spores that hovered above it looked as if they were coming from the tips of her fingers—it was twelve in the afternoon. If she could not see the stain because it had dipped below the surface of the water, it was three-thirty. If she could see the floor and the water-wrinkled edges of her feet, two pale splaying bodies crowded by all of the other sea-things that were left behind when the tide retreated, it was close to midnight. She didn't look up to tell the time anymore, didn't follow the slow ascension of the sun. She looked down. They lived by the sea.

That used to mean something different, she knew. Her grandmother recounted that time to her. *By the sea* was a row of white weatherboard houses set into the shoreline and the ocean only came in on the air, a salt-speckled breeze blowing through open windows. *By the sea* was a straight blue streak in the background of a picture, one that showed glossy brown thighs rippling a technicolour beach towel. *By the sea* was an occasional state of being. Things were different now. The tides had crept up and up, a slow gnaw that rotted the little white houses, pulled them out of the gums of the Earth by the root and swallowed them. Going upward didn't help, stairs or stilts made no difference, because the tide began to come from other places. It would seep out of cracks in the roof, come rushing from pipes. She had heard it even came out of people, sometimes.

For people like her grandmother, her parents even, they lived in a bad time. A *wrong* time. This was not supposed to happen, they always said. The ocean was supposed to stay where it was. Cy didn't know the world any different from how it was now, but she knew that inland it

was hot and there was another tide, a burning red one that soured the air with black smoke, the kind that curdled in chests and came back up in thick, gummy wads, in soot-stained clots of lung. And there was no food there. The tide brought things to eat. The tide told her the time. The tide soothed her red and broken skin when she spent too long outside in the angry white glare of the sun. At night, when the water began to recede from her bedroom, the tide whispered things in her ear. It was not so bad, to live by the sea.

•••

Cy was sixteen when a girl her age was found dead on the shore, a little after the sun had risen. A storm was on its way in, and the bay was flooded with a dishwater half-light, stone jaws open and drinking in the churn of the sea. The bay had been a point, once, an awl of rock like a spear in the flank of the Indian Ocean, but the sea had grown over it and left behind a torn cuticle of shoreline that they called home. They found Marnie at its far edge, a triangle of sand that sat closest to where the remains of the point lay hidden beneath the chop. Around her were the usual occupants of that place that was not quite land and not quite sea, was both and neither. A tiny crab summiting a lump of rotted wood; a scattering of fish who had not followed the retreating tide in time, their bodies a fat wet gleam against the sand; the strange calligraphy of beachworm castings and clam burrows, scabbled along the margins of the shore. She was wrapped in a ragged clump of rust-coloured seaweed, her body curled up as if she were sleeping.

Cy had been there when they found her. Cy's house was one of the closest to the bay, and she liked to walk down there at low tide, to watch the beach emerge like a second sunrise. Most of the town came down at the same time, to recover things that had disappeared from their homes at high tide or to take a fish that had been marooned on the sand. If someone could not find something that had been lost, they could always find something to eat. Cy thought that was a fair trade.

It was her neighbour who saw Marnie first, an old man who was always one of the first to reach the beach at dawn. His voice, chapped and corrugated with age, had travelled down the bay on a snarl of morning wind. He was crouching over her by the time Cy made it to him, pulling away the wefts of seaweed that were tangled around her limbs.

Her face was almost silver in the cloud-dampened light, had the same fleshy and obscene sheen as the underside of a snail. She was bruised, a purple-yellow mottle spilled over her right shoulder and down her chest and a second one curved up her right leg, bare and sheeny with

condensation or seawater, maybe both, she wasn't sure. Cy's eyes traced down the girl's limbs and she saw that they had started to swell, feet and ankles bulging and paling, waterlogged inside and out. She found herself thinking about what would happen if Marnie's skin was to split open then and there, burst open like a seed pod or old fruit that had bulged and fermented in the sun.

People began to crowd around, and someone was shouting Marnie's name, as if they could summon her back into her body if they were loud enough. Cy realised that the person shouting was Marnie's father, who was kneeling in the sand beside her, grabbing her shoulders and thumping her chest. Marnie's eyes were open and blank, the only thing in them was an echo of the quicksilver sky above them, the same colour as the sea.

•••

Most of the people in town were saying Marnie had been drunk, had perhaps fallen asleep on the beach and drowned. It was the easiest explanation so it was the one they all accepted, and within a day they had buried her with the others, up behind the dunes that bordered the town.

The tide stayed high longer than usual that night. Cy could feel the water seeping through her blankets, hear the things swimming in it pass by her ears as she tried to sleep. She did sleep, because she dreamed. She dreamed of Marnie on the beach, still wrapped in seaweed. Standing, looking out at the black lap of the ocean, its surface only distinguishable from the sky by the vein of moonlight stretched between the shore and the horizon. A sound filled the air, a chime like a finger skating along the rim of a glass.

Cy watched as Marnie walked into the sea, something red and glossy seeping from her skin. Blood, running more thickly with each step she took. She fell below the water and became a shadow, half-visible beneath the foam, then just a slick of blood turned to ribbons by the current, and then nothing. The sound retreated, followed Marnie out past the rocks that sheltered the bay—broad sentinels that halted the deepwater waves, cut them down and resurrected them as spray and foam and the tame swell that reached the shore. The bay was quiet except for that distant siege of water and stone, a gull somewhere overhead, its cry a kind of keening.

•••

He came the following day, the man with the rope. Cy had heard people in town talk about him before, stories about a figure who travelled up and down the coast. They said he had found a way to speak to the sea, that

he was trying to send the tides back to where they belonged. He arrived by boat, a rust-mottled dinghy that appeared on the horizon at sunrise, sprung up like a mushroom. He was younger than she had imagined, not much older than herself. He wore a coat that might have been white, once, but was now a damp, water-bruised grey. The rope sat across his body like a bandolier, thick and the same green as corroded copper, frayed so that its edges were blurry and uncertain. He did not introduce himself, only sat on a rock at the water's edge and stared out to sea. When the tide came in he shifted up beyond the houses, disappeared somewhere behind the sand dunes. He returned as the sea retracted back toward the horizon.

Cy watched him from her bedroom window until the sky began to flush and the shadows of the town and its denizens began to lengthen and tangle against the dunes. When she walked down the beach toward him he was running a stick through the sand, tracing a long and jagged line around himself in a dense spiral. He did not look up at her when she got close.

'What are you doing?' she asked him.

He was quiet a long time. The only sound was the rasp of sand as the man continued to scrape though it.

'Measuring,' he said. His voice was thick, a rubbery bellow that sank past her feet almost before she could make sense of it.

'Measuring what?'

He didn't answer. Her eyes traced the line he was drawing, it was rendered in more detail than she would have thought possible, tiny articulations of peaks and troughs, crescents and spires. She felt the urge to get closer to it, examine it in more detail. As she lowered herself down on the sand the scent of something sour and metallic wafted up at her and she heard the man murmuring under his breath.

'Along and along and along and along.' The words didn't seem as though they were formed by the wilful movement of his teeth and tongue. They seemed to crawl up and out of him, to bubble up from his stomach. 'Along and along and along. No edge and no end. Along, along, along.' The tracery in the sand looked to Cy as if it were moving, squirming. She was on her knees and staring, bowing, nose almost touching the earth. It was then she saw that it was the sand that moved, that it was rearranging itself in almost invisible spasms. Something was humming, somewhere behind her ears, a peal reverberating in the pores and valleys of her skull.

Something slammed into her shoulder and she flew back, landing hard on her backside. The man had his palm out to her and had tilted his face upward, his eyes meeting hers for the first time. They were pale

and motionless, flat in the same way that Marnie's had been. The sun had disappeared, the familiar roofs and edges of the town had begun to melt into darkness, so that Cy could not be truly sure they were there at all. She could only be sure of the cold gaze of the strange man, the water seeping up between her toes, and the way that the thumping of her pulse syncopated the steady rhythm of the waves that lapped the shore. So she turned and ran back the way she had come.

When she returned to her bedroom, she looked for the man again through her window. A wash of moonlight had landed on the wet sand so that it fluoresced, a silver-white scream all the way down the beach. Still, she could only make out his silhouette. He had begun uncoiling the rope from around his torso, laying it down on the ground in long loops and whorls. Cy thought it must be the light, or a flight of her own agitated imagination, but from where she watched it seemed that the rope had no end, dropping down over the man's shoulder and on to the sand on and on and on, until she fell asleep, forehead pressed against the glass.

•••

After three days Marnie was back on the beach again, this time propped up against a bitten-away ledge of sand, dotted with scrub and squat trees that shivered in the wind. Her clothing was gone, although clumps of seaweed still clung to her in places, translucent red, brown and green membranes transforming the hints of freckle, nipple, scar Cy could see beneath them. Marnie had been lashed in place by the rope that the man had brought to the shore with him, its ends disappearing into the eroded earth behind her. Cy recalled pictures she had seen of old ships, oak-and-iron monsters countering the waves with bare-chested effigies of women, mermaids, goddesses. Nobody had come down to the beach to collect what the tide had left behind that day, so couch cushions and mixing bowls and unpartnered shoes were spread out on the sand, the turned-out innards of the houses that sat silent and watchful as Cy descended toward the mouth of the bay. She stopped when she was close enough to see how Marnie had changed. Her eyes were open still, but now they moved, a soft side-to-side rocking, tracking something that Cy could not see. Her legs were crossed, and water pooled in the diamond formed by her bent knees. Cy caught the flicker of a tail moving in that water, saw the fine dark spines of a sea urchin protruding past the curve of Marnie's ankle. She stepped closer and Marnie's mouth began to move.

It was a senseless kind of moving at first, a grinding and gnashing made more ragged by a profound displacement of her jaw, her lower lip and teeth pulled to the left, the uppers to the right, and with each

clench and gasp came a cracking and popping that echoed across the bay. But slowly, slowly, her lips started to soften, and between them a black and swollen tongue appeared. Cy watched, frozen on the sand as the movements became more familiar, more human—the soft lower lip bite of a ‘V’; the loosening snare that made an ‘O’; the acrobatic lash of an ‘L’ that exposed the sole of her tongue and showed it was pockmarked with holes, threadbare and bloodless tears in bloated flesh, and with clusters of tiny barnacles, bone-white and pointed like excess teeth. Cy was not afraid, something like warmth swelled from Marnie and dragged her closer, pulled her in by the chest.

She could see the rope properly now, see the way that it undulated and writhed against Marnie’s greying flesh. She could see the parts of it that she had thought were frayed, could see that they were fine as silk and moving with mesmerising, rhythmic intent. They were legs or cilia or hyphae, thrumming gently against Marnie’s body. And Cy was sure that there was some connection between the methodical gesticulations of the rope-thing and the sounds that were working their way free of Marnie’s mouth. This was a translation, a story, the song or whisper of the sea unfurling out into the air.

•••

The rest of the town stopped coming down to the beach, and so each morning when Cy walked down the strand to Marnie, the jumble of items that had been washed out of the houses grew. The quadrupedal bodies of dining room chairs, half sunk in the sand, stood alongside waterlogged welcome mats that had begun to thicken with aquatic life, slow-growing cohorts of kelp and petal-shelled bivalves. The water seemed to linger more stubbornly in the sand, so that as she walked her feet sank more deeply into it, and she could feel the bodies of writhing, labouring things undulating against her skin. Everywhere, the warm-sweet scent of decay billowed and swelled, the trace of things becoming homes or food. Marnie was no exception to this. Cy would visit and find the sleek, anguine body of an eel burrowing into her side, or catch the vivid amber flicker of a sea sponge growing somewhere behind her tongue. She was a new and changing thing, transforming with each day, each tide. Cy would sit beside her, place her head on her shoulder and listen to the soft, slow dirge of vowels and consonants that continued to be expelled from Marnie’s body. She had stopped trying to make sense of them in the expected way; she began instead to hear them with her whole body, a trill that raised and lowered the fine hairs on her jaw, swelled the marrow in her bones. She was listening, like this, when the man returned.

Her eyes had been closed, and when she opened them he was crouching over Marnie, the tips of his fingers pressed to her mouth. Marnie’s hand was pressed to his own lips, his mouth forming slow, silent words against her fingertips, his head tilted as if he were listening. The rope had begun writhing around Marnie’s chest, its ends buried in the eroded wall behind her, disappearing into the jagged edge of the earth. Cy watched as the fine, strange tendrils covering the rope began to pulse and twitch, and as it began to stretch and grow. The man was looking at her, and she felt a rush of something surge in her chest. The rope had bulged out past Marnie’s body, was ascending and then descending, falling over Cy as the sand beneath her began to pucker around her legs, embedding her body in the silt.

When the rope landed on her skin she felt it, the resonance that pulsed through the body of the creature—and it was a creature, she was sure now. An ancient thing, a mind writhing and fruiting in the low wet womb of the earth. She felt the others, the long line of flesh that rippled along the coast, impossibly long and atrophying into infinities. Its cilia began to needle into her and the world unfolded out and down, and she was out past the waves, she was balanced on the fine slick skin of an anchialine pool, floating like an algal mat or a razorblade; she was swept up in a zooxanthellae exodus and she was the bone-white death rasp of the coral; she was a prey-eye panorama of a shoal of bodies just like hers, silver-flashing stream-readers; she was the chyme of oil and rust and salt leaking from an old wellbore; she was phosphorescing and annotating the white filagree of foam crashing on a distant reef; she was the deepwater cry from a hydrothermal vent, chemosynthetic manna-from-Hades, and she was the things that ate that and the things that ate them.

The rope dove back into the wall behind her, leaving her lashed beside Marnie. She rested her head back on the girl’s shoulder, and together they watched the fine silver edge of the tide slide up the beach and beyond them; watched it retract, watched it return, again and again and again, the great flux and flex of the planet, always certain but never the same. Together they felt the come-home call of the moon in their bellies and followed it out and down, up and back, marked time, ate stone, rewrote the edges of things over and over. Through it all the rope creature held them, embroidered itself into their flesh and bones, and when those were gone it found its way into what was left behind. ‘Where are we going?’ they would ask it, ‘When does this end?’ The creature (although by then, they knew that ‘creature’ was not the word for it, that there was no name they could give it) would answer in its own way, send them the sense of a line, countless lines, criss-crossing and embracing and warping one another,

always more detailed, more endless the closer they looked. And when they looked, they remembered what they would soon forget and ask to be shown again, that there was no end, no *where*, only a forever unfurling. Along and along and along and along.

## Lander Lament Devin Harrison

Devin Harrison is a Marine Geoscientist at Kelpie Geoscience, adjunct to the Munderoo-UWA Deep-Sea Research Centre. His research utilises high-resolution topographic models of the seafloor and complimentary geophysical and geospatial datasets, in order to understand the geomorphic evolution and process landform relationship of the deep sea and the continental shelves.

Umbilical chains  
torn from titanium bones.  
Now we descend  
into a world unexplored:

slowly sinking  
light fading  
darkness inviting

Our eyes focus  
on a single ray of light—  
we pray that we might  
capture a universe as  
the pressure thrust upon our shoulders  
builds—

until we arrive.

Lying still  
in soft sedimentary sheets.  
Waiters and rats  
curiously circling  
our alien,  
anthropogenic body.

Patiently  
we listen  
for the signal,  
a burning release  
from the depths:

darkness departing,  
light rising,  
slowly soaring.

We emerge to a new dawn  
buoyant in discovery,  
craning our body skywards  
to recount our tales—  
of the abyssal plains.

But who are we to understand?  
We are but  
a mechanistic servant to science.  
Our brains download to you:

now onwards,  
onwards unto story  
onwards unto new worlds.

#### Note

I wrote this poem on the third of four Trans-Pacific Transit (TPT) expeditions onboard the research vessel *Dagon* in the Pacific Ocean, somewhere between Tahiti and Hawaii. The TPT was my first experience of working onboard a research vessel, with equipment designed for deep-sea research and living at sea for an extended period of time.

I was the geoscientist on board for the transit between Tahiti, French Polynesia and Hawaii, USA. Alongside myself, the scientific team included engineers, deep sea biologists, marine ecologists, geologists, geoscientists and oceanographers from The University of Western Australia, Kelpie Geoscience and The British Geological Survey. We used landers fitted with HD cameras, oceanographic sensors and bait to attract fish and invertebrates. The deployment, journey and data collection from these landers provided me with the inspiration for this poem. We deployed the landers from the ship, with invaluable assistance and oversight from the crew of *Dagon*, where we then watched them descend out of sight on their journey to the deep ocean floor. Following the end of the twelve-hour observation period a weight is released from the lander allowing it to ascend to the sea surface. This poem is my way of showing appreciation for these instruments and the people who design, build and maintain them, thus allowing for innovative and exciting science to continue to flourish.

## Twilight Luoyang Chen

for S.

Luoyang Chen practises social work and writes poetry on unceded Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar. *Flow (Red River/Centre for Stories, 2023)* is their debut poetry book. His poems also appear in literary journals such as *Cordite*, *Overland*, *Portside Review*, *Kalliope X*, *The Suburban Review*, *Australian Poetry Journal* and *Australian Poetry Anthology*.

Norman Erikson  
Pasaribu

Kini ia meminta kembali Musim Hujan  
Dan aku kembalikan semua

Dan aku kembali Semua<sup>1</sup>

I

A summer's (s)trip across the Indian Ocean—

I want to understand currency like I understand tranquillity.

The way your Adam's apple moves as you are talking—I feel my eyes most present, and watery. Your hands on my back, rubbing aloe vera on my sunburnt body. My shoulders tighten. My hands stiffen. Fearful of my old habits/violation. My heart stopped for a few minutes. Wanting protection of you from me. I am not horny.

A broken letter with a breaking heart. You tell me that the average wage in Bali is between \$200 and \$300 AUD per month. How dare I even say *If one day you come to Australia...* to you. O my twilight—

You tell me *Keep your mind straight, and you'll be alright*. I manoeuvre around the table, then the ocean. The rain gives you fever on your ride to work. I see your face in every puddle. I want to say—

Park your motorbike  
Here, under the tree.  
Parkir motor,  
Twilight.  
But I act cool, and say *No big deal*.

## II

Hello from the other side<sup>2</sup>—

Of course it is a big deal. Of course it is about geography. Of course it is queer. There's an ocean you can never truly cross, no matter how much your body sweats, you say. You say, *It's hard, but I am happy*. The 9–5 non-stop wiping of wet floor. The constant sound of a blowing whistle. The organised chaos. Tokay gecko chirping. I am in Bali but won't be for long.

## III

Stench of confinement  
A certain attachment:  
Untidy scene—servile  
Damaged  
In this blessed world

*I don't want to... I...  
Can I... May I... Shall I... Must I...  
I wish I...*

Ample debris  
Falls  
Weakly  
Lack of aspiration—

Rot

Imagine the last scene:  
Anachronistic—

The way he listened, across the ocean, so closely  
Maudlin and feverish

At some point

The waves splash  
The look's coming apart at the seams

Ocean, ocean...  
In my stomach

This is how the ocean dazzles speech  
This is how a blink lets go of the urge

## IV

On my day  
of departure  
for Australia,  
you ask me  
for a photo  
of us.  
You ask me  
to return.  
I won't return  
in full.  
I will return in full.

## V

The ocean is

- not a motif.
- an ocean.
- actual.
- vast.
- not sorry.
- not sorry.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The epigraph is from Norman Erikson Pasaribu's short story collection *Cerita-cerita Bahagia, Hampir Seluruhnya* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2020), and is used in this poem with the author's permission.
- <sup>2</sup> This is a direct quote from English singer-songwriter Adele's song 'Hello', released on 23 October 2015 by XL Recordings as the lead single from her third studio album, *25* (2015).

**and what about your blood  
and your bones should the  
ocean never forget?**

Andrew Sutherland

with gratitude to Nadia Rhook

Andrew Sutherland (he/they) is a Queer Poz (PLHIV) writer and performance-maker currently based on unceded Wurundjeri land. His debut poetry collection *Paradise (point of transmission)* was published by Fremantle Press in 2022 and shortlisted for the Small Press Network Book of the Year.

i.

Swimming at North Beach on a burning Christmas Eve day, I continually retrain my eyes to reach through the collection of bodies to find Luoyang. He is farther out, embraced by the joy of his ocean, and I am suddenly overwhelmed by fear, by images of him taken or bitten by a shark. I can't get it out of my head, this vision that replays until I have no choice but to call him back to me, so certain it is about to happen. I wonder if I have ever felt this uncontrollable and protective, fearful kind of love for someone in my life, or will again. Is this what it feels like? And who gave me the right? To put on him the shark in my mind. Leaving the water, I feel the sharpness of the rocks close to my feet, and spend a moment idly imagining a cut to the sole of my foot, my HIV+ blood infecting the entire ocean, a single diffusing slice across every coral, every starfish, every whale. After the shark, this impossible fantasy is a relief.

ii.

Snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef, I am told by the marine biologist on-board the tourist vessel that sharks, as apex predators of reef systems, protect and fulfill their uppermost tip of the ecosystem by feeding on the weak and the sick. They sense it; hunting by electromagnetic pulse and eating off the dim signals, and by doing so inure the ecosystem against frailty or the spread of disease. This is the viral dramaturgy of predators. Out in the water, I see one: a large and grey reef shark, ten or twenty (I am bad at estimations) metres below me, unmoved and unmoving. I float above it for a long time. What can you sense from me, read of my electromagnetic something-something, my weakness, my virality? If I was sick enough to eat, would I come to know it? Would you clear me from the ecosystem? But the shark doesn't move.

iii.

On the closing night of a show I have made about the virus, I go on a date with a much younger man. We get drunk on soju in my apartment before deciding to get an Uber out to Floreat Beach. The beach is empty after midnight and the night crashes steadily around us. We strip naked and kiss as we are pushed around and under by the surf. I understand that this is the beginning of *Jaws* and every movie since, and I suppose that this is dangerous more for currents than for predators, but in the moment it wasn't. I promise you there was no danger. We have sex in the water, laughing and centreless as we are knocked off or across one another by the waves, dragging each other down. The lights of that hotel in Scarborough are visible enough and for the moment they are romantic, enough. Lying on the sand, I come while looking at the stars; the coldness of the water reaching for the space beneath my calves.

**Speak to the shape of  
something that may no  
longer have the other half of  
its embrace**

Andrew Sutherland

again, with gratitude to Nadia Rhook

The conception of a shoreline is one of negative space. The ocean: filled, the idea of land: the absence. I recall the apparitions of narratives but not narratives themselves. To remember is to survive, the extinction theorist might say. Do I recollect and survive? Or do I recollect, or do I survive? Now I am next to ocean. I try to imagine it now. I try to imagine it, again. I think about horses, that counterintuitive god of sea. My friend once told me that a statue of a horse feels incomplete until it is joined with a statue of its rider. Why do there have to be statues of horses and men? On the Westralian coastline, the beach colonially named for the man, there is a statue of C. Y. O'Connor and his horse memorialised in suicide. Depending on the tide, sometimes the horse's head sits above the water and sometimes, they are drowned. Isn't that sick? Sometimes I think, *at least the Westralian colonial imagination is funny*. Not funny like ha ha, but funny. It is the way the precision of the tide racing to your feet can be so overwhelming when you think the shapes too fast and too close. It is the way the lights and the height of the Rendezvous hotel in Scarborough look like a glorious loneliness from either side of the long shore, until you remember it as a monument to its own failure: the capitalist excess of a time which never quite arrived, but which is everywhere and which is suffocating us here in its saltiness. *Don't look back. Noli me tangere*, extinctions might say. *Touch me not*. It is the way, as the story goes, the team of scientists sent to record the call of the critically endangered Lord-Howe Long Eared Bat, named for another colonial failure, crossed the water to the island to find the endling of the species. How to record the echolocation of this last bat, calling out to someone who will never respond? Or did someone respond? It is the way that, on video call, my niece can take my temperature with her thermometer-gun fifty times in a row just to check that I am fine, so able to imagine that the result mediated across a continental distance might be the same as body's real. The habits

she outgrows which I hold onto far away: the way she would sign *show me!!* on her hands, at one year old; the way she will voice *one more!!* after every song, at one-and-a-half. All the sign-symbols and all the shapes of speech I can't let go of, she outgrows. Where will the coastline sit in five years, ten years, twenty; when she is grown. What statues of horses or of bats will be left to live in her world. I think of her future; on the border of the water and her feet.

## The Many Names of Blue Water

Yakup Niyazi

Dr. Yakup Niyazi is a Marine Geoscientist at the Minderoo-UWA Deep-Sea Research Centre, at The University of Western Australia. He is a Uyghur from the city of Aksu, an oasis in the margin of the Taklamakan Desert, Central Asia. Growing up within the landlocked sand hills of the inner Asia, he, like many of his elder generations, unappreciated and underrated the power of ocean, until he stood facing the Red Sea, in Eilat, Israel, where he studied his MSc. in Marine Geoscience. Reminding himself of the great civilizations and empires that emerged around this sea, he links the name of the Red Sea to the endless sanguinary conflicts, and to the name of his hometown, Aksu, which means 'white water' in Uyghur.

تونۇگۈن ئىدىم ئاق دېڭىزنىڭ بويىدا،  
سۇلىرى كۆك ئىدى ئەمما.  
بۈگۈن كەلدىم قىزىل دېڭىزغا،  
سۇلىرى كۆپكۆك ئىدى يەنىلا.  
كۆپكۆك سۇغا ئاق قىزىل دەپ ئىسىم قويغان،  
يەنە نىملىرى ئىدى ئەسلىدىم،  
كۆرەلمىگەن، ھەم كۆرەلمەيدىغان،  
ئەجدادى، دادامنى، ئاپامنى، ئۇرۇق تۇغقاننى،  
تەڭرىتاغنىڭ سۇلىرىنى،  
گۈزەل ئاقسۇنى.  
ئاق ئىدى پاك ئىدى،  
خۇددى ياغقان قار دەك.  
لېكىن ساڭا كىم قويدى،  
كۆك دېڭىزنى قىزىل دەپ.  
بەلكى بۇ مۇساننىڭ كارامەتلىرىدىن ئۇر،  
ۋە ياكى كىشىلەرنىڭ جاراھەتلىرىدىن ئۇر.  
كىچىك شەھەر ئېپىلات، ئەمما كىچىك ئەمەسسىن،

Yesterday, at the coast of the Ak Dengiz<sup>1</sup>  
the water was deep blue.  
Today, I stand in front of the Red Sea  
the water is deep blue too.  
The many names of blue waters  
remind me of many things,  
that I did not see and perhaps could not see forever:  
my ancestors, parents, relatives and villages,  
the waters of the great Tengri Tagh<sup>2</sup>  
the waters of the great Aksu<sup>3</sup>  
named for the pure whiteness of snow.  
Why do we say blue waters are white?  
Why do we say blue seas are red?  
Perhaps it is the miracle of Moses, or  
perhaps it is human folly.  
I stand in Eilat,  
this small city that bore witness to greatness.

جەنۇپتا فىرئەننىڭ ئەلئېرامى تۇرىدىكى تىك،  
 شەرىقتە ھاشىملارنىڭ شاھلىقى،  
 غەربىگە رىمى قىلغان، ئافىنانى ئافىنا  
 ھەتتا ئاناتولىيەنى ئوسمانلى، كۆلۈمبۈنى كۆلۈمبۈ قىلغا  
 ئاق دېڭىز.  
 شىمالدا نىمەڭ بار؟  
 ئىسرائىلىيە، يەلەستىن؟ يەنەچۇ؟  
 دەسسەلگەن، يەنجىلگەن، تاشلانغان جەسەت .  
 گۈزەل تۇپراقكەن دەسسەپ كۆردۈم،  
 بىر تال تېشىڭمۇ تارىخكەن ئورتاق.  
 ئۆز كىشىلەرگە سۆزلۈشۈپ باقتىم،  
 ھالالگەن ھەممىگە يېگەنلەرنىڭ .  
 يەنە نىمىشقا كۆپكۈك سۈنى قىلسەن قىزىل؟  
 تۇپراق، بايلىق، كۈچ ئۈچۈن  
 ئېيىلاتتا  
 مۇشۇ قىزار تىلغان دېڭىزنىڭ بويىدا  
 ئادەملەرنىڭ ھەممە خوشال  
 نىمىشقا ؟  
 ئالتە يۇلتۇز لۇق بايراق ئېسىلغان پاراخوتتىن  
 كەلدى تىساتتىن ئەرەپچە مۇڭ  
 شۇ دەم ئويغاتتى مېنى خىيالىدىن  
 جاۋاپ كەلگەندەك گويىا ئەرەپتىن .  
 بىللە ئۆتكىلى بولىدىكەنغۇ ئەنە  
 ناخشىنى بىللە ئاڭلاپ  
 بىللە ئىشلەپ  
 قىزىلسىزلاشتۇرۇپ مۇشۇ دېڭىزنى .  
 بولسا مۇشۇ پاراخوت تىنچلىق ئەلچىسى  
 كەزسە دۇنيانى  
 تاراتسا تىنچلىقنىڭ ئۇرۇقىنى ،  
 بۇ مىنىڭ ياش غۇنچە گۈلۈم ئېچىلاتتى .

To the south: the pyramids of the Pharaohs  
 To the east: Hashemite's kingdom  
 To the west: the great Mediterranean  
 where Rome became Rome  
 and Athens became Athens  
 where Anatolia became Turkic  
 and from where half the world became Spanish.  
 But what of the north?  
 Israel? Palestine? Rotting bodies crushed under rubble  
 This ancient land  
 where even a rock holds thousands of years of story.  
 Beautiful people live there,  
 sharing kosher and halal food  
 yet, why is the blue water bloody red,  
 to gain land, wealth and power?  
 At Eilat, at the edge of the Red Sea  
 people live in peace.  
 Suddenly, from an approaching ship flying the Star of David  
 comes an Arabic melody  
 awakening me from my contemplation.  
 Like music from heaven  
 It tells me how to live together,  
 sing together,  
 work together,  
 how to drain the blood from the Red Sea.  
 I dream that this ship is a messenger  
 about to sail across the world  
 spreading the seeds of peace  
 and then,  
 maybe  
 the flower of my youth will flourish.<sup>4</sup>

#### Notes

- 1 Ak Dengiz translates to 'White Sea' in Turkish, and refers to the Mediterranean Sea.
- 2 Meaning 'Mountains of God' in Uyghur.
- 3 Aksu is a city. The name translates to 'white water' in Uyghur.
- 4 From the Uyghur poet Lutpulla Mutellip.

## 'I Feel Like I'm Part of the Ocean': the inter-connected world of the ocean swimmer

Nicole Hodgson

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### February 2024, Busselton Jetty Swim

I wind my hair underneath my swimming cap as I push through the crowd. There is a crush on the Busselton foreshore near the start of the jetty and I am ducking and weaving through the clamour of people. Some are dressed and spectating. Most, like me, are in bathers, cap and goggles, all surging towards the beach. The crowd of swimmers is a rainbow of silicon swimming caps, each colour denoting the wave with which they will leave the beach.

At the starting line are a few familiar faces among the sea of strangers; some people are fidgeting nervously, some laughing and joking, some intent and serious. We slowly move up to the front of the line, where the organisers are sending off competitors in a continuous flowing start of eight or so swimmers every ten seconds—it doesn't entirely smooth out the hectic start of a swimming race, or the jostling to find your spot of clear water. In the past, I've been squeezed between two swimmers on inwards trajectories or stuck in the middle of a group I'd like to get past. Some hate this part and will swim out wide to avoid other swimmers. I don't mind so much. But I do enjoy the point where the pack spreads out and I can fully settle into the steady hypnotic rhythm of swimming; the stroke, pull, stroke, pull; the bubble, bubble, breathe.

Tim Winton describes Western Australians as 'a coastal people, content on the edge of things'. We are 'surrounded by ocean and ambushed from behind by desert—a war of mystery on two fronts' (36–37). Is this surge of ocean swimmers evidence that more Western Australians are leaving the narrow strip of coastline, the warm sand of the beach, the inherent safety of a dip or paddle, to fully immerse themselves in the mysteries of the ocean? The Busselton Jetty Swim began in 1996 with eighty-two local participants—now entries sell out in hours, with 4,500 competitors swimming distances between 400 metres and 3.6 kilometres. The simplest explanation for this trajectory is as one part of a dramatic expansion in all kinds of outdoor and adventure sports: triathlons, adventure racing, surfing and mountain biking. But as a swimmer for over forty years and as an environmentalist for nearly as long, I wonder if this ever-increasing participation in ocean swimming signals something more—a shifting relationship between many Western Australians and the Indian Ocean, which so defines our coastal existence.

There is an ancient human history of swimming, which has ebbed and flowed through different cultures, climates and places. The last glacial period 23,000 years ago, for example, kept early European humans out of the water for millennia. Yet evidence of swimmer's or surfer's ear—bony growths in the ear canal from cold water exposure—has been found in Neanderthal remains in Italy dated over 100,000 years old (Trinkaus et al. np), and in Aboriginal skeletal remains across southern Australia (Roche). I have these bony growths, or exostoses, in my own ears, now regrowing despite surgeries to remove them a decade ago alongside a diligent use of earplugs when I swim. With this knowledge of their ancient lineage, the exostoses are no less annoying, but I do feel a greater connection to the earliest human swimmers. I am struck by how the ocean has been transforming human bodies in this way for so long—another reminder that we humans are not well designed for prolonged immersion, especially in colder water. We are, at best, only mildly amphibious.

Past historians and anthropologists have suggested that the Noongar people of south-western Australia were not sea people, based on historical reports of reluctance around the ocean and a lack of watercraft. Noongar author Kim Scott disputes this, pointing to considerable evidence that the 'ocean is very important to the spiritual and cultural heritage of certain Noongar people' (99). For millennia, waterways of all kinds—oceans, estuaries, rivers, creeks and waterholes—have been a focal point, and aquatic skills and knowledge essential. This went far beyond the practical dimensions of food gathering, for the abundant life of waterways are part of stories narrating 'the complex web of mythology about creation and

the continued enlivening of the landscape through which the creative ancestors travelled' (Goodall 7).

While there must always have been a handful of swimmers among the first Europeans to come here, it took many decades for the settler-colonisers of Western Australia to consistently leave the beach or the riverbank for open water. In 1866, the *Inquirer and Commercial News* bemoaned the lack of any bathing establishment in Perth Water, but rhapsodised about the potential:

Bathing in all ages and in all but the coldest climates has been thought the most perfect of pleasures. Poets have referred to it as a figure to express the idea of calm and perfect enjoyment. Painters have adopted it as illustrative of the highest felicity [...] The art of swimming either as a means of safety or pastime, is of no less importance [...] He who has mastered the art has acquired the command of a new element and touched a new spring of enjoyment. ('Bathing and Swimming' 2)

River-baths and sea-baths would not be built in Perth until the very end of the 19th century, finally enabling safety, modesty and ease for aspiring bathers and swimmers. In 1912 the Swim Thru Perth was held in the Swan River and is now acknowledged as Australia's oldest open water swimming event. With that precedent of open water swimming established, a contemporary ocean swimmer in Perth can now spend almost every summer weekend taking part in races at beaches stretching between Mullaloo and Rockingham.

The growth in swimming events like the Busselton Jetty Swim is mirrored in increased numbers of purely recreational ocean swimmers, including in my home of Denmark, on the south coast of Western Australia. Here, different pods of swimmers gather at different times throughout the day, and in their experiences are similar stories of a recent upswell in the numbers plunging into the ocean, perhaps exemplified by my friends Jill and Murray. Now committed ocean swimmers, as children growing up here in the 1960s and 1970s they rarely swam at either of the now popular swimming spots of Greens Pool and Ocean Beach. It was partly an issue of accessibility, with a long sandy track and a large sand dune to navigate to get to Greens Pool, meaning that going there was an infrequent or even annual outing.

**Jill:** Everyone had eskies, and they'd cart all this stuff down the big sand dune, onto the beach for the whole day [...] We wouldn't go beyond Bombie Rock. That would have been

dangerous. Scary, the big ocean! We never would have gone to the other side.

**Murray:** When I was a kid, I struggled to get out to Bombie Rock. Now it's where we start our long swims.

### February 2024, Busselton Jetty Swim

There are moments of joy to be found in the midst of a pack of swimmers, in the middle of an ocean race, in the camaraderie of a collective. This has to be one of the reasons so many of us have paid to enter this event, for the novelty of being a small part of a much greater whole, all united in a single goal.

We are reminiscent of an ungainly school of fish, we swimmers. Thousands of people making their way up one side of Busselton Jetty, to round it and swim back to shore. So many bodies swimming in the same direction, sometimes pressed together, but maintaining a spatial awareness which avoids most collisions. Not all collisions—our human capacity for synchronised movement and navigation is clumsy and unrefined compared with all those animals who school and flock and swarm, twisting and gyring in silver.

We are not a sleek school either; the way humans move through the water is comically less streamlined than any aquatic animal. Every time I witness the way a marine being propels itself, I am humbled by the effortless beauty of their movement, the oneness of their body and the water. Reminded of the splashing awkwardness of humans. We are visitors; blundering, often raucous visitors, and a pack of thousands of swimmers tends to scare away any other living beings. But a thriving marine ecosystem has grown on and around Busselton Jetty and there is a chance of a fleeting glance of something on the way past, when the human school swims around its very end. In between the satisfaction of rounding the halfway point of this swim, we might get to see some of the marine invertebrates that have colonised the structure of the jetty, or some of the 300 other species who have come to rely on it as their habitat.

Ocean swimmers intuitively understand the myriad ways their passion far surpasses exercise for cardiovascular fitness. Hannah Denton and Kay Aranda call the many benefits transformative, connecting and re-orienting, with changes to the mind, body and identity of the swimmer happening alongside a sense of belonging to nature, place and with others. In the water, they suggest, comes a disruption of our sense of time, space and body.

**Oona:** It's a reset, it just washes everything away.

**Ranee:** I love that first dive... and it doesn't matter what sort of week you've had or day, it just clears everything.

**Sandy:** Swimming is about coming back to yourself. I think it's the rhythm of your stroke. And it's the feeling of floating which means that you have less pull of gravity, which is a freeing experience.

**Jo:** The fact that your head is in the water means you can be mindful of your breath, how you're moving through the water, and the conditions of the environment.

**Bo:** By the time I'm out of the water I'm a completely new person [...] It's just repositioning myself in the world—physically, mentally, everything.

At my three regular swimming spots in Denmark—Greens Pool, Ocean Beach and Prawn Rock Channel—it is difficult to remain indifferent to all the lives with whom I briefly intersect. From seeing the large schools of silver-white tarwhine hanging around the western rocks at Ocean Beach, holding their place in the surge of waves and the strong rip which takes us swimmers quickly 'out the back', over the top of their massing silverness; or the time we encountered an enormous ball of baitfish, small and dark, sleek and darting, swimming around and around and around in a mesmerising marine murmuration—half of our swimming pack saw that bait-ball of fish and imagined hungry sharks trailing after it and went into shore; the other half of us couldn't tear ourselves away from the sight of this writhing mass of fish, stretching out our arms into the ball of small bodies to create a rift in the whole which closed up again as soon as our we removed our limbs. The gannets soon found the school, and we were surrounded by dive-bombing birds, wings held tight to their bodies as they streamlined, plunging vertically into the water. After turning around and around to watch the bird missiles pierce the surface, it was finally time to go into the safety of shore.

I have not seen any large sharks while swimming, but dolphins have frightened me briefly. Once I swam alone at sunset at Ocean Beach and out of nowhere came two large, grey bodies, close to either side of me. At first, I could only see flank—large greyness, no defining features—and I squealed into the water. Then I saw their heads, their fins: two adult dolphins, trailed by two calves. All looked directly at me as they swam past, and I felt like an exhibit, a part of the ongoing education of the youngsters. 'Kids, come and see these strange creatures. They are here only occasionally, and the poor things can barely swim.'

Some kind of communion with the marine world is inevitable when interacting with the ocean. Even if you were oblivious to all the fish, the rays, the seastars, the nudibranchs, the octopi, the weedy seadragons, all the riotous diversity of underwater plant life, still you are required to be mindful of the entirely different medium of salt water. You must navigate temperature, currents, tides, waves and you can't help but notice the shimmer of light refracted through water onto the sculpted sandy ocean floor. The ocean requires something different of us humans, even the most tentative of bathers, who might not put their head under water. A readiness to relinquish, to let go—even momentarily—of our human-centredness.

**Bo:** When you are swimming in the ocean, you have to be present. Your mind can wander only briefly, because you need to look where you're going.

#### **January 2017, Walpole–Nornalup Marine Park**

There is one memorable moment when I feel I can truly, properly swim. My partner Tim is beside me on a kayak, guiding me across the broad, flat expanse of the inlet to the mouth of the Frankland River, only visible from a subtle V-shaped wedge in the low-slung sandhills that skirt the inlet. We are lucky with the conditions this day. Wind can turn this stretch of water into a broad basin of choppy brown water, and getting across requires a gritting of teeth and an increase in stroke rate to not be swamped by the chop. But on a day like this I can swim as I like. I am in training for a longer swim, I feel fit and strong, and the further we travel across this body of water, the better I feel.

I'm hypnotised by the rhythm of a long swim—stroke, stroke, breathe, stroke, stroke, breathe—over and over without pause. The only sound is the bubbling of my *out* breath, the short gulp of *in*. I become aware only of my body, arm reaching over, hand spearing water at a slight angle, so I can hold my elbow high and propel myself forward from the force of forearm against water, swivelling my torso for maximum extension. As I stretch out, I angle my head backwards, to breathe into an air pocket created by my arm above my ear. My hips are high, just a gentle two-beat kick with my legs.

Something is happening. Swimming has never felt so effortless; in all my decades of swimming it has never felt quite this good. I am firmly in the zone. I am some combination of a creature of the ocean—a dolphin, a seal—and feel as smooth and technically proficient as a highly-engineered machine. I'm in it, I'm doing this, this is me, my body, but I'm spectating also, marvelling at the feeling of this flow state.

I keep pushing, stretch out a little more, pull harder, feel the power in each stroke. Tim can see it, he knows me so well, he's been in this position next to me on so many swims. He takes a short video, and when I look at it later, the brief seconds of it capture just how I felt. I am all fast smooth rhythm, barely troubling the surface of the water with a splash.

This flow state didn't last, and I pay dearly, later in the swim, for the increased pace and power. For the final half-hour I swim through treacle. Every stroke a minor battle, which, finally, eventually, gets me to the end.

One thing unites all the swimmers I know: a continual intimate interaction with all the marine lives encountered on each immersion. When swimming in a pack, someone always stops to point for the following swimmers at the wobbegong shark camouflaged amongst the macroalgae or the huge, black eagle ray shimmering just above the sand, or the octopus half-hidden under a rock ledge. In the crossover between exit and entry, on the beach or on the granite rock, all the talk is about the blue devil near Bombie Rock, or the Port Jackson sharks at the rock

named after them, or the school of baby garfish glimmering near the surface. Unfamiliar fish are described in detail to others in the hope of making an identification. There is a bias towards animate, animal lives in these excited conversations, and there are so many beings to find here.

I've wondered if many ocean swimmers might come to it seeking the physiological or psychological benefits, but in their absorption into this mostly hidden world, find themselves with a greater understanding of their place; entangled in more-than-human marine communities. Ocean swimming is an inherently emplaced practice that involves what David Howes calls the 'the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment' (qtd in Throsby 47). And there is a powerful immediacy to the experience of immersion: as Steve Mentz writes,

When we dare to immerse our small bodies in our globe's watery skin, we feel something. Nothing like control or mastery, but rather a physical intuition or connection, a planetary tug, a faint reminder that one's own water-filled flesh also has tides, also responds to the moon's gravitational embrace, also swims in fluid connections atop a nearly spherical rock in the void. (137)

It is inherently humbling too, to be fully immersed while protected by so little—just thin Lycra and a silicone cap between you and all the immensity of the ocean. This combination of a rare experience of ecologically mediated vulnerability and an increased respect hopefully allows for filaments of connection to be created between a swimmer and the marine world.

**Kat:** How often are we truly vulnerable? We have that feeling so rarely as humans. And swimming out here, we challenge ourselves, we put ourselves in unfamiliar situations.

**Jo:** I enjoy playing or working with the conditions it presents. When conditions are challenging I feel like I come out of the water with a larger hit of dopamine.

**Oona:** Over time you become more familiar, but there's always that respect that it can be different each time.

Ocean swimmers know how mercurial the ocean can be; how different seasons, different weather, different wind, tides and currents can change what we experience under water and on the beach. For most of us on the south-west coast though, the more substantial human impacts on the ocean, seen elsewhere, remain subtle—at least in our immediate, visceral experience. The severe marine heatwave of 2011 that had such a profound

impact on invertebrate and fish lives in the Northwest Shelf, Shark Bay and Ningaloo Coast areas (Caputi et al.; Molony et al.) did not reach such severity in the very south of Western Australia. And, as yet, we are not seeing the same devastating impact of warming waters as experienced in the 2023–2024 coral bleaching event on the Great Barrier Reef. Ocean and river swimmers in the United Kingdom and Ireland have to navigate increasingly dire wastewater management and waters polluted with *E. coli* and other bacteria, something which ocean swimmers in Western Australia rarely have to think about. Although, the recent algal bloom at Mullaloo is a reminder that our oceans are not always as pristine as they might appear. The most observant ocean swimmers might notice a decline in some fish species too, particularly on the west coast; they might also notice unfamiliar species as changing water temperature and shifting currents bring tropical species into more temperate southern waters (Coulson et al.). But for so many swimmers the recency of their regular ocean interactions could result in shifting baseline syndrome. This was first noted by Daniel Pauly in relation to fisheries scientists, but is now broadly applied to all of the natural sciences, where there is, according to Masashi Soga and Kevin Gaston, ‘a gradual change in the accepted norms for the condition of the natural environment due to a lack of experience, memory and/or knowledge of its past condition’ (222).

Shane Gould, in writing about her swimming group in Bicheno, Tasmania, describes their collective ecological awareness being ‘sharpened by marine creature encounters, so they can see and understand the human impact on their local coasts’ (54). It was a group of local swimmers, snorkellers and dippers who lead the small community campaign to protect Greens Pool by convincing the government to enact a fishing ban over the small area of the pool itself. But still, I’m not yet sure that the close connections being forged between swimmers and the marine world has led to any particular involvement in advocacy or ecological protection. The intimacy developed between swimmer and regular swimming place appears specific; almost monogamous. But perhaps I am asking too much: it might be enough to experience ‘that feeling, and that being, the poetics of swimming and oceanic connection,’ which might teach, in the words of Mentz, a ‘body how to live in this wet world’ (121).

**Oona:** The ocean now feels more like a sister. Instead of feeling like a foreigner that you were separate from, it’s now something to snuggle in next to.

**Kat:** It’s like being with a friend, the more you’re in the company of a friend, the deeper the shared exchanges.

**Bo:** Now it feels like a fundamental part of being human to be in the ocean. Which is strange because we don’t really belong there.

**Mike:** I used to sit and watch the ocean from the outside, but now getting into it I feel much closer to it, almost part of it, not just an observer, but I feel like I’m part of the ocean.

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## Unseamed Jessica White

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At Taalinup, where the rocks tumble down to the sea, you can see striations in the stone. This coastline was once part of the supercontinent Pangaea, which broke apart, then slowly reformed as Gondwana, about 750 million years ago. India slowly crushed into south-west Western Australia and then, 400 million years ago, began to break away, leaving part of itself between Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin. The pressure of these ructions was so great that it caused the stone to compress into layers, a rock formation known as *gneiss*. It glitters in the sunlight and was so named from the old High German word *gneisto*, meaning 'spark'.

Nearly 10,000 years ago, the traditional custodians of Wadandi Noongar boodjar looked out to a coastal plain covered with low shrubs. Over the generations, the sea rose and moved in, lapping at the shrubs, until it covered them entirely. The saltwater people take their name from Wadan, their saltwater spirit. The Wejt Kwala (Emu Songline), marks where the Indian and Southern oceans meet on their journey from Lake Dumbleyung to Taalinup, out to where the old coastline used to be, before the oceans began to rise (Davies et. al.).

Over time, the sea brought European men, and probably the occasional woman dressed as a man (Clode). In 1622, a Dutch galleon named for a lioness—an animal that evolved in Africa—mapped some of the south-western coastline. The *Leeuwin* was one of nearly 5,000 ships owned by the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, the Dutch East India Company, which became rich on slaves and the fragrant powders of spice. Where most vessels made the journey from the Netherlands to Batavia in four months, the *Leeuwin* took a year, suggesting that it ventured off course and along the Western Australian coast.

200 years after the Dutch ship encountered Noongar boodjar, Englishman Matthew Flinders appeared on his circumnavigation of Australia. He overwrote the name of Taalinup with Cape Leeuwin.

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Between the land of lions and the cape of sparkling stone lies the Indian Ocean. As the world's first highway, it continues to carry seventy per cent of the world's goods ('Travellers and Traders'). Back when the Dutch East India company was at work, ships used to track north from the Cape of Good Hope along the African coast and through the Straits of Madagascar until they reached the Indies. In 1611, Hedrik Brouwer devised a route that, with the aid of winds known as the 'Roaring Forties', thrust ships eastward from the Cape of Good Hope. However, the captains had no markers by which they could determine when to turn north, and relied on their own experience and judgement. Sometimes it wasn't enough. Western knowledge about the Western Australian coastline was derived from splintered wood, smashed chests of spice and half-drowned men dragging themselves onto shore. The *Batavia* wrecked in 1629, *Vergulde Draeck* in 1656, *Zutdorp* in 1712 and *Zeewijk* in 1727.

Then came the French who, under their revolutionary government, poured francs into scientific expeditions, regarding it as a public endeavour that advanced the national interest (Clode and Harrison). Then came the English. Jealous of the French, they stuck a pole in the sand at Albany and claimed the old, weathered rock for the British Crown. Later, they built a lighthouse on the rippled stone of the cape. At night its light fell upon the place where the Indian and Southern Oceans meet, a place of shifting, eddying currents, of warm tropical water meeting cold.

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In the Doe Library at the University of California, Berkeley, I knelt on carpet, peering at the spines of books on the bottom of a stack. It was the Australian literature section, and I was looking for something to connect me to home during my year on exchange. My family was 12,000 kilometres away, and I was beginning to understand what it may have been like for my mother, who migrated from Aotearoa, New Zealand to rural New South Wales in the seventies to be with my father.

I pulled out a book patterned with dark red leaves. *An All Consuming Passion* was William Lines' biography of Georgiana Molloy (1805–1843), one of the first *wadjelas* to encroach on Wadandi Noongar boodjar in 1830. Following the death of her son in 1837, she began collecting seeds

and specimens for an English horticultural connoisseur, Captain James Mangles. Intrigued, and with my feet fizzing from pins and needles, I checked out the book.

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I grew up surrounded by chlorophyll. My mother inherited a green thumb from her father and spent weekends working with him in his garden in Christchurch. After finishing her Bachelor of Arts, majoring in History, at Canterbury University, she sailed across the ditch to Sydney with the intention of continuing around the world. However, she loved fashion, and her savings moved through her fingers like water as she pulled minidresses off the racks.

Eventually, she had to abandon her dreams of travelling and find a job. She worked at what is now the University of Technology, Sydney, and not long after she started there she met my father. Six months later, they married, my father wearing a navy suit with a red arrow down the back. My father took my mother back to the family farm on Gamilaroi country in north-west New South Wales.

My mother began a garden as soon as she arrived. The travel from suburban Christchurch to rural New South Wales was a shock. My father said that, to encourage my mother to meet other women in the area, he drove her to a Country Women's Association meeting, where she gave a presentation on history. Gardening was a way for my mother to grow food for her family and to connect with a place that produced gum trees, not *pōhutukawa*. The soil was so rich and loamy that her first few cabbages were enormous. When my mother dug them up, their leaves fanned across half her body.

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Three years after the British stuck the flag in the soil at Albany, Georgiana and John Molloy sailed from Gosport in England in the *Warrior*. John had fought in the Napoleonic wars and, finding it difficult to establish himself, determined to move to Australia. Although Georgiana was not certain about John and the prospect of leaving her friends and country, she did not have many options open to her and agreed to marry him.

On the ship, amidst the sweep and lull of waves, Georgiana read poetry by Robbie Burns and books about botany. She watched a hive of bees in a box she bought at Gosport, until they all died. She was ill from morning sickness and poor food, and struggled with the heat as they approached the tropics. When her headaches grew worse, John cut her light-coloured hair, then carefully drew his razor from the nape of her neck up to the

curve of her skull. She shivered from his touch and the fresh air on her neck and scalp.

On 12 January 1830, nearly three months after leaving Gosport, the Molloyes reached Table Bay in the Cape of Good Hope. As the ship restocked, Georgiana nourished her body and growing baby with fresh food. She also acquired seeds: pink gladiolus, *Sutherlandia frutescens* (cancer bush or balloon pea) and peach stones.

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The Greater Cape Floristic Region (GCFR) is a biodiversity hotspot in South Africa, one of five that exist in a Mediterranean biome. The hotspots are places which house hundreds of species found nowhere else on earth, and which are also highly threatened (Hopper and Gioia). The initial twenty-five identified hotspots worldwide have now expanded to thirty-six, supporting more than half the world's endemic plant species, and nearly forty-three per cent of endemic bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian species. This is despite the hotspots taking up only two and a half per cent of the earth's land surface ('Biodiversity Hotspots').

The GCFR region is home to 9,000 plant species, sixty-nine per cent of which are endemic. Georgiana, who learned her first lessons about plants and gardening in her family home in Cumbria, would not have been aware of the richness of the area into which she had sailed. Nor would she have known that the place to which she was headed would, in time, be named another biodiversity hotspot.

The Molloyes, on reaching Swan River, found there was no land left for taking. They sailed south to what the governor, James Stirling, named Augusta for Prince Augustus Frederick, the sixth son of George the Third, who had died ten years before, worn down by blindness, deafness and mental illness.

Georgiana was heavily pregnant. On 24 May 1830, she wrote to her friend Frances Birkett, saying she was 'confined when thinking nothing of the kind' and, in the rain in a tent, gave birth to a girl she named, after her mother, Elizabeth. The baby was unwell, perhaps from a lack of nourishment on the ship, and over the course of ten days she weakened and died. To 'dispel the sad blank her death occasioned', Georgiana went out and planted bulbs (Georgiana Molloy to Frances Birkett, 15 Apr. 1831).

•••

Noongar boodjar is an earthly island. Scientists refer to it as the SWAFR—the Southwest Australian Floristic Region. It occupies roughly 300,000 kilometres of the south-western corner of the continent. It is bordered by

arid regions to the north and east, and by the sea to the south and west. As the soil has not been disrupted by geological activity such as volcanoes or earthquakes, it is one of the oldest landscapes on earth, and it harbours extraordinary endemism (Hopper and Gioia).

The SWAFR was the first biodiversity hotspot designated in Australia (it was later joined by the forests of Eastern Australia). The SWAFR is threatened by land clearing for farming and urban expansion, fragmentation of habitats, the introduction of invasive species and climate change.

•••

As soon as Georgiana was well, after those first terrible days at Taalinup, she started a vegetable garden, because she and John needed food. Their indentured servant, thirty-five year old Staples, dug the beds and sowed seeds from England and the Cape of Good Hope. Georgiana worked alongside him, pushing holes in her garden to plant seeds, picking out weevils from her precious hoard of wheat and drawing nets over seedlings to keep possums and birds from trying the exotic produce. After six months, the garden was yielding daily vegetables and salads for dinner. In a letter to Frances, Georgiana boasted that this was 'more than anyone can say, not even for the Governor' (Georgiana Molloy to Elizabeth Kennedy, c. November 1830). She grew so much food that she gave produce to her neighbours.

After the loss of Elizabeth, Georgiana had two more daughters, Sabina and Mary, and a son, John. In 1837, when John was nineteen months old, he wandered off and accidentally fell into a well that was hidden behind an acacia. By the time he was found, it was too late.

•••

My mother grew to love her garden and the farm. She went to parties with my father then, when she was ready, had my sister when she was twenty-six. A son followed, a chubby, laughing fellow, but at nine months they lost him in an accident. I was born in the aftermath, followed quickly by my brother.

In her letters, Georgiana dwells briefly on the death of her son. She and my mother continued to feed, clothe and care for their families although their hearts were dark with loss.

•••

Just prior to her son's death, Georgiana received a box of English seeds from Captain James Mangles, the cousin to the governor's wife, and a letter requesting the box's return with 'the Native Seeds of Augusta'

(Mangles, 21 March 1837). Although she had previously thought herself too busy to collect flowers, Georgiana now went out into the bush regularly. She became obsessed with identifying and collecting flora, writing to Mangles on 31 January 1840 that 'I never met with anyone who so perfectly called forth and could sympathise with me in my prevailing passion for Flowers' (Mangles, 31 January 1840). She wrote long letters to Mangles, starkly different to those she penned to her mother and friends: these were thick with adjectives and pleasure.

She also meditated on her garden. On 25 January 1838, she wrote to Mangles, 'All Chinese and Cape plants thrive luxuriantly here, many annuals of England are biennial and perennial, the sweet pea and *Hibiscus africanus* survive the winter, the latter bears very large blossoms and grows to the height of 3 and 4½ feet' (Mangles, 25 January 1838). *Hibiscus africanus* is an old name for *Hibiscus trionum* L. (Miller 1366), which is native to India. It is a white flower, purple tingeing the edge of its petals, with a cluster of dark orange anthers in a crimson mouth.

Meanwhile the pink gladiolus, or *Gladiolus caryophyllaceus*, grow from bulbs or corms. They are so widespread in Noongar boodjar that some think they are native to Boorloo/Perth. However, they are a weed, and in their enthusiasm for reproduction, particularly following fire, they have become a threat to the ecology of the Banksia woodlands and the Swan coastal plains. Back in their original home in South Africa, they are endangered ('Pink Gladiolus').

•••

For almost half my life I have been travelling to Wadandi Noongar boodjar, trying to get a sense of how the light falls, the sounds of the creeks, oceans and birds, what the soil and blossoms smell like and how it changed Georgiana. For all this time I have been trying to write about her life in a way that gives weight to the richness of the species that she encountered.

In 2016, courtesy of a postdoctoral fellowship, I finally found the time to research the form I thought the book should take: ecobiography. Where a biography details a person's life, an ecobiography charts their relationships with their ecosystem. At the end of the fellowship, I planned to travel to Scotland and the United States on residencies to finish the book. Then COVID-19 came, then I uprooted myself to move interstate for a new job and then my mother, who had been chronically ill for a long time, started to deteriorate.

In October 2023, in our family group chat, we discussed when my brother, in America, would come back for Christmas. My mother added,

*Jess what about the book—I need it done to die in peace.*

*The first draft will be done by Xmas eve. Stop harassing me about it.*

My brother chimed in.

*I'm dying, you have to finish your book. Your publisher couldn't hope for a better motivation. Poor Jess, I'll bring you coffees.*

•••

Georgiana loved Taalinup, the place where the Blackwood River meets the Indian Ocean. She wrote to Mangles on 22 June 1840 how she would take her piano to 'the Grass plot, and play till late by moonlight, the beautiful broad waters of the Blackwood gliding by, the roar of the Bar, and ever and anon the wild scream of a flight of swans going over to the Fresh Water Lakes' (Mangles, 25 January 1838).

Breezes, thick with salt, rose from the sea and through the paperbarks lining the shore, rippling their feathers. Behind them were shrubs of wattle, sharp with phyllodes, their blossoms honey-scented in spring. Vines wrapped around many of the shrubs, their flowers like red and purple sparks. Further back still, the sea breathed into tall stands of trees: karri, reaching up into the airy expanse of the sky. They bloomed with clusters of creamy blossoms, drawing bees into their delectable orbit.

What happens on land, Wadandi custodians and elders remind us, affects what happens in the sea, 'So it is important to manage and care for Wadandi Boodja as one continuous cultural seascape' (Davies et. al. 3). When the *gullyung* or *Acacia cyclops* starts to flower, the whales, *mummang*, start their migration. They birth their calves in Bardi Country in the Kimberley as the wattle develops seeds. As they come down past Wadandi boodjar, this seed represents their large eyes. Sometimes they come close to shore, to the 'Gabbi-up places where the freshwater seeps out into the saltwater and when they beach themselves they are offering themselves back to the land where they come from' (Davies et al. 5).

It is a circular, self-contained movement, like the black seeds of the acacia or the round eyes of whales. The line made by the British, sailing across the waters, was linear and pointed.

•••

My mother died on 16 November 2023 after a short, sharp decline. I was only 20,000 words into the book. I tried to keep writing, but my brain could not stitch things together. I walked through a fog. When the shock wore off and I resurfaced, it was as though the earth had tilted.

•••

Banksias, in bloom, stand like tall candles against the dun background of vegetation, their flower spikes fuzzy with blossoms. Their seed pods open during exposure to heat, hundreds of small lips breathing spores into the air.

Their family, *Proteaceae*, originated in Africa 130 million years ago. Initially it was thought that the family originated in Australia and travelled to Africa, South America, New Caledonia and Asia. Recent research conducted with fossilised pollen grains, which can survive for millions of years, disputes this theory. Research shows that proteas began migrating into South America, then across to the Antarctic Peninsula (the two were attached on the supercontinent of Gondwana). The protea's ancestors then diverged. One group, with soft leaves, crawled through Antarctica, then covered in forest. It reached Tasmania, then stretched up the coast to New Guinea. The other ancestors travelled along the eastern side of Antarctica into south-west Western Australia. Their descendents, which include grevilleas, hakeas, macadamias and waratahs, travelled along the edges of the Nullaboar Plain to south east Australia (Byron et al.).

All of the world's banksia live in Australia, with the exception of *Banksia dentata* (tropical banksia), which spreads through northern Australia, New Guinea and the Aru Islands Regency. There was also once a species in Aotearoa (*Banksia novae-zelandiae*), but it went extinct. Over ninety per cent of all banksia species occur on Noongar boodjar.

Climate change, a global problem to which settler Australia contributes significantly, is drying out the south-west. At least eighteen species of banksia are predicted to decline as the climate dries and warms the region (Yates et. al.). All this happened because of the people in the boats who travelled from England across the Indian Ocean to the Swan and then to Taalinup. It happened fast. In comparison to the time it took the banksias to move through the forests and the continents to come asunder, it was as fast as a meteor.

•••

Georgiana delivered seven children and miscarried one. The afterbirth often took a long time to come away and, after her seventh child, she became ill with puerperal fever. She died at the age of thirty-seven.

I wonder, as she stood on the shores of Taalinup, watching moonlight spill onto the water and listening to the purling waves, if she longed to get back to people she loved. Perhaps, tethered to this new world with plants, blood, family and survival, the ocean beyond was endless and impassable.

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**archipelago**  
Kathryn Gledhill-Tucker

Kathryn Gledhill-Tucker is a Nyungar technologist, writer, and digital rights activist. Their poetry has appeared in *Cordite*, *Red Room Poetry*, *Running Dog* and *Best of Australian Poems 2023* (Australian Poetry). Their short stories have been published in various anthologies, including *The Rocks Remain* (Wakefield Press, 2024) and the blak speculative fiction anthology *This All Come Back Now* (UQP, 2022).

Drawn from memory, the coast is fragmented into short shards of elsewhere time and salt water tongues. Particled memories that turn stones and beach glass over onto themselves and into smooth islands. A heaven mess of sand and salt calling into itself, out and under. Its weather and water pulls ribbons of salt time into their water bellies and speaks slow slow slow echoes. What is felled from the chests of bruised mountains sprawls onto granite and combed sand. Memories between islands. Memories of wrecked bodies and crushed rib cages. Shales of granite tears lying flat under the reverberate noise. The salt tongues spit great mouths full of stories to break the smooth line between sky and water. Let the oil slick coat your skin, cast its grey into the slip spill. Let it split into filaments that fall like tendrils of hair into weather. Let splintered sound tremble and collapse into the wet centre. And in the grains of soft sand find its spectre.

walking  
wooden  
into foam  
memory  
time  
cloak  
and drift

## Stand Up, Paddle Riley Faulds

Riley Faulds is a writer from Walyalup/Fremantle. His poems have been published in various of Australia's best journals and birthday cards, and recently have been Highly Commended in the Bruce Dawe Prize and won the Jon Stallworthy Poetry Prize at Oxford University, where he's currently studying his Mst in World Literatures as a Rhodes Scholar. He misses gum trees.

The slow vertical of a waist-high wave shadowing our next-to-last trip together could only ever sustain one of us, on hugely buoyant boards—clinging

to our six years foaming under the rolling weight of cliché. Huge black rays we nearly slip into so many times—startling them to deeper

blue channel rush-dug between turquoise—are, with dolphins arcing edges, the only moving actors in strange offshore northerly. I feel your every

stand stroke takeoff so acutely, aware of the two kinds of water around this scene's corners: truer blue of Indian past near-visible Cape,

its solid granite; and the Deadwater just over that thinning spit, cut off for the good of upstream, shrinking to porous limestone and brilliant sand.

The next visit (beyond you, in howling southerly) I can't kitesurf for the sharks invoked by whale carcass in this very same rivermouth. But now,

on my longer, unwieldy board, I strike hard with the rising vertical and see a dolphin join the slice, roll of the nothing-more than a line

of energy that carries it and me in its eye, from and away—from our depth, all the way to a shore from which I turn

to see you, lifted occasionally above the wave-line.

my great-uncle jack  
Riley Faulds

(you know him,  
jack of the fish-processing plant, king  
of that thin sandstrip just past  
halfway up the estuary, namesake  
of the rock in the bay which haunts  
every boatbound child in the family)

used to say *this*, or so his nephew  
tells me, fangin' down the sand

(this blankest stretch of coastline)

in my brand-new second-hand zook,  
showin' the dick'eads in tricked-out rigs  
just what crushing lightness can do.

he used to say a trench waits there,  
exact 4 kays downbeach from the steep  
white hill which is dunes' final spite  
in the face of the other kind of rise,  
sea-level weedyblue in winters milder  
and more violent for these eroding  
sands. 4 kays exact, he said  
in beer-rubbed breathiness  
and then *stop*—slam brakes plosive  
clutch hot from soft stuff—

for there it will be, faintdarker  
than water already held deeper-  
hued by sand yellower than every  
sharpwhite region north and south:

the *trench!* where (his eyes rheumy  
his hands shaking parkinson's impossible  
trembling desire) piddly whiting  
give way to the much larger  
much stronger, the thisandthat  
of myth and howling sandwhip  
westerlies. a *dhuey* even, that

one time with the once-sailor  
and catholic priest he rolled  
and sighed and screamed the oceans  
with, quartermaster of the RAN's  
finest, drinking the RAN's finest  
with said sailor and cloth-man.  
you know jack.

a dhufish, and they the only witnesses  
of coast near-scoured of people  
by other short-ago ships, of  
line whistling up rod and  
through teeth on beach on  
barbecue his lawn so-perfect green  
just east of woodland-lime-farmland  
round lake Clifton, signage fertilising  
algalbloom,

the colder deeper outflow

of a secret trench bringing pelagia  
and deep-dwellers to erosive sands  
of the blankest yellow stretch of  
whole state, floggin' the lil' suzi  
past the millions of parked hiluxes  
fishing this too-hot easter  
for the hope of a cold one.

4 kay mark

is trenchless to our eyes.

i think, jack's nephew says, that maybe  
4 means exactly 5. you know  
(his bare-rubbed breathiness, his  
roomy eyes) old uncle jack.

## Stirling Crop Anna Quercia-Thomas

Anna Quercia-Thomas is a queer Hispanic American writer and theatre-maker living in Western Australia. She has a PhD in Literature from UWA. She writes speculative and literary fiction about found family, queer romance and connection in dark times.

The following story is a reimagining of the Flannan Isles Lighthouse disappearance, on Eilean Mòr. The location and characters are fictional.

### Diary of Thomas Marshall

Stirling Crop is an island to the south, marking the start of a particularly dangerous patch of inlets and insubstantial coastline. It is approximately ten miles from Albany, which is 244 miles from Perth by the new road, and 14,420 miles from London by sea. I have never had to calculate the distance from London back home, so I do not know it.

I remember each stop on the train journey and each footstep from the station to my mother's door after that. I wonder sometimes why the voice of an English train conductor is something that has stayed with me all these years, when so much else has slipped through the cracks. I wonder sometimes if I will dream my way through each corner of St. Albans station every day when I close my eyes, brick by brick, cobblestone by cobblestone, until I die nearly 15,000 miles from home.

I am walking the last of those miles now, trailing behind Ducat as we trudge inland from the shore. The beach is a long stretch of pale white at the bottom of worn rock steps, marring the blue expanse beyond. The fishing boat that brought us is a small dot on the horizon, all too eager to leave us behind.

'It's quiet, mostly,' Ducat says, the first he has spoken in a long time. 'Dull. Hard work. Drives you crazy, after a winter.'

'Then why do you do it?' I ask. My back is sore where a lump at the top of my pack has been digging into my spine for the past mile or so, and I'm grateful that we've almost reached our destination, the long shadow of

the lighthouse an acute angle in the weak winter sun, painted onto the hill above us.

In front of me, Ducat shrugs as well as he can beneath the weight of his own bag.

'It's a job,' he says. I assume that's where conversation will end, until he adds, 'Wasn't sure I'd come back this year, but the board asked for me. They need someone competent, now that it's just MacArthur and the seasonals.'

MacArthur didn't own the lighthouse, I'd come to learn, but he might as well have. He'd been its keeper for coming up twenty years by the time I got there, and the fisherman who had ferried Ducat and I over to the island referred to MacArthur referentially, as though his knowledge of the place was something sacred, like there was something deep in its bones he could understand when no one else bothered to. Ducat had rolled his eyes, muttered under his breath about *locals* and *superstition*.

'Will I meet him tonight?' I ask now. 'MacArthur?'

'Maybe,' Ducat says. 'He keeps strange hours. You might not see him much at all, if you're lucky.'

I am once again struck by the view that unfurls before me, pristine and beautiful, soft green hill giving way to rocky cliff face, to stained white sand and blue-green water. It is colours upon colours, blended into one another with such vivid intensity that my breath catches in my throat.

It is, objectively, quite beautiful. Ducat shrugs when I tell him this, barely turning his head back to me. The sea sparkles, faded blue and deep with occasional patches of darkness. Ahead, Ducat catches me looking, snorts derisively. I pick up my pace, scramble across the final few rocks that separate us.

'You see one paradise, you've seen them all,' he says. 'Take it from me.'

It is my turn to shrug, or would be, had I not been weighed down by my bag, the meagre contents of my life packed tightly into a single burlap covering.

'I've seen a few,' I say. 'Beaches, not paradises.'

The Albany coast looks much the same as this one, give or take a few rocks, but it seems beautiful to me all the same, abstracted and serene in a way my erstwhile home could never be. I do not tell Ducat that the shoreline marks the start of the first of 15,000 miles I am not likely to cross again.

Ducat is silent for the rest of the trek up the sharp incline of rock and hill, and I fall into step behind him. I do not look back to the beach again; there will be more than enough time for that soon.

• • •

Ducat warms up after a couple of days, and after I prove my usefulness a few times over by tying down ropes pulled loose by the wind and pointing out a chip in a lantern bulb that MacArthur had missed over the long, grey winter nights. He warms up enough, at least, to beckon me over after he stamps in from a rotation and shucks off his oilskin, kicks his way past a stray bundle of rope in the entryway.

‘Marshall,’ he says, when I’m close enough. He pushes roughly past my shoulder so he can flop down into one of the old table’s creaking chairs. ‘You’re not an idiot, are you?’

It is not, I admit, the question I expected.

‘No,’ I say, hoping to keep my tone free from any stray question marks. ‘Not as far as I’m aware.’

Ducat favours me with a humourless snort.

‘We’ll get on then. As long as you listen to nothing that comes out of MacArthur’s fuck-addled mouth,’ he says, with a wave in the direction of the door. ‘Not a single bloody thing. He may be the one who hired you, but I’m the one in charge. You understand?’

I slip my hands into the pockets of my coat, rub the tips of my fingers together. I can never seem to get the cold out of them completely.

‘Sure,’ I say. ‘I understand. Is he—’

‘He’s a drunk and a maniac,’ Ducat snaps up the end of my question with ferocity, but what he says is not entirely unfounded, if my admittedly brief interactions with MacArthur are anything to go by.

Ducat had introduced us the way he might introduce a marksman to his next target, pointing out MacArthur’s bunk with a single accusatory finger from the threshold of the darkened room and indicating mine beside it only as a sort of afterthought. Later, he nudged my shoulder the first afternoon we spent together in the service room. There was a rod knocked loose in the mechanism, he’d said. *Fucking drunk*. The piece in question was a small thing, spindly like a broken finger, flapping in a wind that I was coming to learn reached even the deepest crevices of this place. Things like brick and wood seemed only to subdue it, and everywhere, each rotation I spent staring at the ceiling above my bunk or every morning after, nursing a strong cup of tea in what passed for our kitchen, I heard the wind. It pounded incessantly against the walls, whistled through the cracks in our little windows, carried the scent of salt and the tang of something else entirely that I couldn’t place. Soon enough it engulfed me as it did everything else, clinging to the collars of my shirts and steeping into the musk of my pillow.

I have yet to exchange a word with MacArthur himself, besides to shake him for a change of shift. The first weeks, I knew him only by the chaos in

his wake, lamps left speckled with the sea salt grime, clock unwound, the rattling pipe loose in the engine room. Occasionally, I heard him arguing with Ducat, voices carried towards me on the same wind that brings the damp tang of sea.

He slurs his words and stumbles up the stairs to mind the lamps and, mostly, I pay him no mind.

‘You’re in charge,’ I say, now, and Ducat nods, something like relief playing across his weathered face.

• • •

The sea is different to the one I know, they tell me, full of waves and currents and fish that have never seen the English coast, but it laps against the shore just the same, cups the horizon gently in the palm of one hand. Deep blue water, pure white sand. *Like fucking paradise*. My muscles protest as I move, days of lifting and dragging and sleep disrupted by the roar outside. I wonder if there is a piece of me out there somewhere, lost on the bottom of the ocean floor. I wonder if I dropped it there on purpose, forgotten on one of those endless months of journeying. Sometimes, I think I should have pitched myself overboard after it.

This, I know, is why I have avoided the view, this paradise, or something like it.

Up in the lantern room, the feeling eases. The glass around me is thick enough to block out the worst of the wind, and cleaning the lamps is a foul, immediate task that pulls me in enough that I can look away from the fan of blue turned grey in the haze of early morning fog. Up here, I forget the bottom of the ocean floor.

And it is up here that I notice it, a speck marring the pristine white sand, growing in focus as it makes its unsteady way up the rock path. MacArthur, walking with a purpose that I am unaccustomed to seeing in him. His steps are frantic, he is nearly running, tripping over loose rocks and his own feet in his haste.

I step to the edge of the glass, feel my heartbeat gather somewhere higher than my chest and do my best to swallow down the rising agitation as I scan the beach behind him, then the shore beyond that. I see nothing that might pre-empt such panic, no smashed boats on the coastline or drowned figures in the water, no dark clouds rolling in off the sea.

There is only MacArthur, running now, his oilskin open and flapping behind him like a strange, dark, moving beacon. I squint, wonder if I imagine the sodden ends of his untucked shirt and the damp that climbs halfway up his trousers, as if he has waded out into the ocean, or, more likely, fallen in.

Then I blink and he is gone, lost somewhere beneath me, too close to the lighthouse for me to follow his progress any longer.

•••

The weather gets worse with each week that passes, a near constant onslaught of wind and rain so hard it blows at us sideways, spraying in beneath our oilskins and the leather of our boots and leaving us shivering long after we've fought our way back indoors. I spend night after night tying down the same ropes, squinting into the distance and steeling myself for each trek across the gallery deck, where it feels like even my heavy leather boots might not be enough to keep me moored.

The door bangs shut behind me, blown out of my hand by the wind as if the place itself is just as desperate to be rid of me as I am for shelter. The moment I turn around, I jump back, jam one shoulder into the door hard enough to bruise it. There is MacArthur, his eyes flat and his mouth downturned beneath his beard.

'It's your shift,' I say. The words ring, loud in the sudden quiet.

His eyes flick towards me, sluggish and vague, as if each part of him has been softened. He is whisky-soaked, or something like it, loosened enough that there is room for the weather to blow through his cracks.

'Aye,' is all he says. A single hard syllable. Then he turns away towards the door, heedless of my words or of Ducat's inevitable anger.

'Ducat said to check the engine room,' I try. 'Something's come loose again.'

He stares at me a moment longer, glassy, as if he is not seeing me directly, the way things reflect strangely beneath the surface of the water.

'Aye,' he says again. And then he pushes out into the roar of night wind and the rush of the sea beyond.

It is no use to call after him: he would never hear it. Instead, I shake my sodden hair back from my forehead and trudge slowly up the staircase to the engine room.

The next day I watch the speck of him against the shoreline, through a haze of post-storm fog so thick I might lose sight of his defining edges should I so much as blink. MacArthur could dissipate into the boundaries of mist and water and the pebbled shore, leaving only wind in the shutters and rumpled sheets on his bunk. I stare until my eyes sting with strain and salty air, then go on staring just a moment more. The sea caresses the toes of his boots in slow rhythmic strokes.

•••

Overnight, a heavy crate of tools and ropes comes unmoored from its rigging and is blown right off the rocky cliff, its contents scattered across the beach. Ducat curses as we pick through the damage, the wet sand cloying beneath our boots.

'Half of it's gone. Must have swept out on the fucking tide.' He punctuates the words with a swift, angry kick to a nearby piece of splintered wood, which seems unmoved by his antics.

'Is it always like this?' I ask. I have found myself growing weary of the strength of the world each day, wind that whips the ocean up in a frenzied howl, waves so high and so dark that I sometimes fear they will rise above the rock outcropping and devour us whole. I wonder, sometimes, when the tide comes in, whether it will ever recede again to reveal the beach below.

Ducat frowns slightly, his eyes fixed somewhere on the writhing horizon.

'No,' he says. 'It's not.'

An hour later I am windswept and frozen, and a small pile of rescued supplies is growing at the start of the rock-formation stairs.

It is not until I pause to breathe after hauling up a particularly large chunk of splintered wood that I notice MacArthur. He has his back to me in the process of scrambling down the last steep edges of the outcrop to the beach and, if he notices my scrutiny, he does not show it. He merely turns straight past me, and walks right into the foam of the surf where the waves lap the shore. Only a little way out they are still rising, crashing and rising once more, an unending push and pull, scattering pieces of once-shore into the endless depths, returning devastation in their wake.

As MacArthur stands, his boots now soaked up to the ankles, I could swear that the waves rise higher in response, as if they are gathering up something vital from his soles and growing powerful from it before my very eyes.

I watch MacArthur a moment longer, the wreckage of supplies an afterthought to the sudden desire to feel the icy fingers of surf against the edges of my own feet. I am not much aware of my own movements until I come to a stop beside him. The wind is as fierce here as it is up in the gallery, and it whistles between our oilskinned shoulders with ferocity, cold fingers down my neck and hardened arms curved around my back, pushing and pulling in time with the tide at my feet.

MacArthur does not turn to me. In fact, his eyes are closed, dark smudges beneath them, red blotches of cold above his unkempt beard. If I did not know better, I would think he was at peace.

•••

I wake to shouting in the night and find myself surprised, at first, that I have heard anything at all above the sounds of sea and wind, near constant screams in the gale beyond the walls.

'Fucking madman! You had a hand in this, I know it!' Ducat's voice, rough around the edges and nearly hoarse from what I assume is the prolonged effort of yelling.

I sit upright in bed, shiver as the blankets slip down to my waist. Rain lashes the tiny windowpane in torrents, huge sheets of water that seem large and strong enough to be drawn from the ocean itself, waves pounding the side of the lighthouse in time with a steady throb in my temples.

I stumble when my stockinged feet hit the floor, clumsy on frozen toes. I am unmoored in the storm. Were it not for the solid bulk of brick and mortar between us, I might blow away; then, in the morning, MacArthur would wade through my scattered contents on the shore, kick aside tangles of organs, and squelch against my still-beating heart on his way to the surf.

MacArthur's voice is always quiet, so I do not hear his response until I round the corner into the kitchen. He speaks so low it is nearly a growl.

'I don't control the weather.' He has his arms crossed over his chest, standing his ground in the face of Ducat's advance, who seems to be attempting to crowd MacArthur back into the table with his bulk. MacArthur, all muscle and sinew, glares up at him.

Both are soaking wet, water dripping from their oilskins to form oblong puddles on the floor.

'What—?' I do not get the question out completely before Ducat rounds on me, his heavy footsteps squelching in wet boots.

'Surely you heard it?' he snaps. 'It was so loud they likely heard from the mainland.'

'Heard what?' I shout. It is hard to hear even the men in front of me over the wail of the storm. 'The wind's too loud!'

Ducat's eyes narrow.

'The sound of our bloody livelihood torn away! Everything smashed on the rocks below. Railing torn away! An almighty crashing like death itself. You must have heard.'

My head still throbs, and it feels like a vast effort to shake it in response. Across the room, MacArthur meets my eyes.

'It must be the storm,' I say, wishing I had thought to pull on my boots. 'The wind sounds strong enough to cause all manner of destruction.'

Ducat watches me a moment longer, but I pay him no mind. My eyes are locked with MacArthur's, and I think I might imagine the way his head

moves, very slightly, in the vague hint of a nod. It fills me with a strange warmth that is foreign after so long in the cold.

Then, Ducat pushes past me and is wrenching open the door before I can move to stop him, throwing words back over his shoulder with a venom he has saved for MacArthur until now.

'Mad! The fucking lot of you.'

A puddle left by Ducat's coat has begun to soak through the wool of my sock and, once he is gone, I step closer.

'I don't understand,' I say, my voice pitched loud enough to be heard above the wind and across the room. 'This storm has been building for a week.'

'Aye.' MacArthur runs a hand through his hair, where the lank strands have begun to drip down his temples and his cheeks in a pantomime of tears. 'The storm.'

'Are you alright?' I take another step.

MacArthur frowns.

'Your hand,' I prompt, and, as if he has only just noticed, he raises both up to eye level, considering the damage with a distracted sort of concentration.

Most of his nails are missing, torn skin and bloody rivulets tracking a path down each knuckle. The palms too are scraped and dirty and, from here, I can see that the front of his oilskin is covered with a layer of mud which runs down the sleeves of the coat, congealing into the patterns of the cuts on his hands.

'Ah,' he says, an offhand thing, as if he has only just noticed. 'The storm.'

•••

By the time we sit down to dinner, I can no longer hear the chime of the clock over the wind.

The storm rages loud and fierce, walls creaking with the strain, shutters banging a strange rhythmic accompaniment to the onslaught beyond. I doubt that MacArthur can hear the splash of whiskey into his mug, but he knows the feel of a healthy slug by heart.

He sets the bottle down beside his plate, a highland blend, far too nice to waste on a night like this one. It's nearly empty. He doesn't offer me any and, across the table, stiff-backed and watchful, ready to bolt at the first sign of something unspecified, I do not ask.

MacArthur watches me for a moment with half-lidded eyes, then raises his mug and waves it vaguely in the air, the barest hint of a salute. He swallows down the contents in one long, burning motion, forceful enough that the tin coating of the cup clicks against his teeth.

Outside, the storm rages on, wind and rain and the ocean itself, howling. The desperation, by now, is something we know well, full of cracks and weakness.

I tap one finger against the table, an irritable jerk of a movement that draws MacArthur's attention. His lips move vaguely beneath the scruff of his beard. I do not hear what he says. Our eyes meet for a moment; his bright with fear and glassy with something else entirely, pupils blown so wide that their blue irises look nearly black, like the discoloured grey-blue of the sea from the gallery. When the perspective shows a truth beyond the pristine colours that encase the shore. Now those ocean-dark eyes narrow. I wonder if his vision is swimming.

Another beat of stillness amidst chaos, before I push myself upright with both hands pressed flat against the table. The floor beneath my feet pitches like waves outside. When I am close enough, I brace against the back of MacArthur's chair and lean down to his ear.

'We have to go!' Even shouting, the words are nearly swallowed by the wind. 'It's late!'

MacArthur shakes his head, pushes his own mouth closer to shout back, 'Clock's wrong!'

His breath is a warm puff of air in the otherwise frigid space. I wonder briefly if he is the last warm thing left out on Stirling Crop.

I look over my shoulder, to the old clock on the kitchen wall. MacArthur does not follow, as if he knows without looking what the time will be: the same time it has been for some days now, since he last wound it. My hand lands on his shoulder, clinging reflexively as if this alone might keep me afloat.

I do not know how long I stay with my hand clenched against MacArthur's shoulder. Perhaps, it is until my back protests the hunched position. Perhaps we simply know when time enough has passed that we cannot let any more slip through unmarked?

MacArthur tosses back the last of the whisky straight from the bottle. He closes his eyes, savouring the burn on the way down.

My hand slips away from his shoulder as he stands. MacArthur's fingers are bare, pale and trembling in the haze of lamplight, washed clean. They looked similarly beneath the water, I remember, twined with my own, twined in turn with the shaggy locks of Ducat's hair as we dragged him, his contents spilling out across the shoreline like ropes and mooring, a crate smashed irreparably by the wind.

'It's time,' MacArthur says, turning towards the door and I step into place beside him. There is a familiar expression on his face now, peaceful, like his first steps into the ocean all those days ago.

And although the storm still rages outside and the waves crash high enough to reach the windows of the lantern room itself, MacArthur might just catch the words I breathe into the crack of space between our arms, salt-stung and tangy with the thing the ocean slips between the windowpanes, 'The first mile.'

## On casting a ghost shark Tineke Van der Eecken

Tineke Van der Eecken is an artist with Flemish-Australian multilingual heritage. Her memoir *Traverse* (Wild Weeds Press, 2018) was shortlisted for the 2016 TAG Hungerford Award and follows *Café d'Afrique* (Tineke Creations, 2012). Her poems have appeared in UK, New Zealand and Australian journals. Her poetry collection *A Place To Land* was published by Mulla Mulla Press in 2022.

### *At wet lab*

A euthanised ghost shark, the scientist  
and me, the artist. To remember her,  
we will cast her blood vessels in polymer.

'Fish don't cast,' warns the surgeon.  
He preps scalpel and forceps, cuts through  
cartilage and heart; I mix pigments and resin.

We inject heart, arteries and veins,  
pump aqua blue towards gills, down capillaries  
one blood cell wide to brain, trunk, fins, tail.

As he said it would, the flow stops, reverses,  
floods the heart chambers. Will I fail  
this triumph of history, this living fossil

whose senses evolved in darkness and cold,  
whose skin could detect the minutest electric fields,  
whose hooked trunk scanned sediment for food?

Hope fades while we dab the overflow,  
send one last push to trunk, liver, stomach.  
I submerge her body in potassium hydroxide.

Filled with fear of failure I drive away. Down  
Snake Gully Street, past the Reptile and Aquarium Store.  
Return the next day to find out what remains.

With skin and tissue dissolved away, her liquid pathways  
are revealed. Gills and liver, spine to sex organs.  
Phthalo green, clear white, iridescent blue.

### **Note**

According to Lucille Chapius, *Callorhinchus milii*, or the Australian ghost shark or elephant fish, 'belongs to a subclass of the cartilaginous fish family known as the chimaeras, close cousins of sharks and rays. The ghost shark inhabits temperate waters off southern Australia and New Zealand, typically at depths of 200 to 500m' (np).

### **Works Cited**

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## The Porifera

Scott-Patrick Mitchell

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

Mouthless,  
and without nerve,  
the sponge cannot scream.

Instead, it weaves colour  
into the limestone structure  
of its existence:

crimson, chartreuse,  
cerulean, fuchsia, honey  
yellow. In tidal elbow

brightness limbs  
saltwater hymn:  
stained-glass sings.

When life ebbs liminal  
these sponges amass graves  
along shoreline.

Their hues undo  
and they become replicas  
subdued, muted by wind.

Yet their shape remains,  
retained by a body  
that contains a galaxy

of tiny holes. Through these, wind  
feeds memory of pore bearer's  
speech and absorbs their howls.

Silence is an ocean  
lapping back to cleanse  
the body of a voice.

**The Acorn Barnacle**  
Scott-Patrick Mitchell

Larvae, head-down:  
attach yourself  
to jetty, hull, rock.

There, stop.  
Begin serving function  
by setting plates.

To prepare a meal  
appendage legs, feather them,  
dust up plankton for dinner.

You could become a mighty oak  
but you won't: your life is lived  
in the smallness of being.

Blessed hermaphrodite of the tide:  
you contain all that you need  
to fertilise an orchard, a sea.

Be the shelled fruit  
of the tempest realm,  
travel seven seas, canals.

Within an acorn  
is a sprawling map  
of possibility, branching

but this is of no consequence.  
Stay in one spot, gather  
love: become a colony.

**The Ram's Horn Shell**  
Scott-Patrick Mitchell

From out the open wet, spirula  
spirula ascends to augury stars and space,  
calculate the dawning grace of end times.

Inside the shell of it,  
gas-filled chambers  
allow for lift, descend.

Sky, a perpetual cinema,  
reveals apocalypse in one million years:  
spirula spirula sighs. No need to knell.

Death comes the next day  
and spirula spirula ends, leaves curl  
of carcass: ram's horn shell.

Oh Jericho, let your walls fall,  
offer rubble to the sea  
so it can fabric new reefs from grief.

Oh Human, when ocean hungers your home,  
do the same with the demise of your world:  
take each brick to the lip and let abyss swallow.

Oh Human. Oh Jericho.  
Do not fear: you only live once.  
The rest is myth, symbol and poem.

And still, somewhere  
a shofar scratches to joyfully yell  
and summon the flood, the final battle.

**Avant-sharke**  
Heather Blakey

Heather Blakey is a writer and scholar at The University of Western Australia. Her work examines intersections between technology, intimacy and the environment in video games, literature and virtual worlds.

The beginning created me  
darkness was over the surface of the deep  
I teemed in the vault and the void and moved about in it  
changing shapes and flowing and chomping  
for four hundred and fifty million years

*They asked to uninvite me?*

As if I haven't heard the same thing before

I'm still here though, aren't I?

and where are they?

it's like I always say

just give me your acceptance speech

I'm like a nice black dress

an investment spiece

You know we have no gallery in the water  
no owner no stopping no showcasing no boring nine to five  
because we don't have time  
day and night are just categories  
me I've got preference and action for the light  
though it's good to be open to new perspectives on the existing  
scharkship because  
fashion rarely stays the same  
Here is one I like I've got  
the strength to bite the things I cannot change  
the courage to sense the things I can  
and the taste to know the difference  
though it is funny to watch your reaction when I  
chomp chomp yum

You are interested in immaculate conception?  
well yeah we know about that it's called  
par the no chomp chomp *genesis*  
why don't you swim over here and meet our  
divine sons and daughters  
my little prophets told me you were coming  
they're practising reading the electromagnetic scripts  
speculating the future of fine art  
they need to be literate to live  
to avoid the bycatch  
and the violent aesthetic offence of  
your ugly designs

Okay quickly before you run out of oxygen  
let me give you some better ideas  
let me tell you about the golden age  
the cuteness of the avant-sharke  
*Falcatus* was tiny and sharp  
questioning contrasts and challenging  
the boundaries and limits of the dorsal spine  
*Helicoprion* reimagined the jaw with their tooth whorls  
a little kinky and experimental  
messy but inspired  
Personally I really like the work of *Stethacanthus*  
and the ambivalent allegory of sacrificing speed for style

*Hah!*

When I think about them I show  
my infinite smile  
I'm always laughing  
pointy and smart  
my self-help advice?  
tips for an immortal life?  
get some teeth and  
a sense of humour and  
don't be picky at dinner  
now you better keep moving  
chomp  
or die

## Water Moves Elrond Garcia

**Elrond Garcia is an Integrated Masters student in Marine Biology at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. He spent his fourth year research placement at the Mindaroo-UWA Deep Sea Research Centre at The University of Western Australia studying Crinoids in the Izu-Ogasawara Trench.**

Water is accustomed to movement. We flow, individual molecules jostling each other, clinging together, moving together. We flow, in the direction of gravity. Pushed or carried by the wind. Heated, excited molecules, all jumpy and flushed, scatter about, push against their colder, more languid compatriots. We flow through the tides of the ocean, are lifted into the sky, carried upon the winds, fall upon the land and are carried back to the sea in an ever-moving cycle.

When we get trapped in one place, too small for this flow to be maintained, we become stagnant. Stillness is not a natural condition for us. It's so unnatural that you give us an entirely different name once we stop moving. We become ice, and that word 'frozen' in turn you take and apply to anything that has become still.

We are vital to human existence. We are a part of you, and in turn you are part of our cycle. You trap us in bottles. For a time. Ultimately, no matter how long you hold us separate, held ready for our consumption, we will return to that cycle.

This water sits frozen in a bottle, our molecules fixed in place. The bottle is shrouded in cloth, slowing the gradual draining of heat from the fleshy sack in the bed—a process that would gradually loosen us. It has remained there through the night, not for consumption, but as a sink for thermal energy. It's the reversal of a more common practice, where the water is loaded with energy until it leaps and is stuffed into a bottle of rather different construction. There, we are made to give energy until your beds are comfortable and warm.

Then the sun rises, casting its own heat into the room. The bottle, now half-full with water that flows and half-full with water still locked in place, is retrieved. It's placed back into the freezer. Two more are withdrawn. These go in pockets, meant for that purpose, on the side of a bag. The bag goes on a back. The back goes on a bicycle. The whole assemblage,

moulded briefly into a single moving mass, sets itself into motion. Out the door, down the hill and towards the river.

You are on your way to work. The cycling route borders what you would call a river. The river and the cycling path run alongside one another for the length of your journey. The river is vast, unimpeded. It flows languidly, untroubled by your presence beside it. There are places where other vessels disturb us. Swimming. Fishing. Hurtling your vehicles above our surface. In other places our course has been fixed in place by concrete, pillars sunk into the mud to support bridges so that you can cross back and forth at your leisure.

The day is hot. Above thirty degrees Celsius so far. It'll be hotter later. We are untroubled by this. Parts of us are lifted into the sky, carried by the energy the sunlight imparts. They will return in time. For those of us still frozen in the bottles you carry, sunlight is liberation. We melt, our shackles loosen.

Your fleshy sack of water carrying bottles to work fulfills your own role in the cycle. Activity generates heat, and it's a hot enough day already. Your internal temperature begins to rise towards levels that would be unsafe, so along with other counter measures a concoction of water and other substances is expelled onto your skin. Enough of this and fluid supplies run low, so you stop under the shade of one of your bridges. The bottles are emptied into your body and we are absorbed by your tissues. The internal balance between the water and all the other substances that make up the thing you call 'yourself' is restored, and on a more tangible level you feel refreshed by the influx of coldness as fills your chest.

When you arrive at work, the bottles are refilled by fluid coursing from opened taps and then returned to a freezer, where another one sits frozen.

The bottles spend the day in and out of the freezer. Cycled out to melt, be consumed, refilled, cycled back out again.

You sit at a computer, staring at a screen.

The screen is filled with a view of more water.

Water from over 9,800 metres below sea level. This far down, we're a long way away from the warmth of the sun. Instead, we can just about feel the heat that comes from below. It seeps through the bedrock, the ghostly presence of the raging fury at the heart of the world.

You're not really interested in the water. You're interested in the sessile flowerlike things living in the water, and yet you cannot separate us from them any more than you can separate us from yourselves. This deep we are stacked so far on top of one another that anything living endures a pressure more than a thousand times of that at the surface of the ocean.

Many could not survive a lesser pressure any more than they could survive if they were a different temperature. If we didn't bring them food. If our currents tore them from the rocks to which they cling. We permeate them as we permeate you.

At the end of the day, you put some of the bottles, part-frozen, back in the bag. By the time you head home, it's dark out. Cooler.

The river seems to you restless, more awake than it was earlier in the day. We spit up over the bank as the vessel passes, sporadically peppering you with spray. Dark clouds, unusual for this time of year, swallow the sky. In the darkness, the same thing you process and contain and consume becomes vast and ominous and threatening.

Do you really think we care about you?

We are in you and go through you. You might constrain us, detain us, but only for a while.

The sun sets and the bore sprinklers start up. Without them, the grass you planted along the rest of the route would shrivel and die. Near the bridge, the jets of water criss-cross the path like laser-beams in one of your spy movies.

Acrobatics are difficult on a bicycle, so the best thing to do is to lower your head and keep cycling, pretending you don't feel the water trying to batter you off your perch.

Afraid of us in one form, dependent on another. We would laugh if we could.

You get home late. Boil us to cook pasta, wash with us, drink us.

Bottles go in the freezer. Another comes out. The cycle continues. Days, months, years. Soon your water will join the cycle. We can wait. Water frozen centuries ago will melt just the same. Is melting just the same, in many places, thanks to you. Sometimes you think about it, more often you don't.

We don't think about you at all.

## **jellyfish** Monty Hoddinott

**Monty Hoddinott was born in London in 2009 and moved to Perth in 2010. He is studying ballet and contemporary dance at The Perth School of Ballet.**

like an aquatic flower  
like a scorpion in a jelly suit  
like a scary bowl of noodles  
like a bubble of paraffin wax in a lava lamp  
like a clear pancake  
like a dish of molten glass  
like a feeble attempt at an aquatic spider  
like an unappetising desert

**Monkey Mia, 2023,  
My aunt records the  
documentary on the dolphins**  
Caitlin Maling

Caitlin Maling is a Western  
Australian poet with five books  
published.

It begins with people in 1970s bathers  
knee deep with clutched fish heads feeding  
wide smiling toothed mouths. The female scientist  
keeps saying the words 'dead fish'  
like it's her mouth that wants to bite down  
on some still flapping thing. It's 8pm  
beyond the time I can be relied on to fashion  
flesh into lines, so I take notes on my phone  
as the documentary narrows from the span of decades  
to our current days. The two male scientists  
want to believe that the mother teaching the calf  
to accept the dead fish is foraging  
like finding something coincidentally tangled in weed.  
Should I butcher my own cow  
even if I know what is shrinkwrapped is meat?  
Dolphins in the wild might breastfeed for almost a decade.  
When they are provisioned with fish the Mum won't give it a year.  
It's a small sample group, the Monkey Mia dolphins  
down to two after 'Shock' and 'Surprise' died.  
There's a saying now 'Fed is Best' and they can only  
provision 350gms, 5%, of the total dolphin daily diet  
a taste to get them to search and move, but really  
it just keeps them hovering at the beaches  
not restlessly searching the remaining seagrass  
after the 2011 heatwave sent 25% of fronds to the surface  
like boiled noodles. The provisioned dolphins  
can have 90% infant mortality  
and not in a competitive sharks eat their siblings way  
the ones that survive are still weak. Can a dolphin

be practical? The family in these waters  
learnt to use a sponge as a tool, stuck  
their beak through so it could dig in weed  
without fear of being stung. The mother  
passes knowledge of this to the child.  
After the documentary finishes, I say  
'We won't be taking the baby to feed the dolphins then.'  
My husband asks why? And I tell him,  
the only death my son hands out  
will be his own.

1. stromatolites, again  
Caitlin Maling

Like the fossil record  
I could not care  
about breathing

2. stromatolites, again, again

Look. It's not just that they are boring  
It's that making them took more time  
than the entirety of human history  
And that's just rude

3. stromatolites, again, again, again

It's not birdshit  
it's non reef-forming  
carbonate sediments  
in the non reef-forming hyper-saline  
you can't float on  
because the oldest living  
thing is too fragile  
for the break  
of your skin

Queen of Heaven  
Sarah Yeung

Sarah Yeung is a researcher,  
editor and sessional tutor  
living on unceded Whadjuk  
Nyungar Boodjar. She is the  
co-editor of the poetry  
anthology *Hello Keanu!*  
(Momolo Books, 2024) and the  
transnational Cantonese zine  
做乜嘢 (*Zou Mat Je*). They are  
the Administrative Editor at  
*Westerly Magazine*.

I hear they've built a statue of Tin Hau in Victoria, standing proud over pounds of stainless steel, all blessed in gold. Gazing upon the star-strewn sea, two shorelines stretch beneath her tepid watch. The one where a beach ball flew out from the hands of my baby brother, its buoyant ghost teasing some trite anecdote about loss. In the shallows, I find a purple sea urchin, passing it to my sister for closer inspection. She crushes it to powder with a triumphant pop, and I am shocked not to hear its sigh of relief. The second shoreline I don't see until my mid-twenties, although I have dreamed of it my entire life, ankles deep in temple worship. There, I watch the ocean lapping the edges of the Capitalocene, making archipelagos of ATMs, pews, display cases. The smell of chlorine hallows the flooded carpets and my arms are always stretched out, feeling for the perfect click of the elevator button. Ascending storey upon storey. On the rooftop bar of the Mandarin Oriental, I sip a classic cocktail I can't afford in my other life. Across the deserted deck, I see him. Dressed in plain grey, he turns and smiles in complete understanding. I wish one of us could be held forever in this glitched moment. The wave swells to meet him and when I see the goddess' face, I fall into the curve of a hand making the sounds of the ocean.

## Approaching the Ocean

Paul Hetherington

Paul Hetherington has published eighteen full-length collections of poetry, including *Sleeplessness*, which won the inaugural Marion Halligan Award in 2024. He founded International Poetry Studies at the University of Canberra and the International Prose Poetry Project. With Cassandra Atherton he co-authored *Prose Poetry: an introduction* (Princeton University Press, 2020).

### 1. Hands

Our rented half-house leans into its street, the local butcher sells us offcuts. Days became a glare of light, weeks dissolve. The palm of your hand imprints the sand and presses grains on my shoulder. The Indian Ocean washes our bodies. Our infant daughter wakes every few hours and her nuzzling cries clamber in dreams. You place oily hands on her downy body. Our clock ticks slowly—days and nights drip through fingers, as if we feel the seconds and minutes slide.

### 2. Mangroves

Homed-in, belonging to this place, we look outwards toward cliff and ocean; toward the road away from the old, crowded town. We place a tablecloth and carpets, clean the skylight, hang paintings from angling walls. One image shows a boy and girl among mangroves at the ocean's root-bound edge. They're digging for crabs with sticks, beyond fencelines and land claims, feet firmly planted in sea and mud. They're alert, as if to say, 'We belong where the mangroves remain.' Walking outside, you ask what we're doing and why we've come. I've no answer, as the sky peers. Trees crowd us and our feet are sinking.

### 3. Opacity

Cumbrous feeling gathers and dissolves; days are as opaque, like an abstract image. We face the ocean; behind us are houses, a road we know well, a shop that sells hand-me-down clothes. We look toward an idea, between shop front and shore, gusting in a sketch of wind.

**undead river**  
Luisa Mitchell

Luisa Mitchell is a Broome-born Nyungar-Anglo writer living in Boorloo/Perth. Her work has been published in *Westerly*, *Kimberley Stories*, *Portside Review* and more. In 2023, she won the Highly Commended Poem and Best Emerging Poet Awards from Liquid Amber Press and was shortlisted for the Richelle Prize for Emerging Writers.

skeletal hands of rivers  
thumbprint of veinous leaves on desert bowl  
wherein golden fish once circled  
clockwork migration at tide's turn

now only schools of cloud scatter  
dark and unknown  
cumulus shadows in the lung  
taunting thirsty bloodstreams

storm showers few and far  
between these ancient seas  
shell of a journeyman cries out  
beside hollow roars of brittle dragons

while I float on by  
inside a roaring metal beast  
refractive bubble catching light  
winged in the sky

below I see only desert  
where death stroked his thumb  
pindan press of life wrung dry  
scorching silent under sun

yet beneath this cracked earth  
ocean caverns whisper  
threads of water crossing wires  
sparks of story in the deep

a haunting of remembering and  
the promise of what remains  
what monsters have yet come  
to pass

and how long do dead rivers  
stay dead  
if they were ever dead  
at all?

The Ways Death  
Likes to Speak  
Luisa Mitchell

Death was a little angry bird  
raising eyebrows sending messages  
through insects jumping at His feet  
arriving as the shaking finger  
ceased pointing posturing  
and then solidified / horizontal  
now peripheral visions of her  
at the park  
follow me  
pray, speak *djitti djitti* speak?

Death was Freo Doctor's breeze  
stirring up frustrated dust  
whipping questions like *why me?*  
sweeping unsatisfied return through Wadjemup seas  
past men and women singing in moodjar trees  
ghosts opaque as the state letters that  
/ killed them  
living on in familial myths  
lost tongues and a tendency to  
drink

Death was the weeping poem  
stanzas of tears down blurred faces  
foggy with shyness side-hugs hand squeezes  
your knee gently touching mine  
five thousand goose pimples  
away from you  
when I wrote my grief

it transformed *transcendent*  
ink splattered angels worshipping at your feet  
crying out *is love so different from this pain?*

Death was guttural scream on neon streets  
trembling cups of tea then  
first light's paper crease  
cool tiles that remember her dancing feet  
dust motes cling to the / absence of her  
now we wait her final breath  
where once was life here comes Death  
true deep alive as you and me  
a friend? *perhaps*  
we shall see

the day Death ceases stirring  
fear and loss and love within my gut  
like rotting honey gone too hot  
will be the day I fall into His arms  
glad now to hear my questions meet nothing  
but crashing shores deep time waves vacuum of  
heavy space  
the curtain falls and  
*utter*  
/ *unholy* /  
*blessed*  
*silence*

**Pearl Ocean Dragon  
Restaurant**  
Ange Yang

Ange Yang is a Malaysian-Australian writer based in Boorloo/Perth who uses her appetite to explore questions around food and identity. Her writing has been published by SBS, *WA Good Food Guide*, *Broadsheet* and *Gourmet Traveller*. Her micro-memoir features in *Ourselves: 100 micro memoirs* by Night Parrot Press. Find her @vegemitecongee

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**MENU**

SOUP

Shark Fin Soup .....	\$10.50
碗仔翅	
Chicken and Sweet Corn Soup .....	\$7.50
雞肉玉米湯	
Hot and Sour Soup .....	\$8.20
酸辣湯	

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‘唔該 唔好意思’

Bowls clatter against glass. The lazy Susan swivels. The server’s hands shoot out. In a flash, the mess of bowls are rearranged into a neat series of concentric circles around a larger bowl of soup. Each smaller bowl is filled with a practised turn of the server’s wrist, the ladle a precise line between the table, her body and the closed fist resting at the base of her spine. The filled bowls become a murky orange ripple, fanning out to the table’s edge.

This methodical dance is drowned out by the saga of Peter’s housing woes being cast across the table.

‘He should just build—my friend just built in the suburbs,’ says one aunt.

‘No, I heard that building takes longer now. There’s a shortage. Don’t you watch the news? Building companies are collapsing every day!’ says another.

‘Has he even called an agent? Remember Lien? His daughter works at a real estate agency now.’

As is the nature of family storytelling, Peter is yet to arrive and therefore cannot defend himself, thus creating the perfect habitat for gossip to bloom. It grows and crawls into the crevasses of his absence in waves of well-meaning criticism that will never make it directly to his ears. Instead, it’ll trickle in through obscure WhatsApp messages and forwarded emails containing the latest house listings. He’ll swipe them away without a moment’s thought, determined to chart his own way.

With the last tilt of the bowl, the server ebbs back into the flow of the dining room. A bowl floats towards 爺爺.

‘Eat, eat,’ my aunt chides. 爺爺 is served, then 嫲嫲, before drifting through three different generations’ worth of hovering hands. Bowls disappear to the beat of an unspoken hierarchy. One is left on the table for Peter. The clacking of porcelain spoons against bowls is disrupted by a server approaching our table. There’s a dark blue bucket beside her. 嫲嫲 peers inside. I can hear the scrabbling of claws from the other side of the table.

‘They’re so small,’ 嫲嫲 says flatly. Her lips purse.

The server agrees and disagrees in the same breath, the way that only the sharp edges and broad tones of Cantonese allows. ‘They’re the biggest from the tank. Not too bad. See?’ She shakes the bucket. 嫲嫲 hums. The lobsters scramble.

‘How much?’ my sister asks me.

I make an aborted gesture to the A4 piece of paper haphazardly taped to the wall of tanks at the front of the restaurant, next to the redwood chairs and counter.

‘Huh. That’s a lot.’

I shrug again, distracted by the knot of bamboo floating in my soup. I know the price of tradition.

The server leaves, bucket in hand.

From the other side of the table I hear Lucy mutter: ‘Why do we have soup all the time? It’s too hot.’

My aunt chides her. The discontent ripples across to Kevin. ‘Yeah,’ he says. ‘It’s wayyy too hot. It’s summer.’

‘Yeah, and at school Ms Jones says we have to eat less meat.’

I hazard that my aunt could explain the roots of the imitation shark fin soup we're all gulping down, weaving together a story part-legend, part-history (as most traditions are) with ease. She's always been a good storyteller. A flopping, wet noise emanating from a bucket distracts us again. A disinterested server gestures to the green bucket at his calf. Tonight's fish, no doubt. 嫵嫵 peers over. There's no talk of rubbery fins or sniffing gills or examining the fish's eyeballs—things that YouTube food videos have taught me are markers of a good quality catch. Her assessments have always been swift—a crease between her tattooed eyebrows, a shake of her jade bangle against the table, a glance towards 爺爺. 嫵嫵 nods in approval. The server backs away with the bucket in one hand, net in the other. The fish gets whisked away, presumably to the steamer. I remember the rubbery, glassy eyes of the fish in the tanks on my way into the restaurant. Once I would have dragged my sister and cousins along to the tanks, spending the time between dishes pressing our noses up to the glass, staring at the way the fish fought for space, tracing their dark scales up and down with greasy fingers. That was before we all got our first Gameboys, then mobile phones, then smartphones. By then, the bubbles of the fish tank and the beady eyes of the lobsters were boring compared to Bomberman.

'Is Peter coming?' an uncle asks.

'He said he would,' my aunt replies.

'He's probably stuck in traffic,' I say. Beside me, my sister starts typing on her phone.

'Maaaaaaa, I don't want to eat this,' Lucy whines. She pushes her bowl away.

'Eat.'

'Why?'

'We eat it to celebrate. Don't be rude.'

'So do we get money?' Kevin asks.

'Wrong festival, idiot.'

They bicker in the way only siblings do, before tiring themselves out and going back to their portable screens.

Across the table, 爺爺 slurps loudly.

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## MENU

### SEAFOOD

Lobster .....\$MP

龍蝦

Snow Crab .....\$MP

雪蟹

Mud Crab .....\$MP

泥蟹

---

Peter rocks up just as the lobster yee mein hits the table.

'Fucking finally,' my sister mutters. She fills the teacup beside her. Her profanities are lost in the cacophony of the restaurant.

I watch as Peter and his over-gelled quiff float through the sea of banquet tables. His black-hair-and-black-shirt ensemble is stark against the swarm of white tablecloths. He looks like a shadow slipping through blinking headlights.

Peter pauses. My sister rolls her eyes. My phone vibrates.

### COUSINS

#### Active now

7:04pm

...where the fuck are you

Latesoz

-.-

7:36pm

back wall, under the horse painting

He squints.

Haha thnx

He smiles, letting servers pass through, avoiding their billowing trails of steam, dodging plates of kai lan and narrowly side-stepping those whipping around with open teapots.

On our table, a mountain glistens under fluorescent light. The curls of the lobsters' tails make them look like little orange globes, like Dragon Balls. They float in a moat of yellow noodles. "Bout time," my sister jabs.

Peter smiles while he's half hugging 麻麻.

'Nice to see you too, cuz.'

My sister and I shuffle out of our little arc, tucking our chairs under the table and pressing our backs against the peeling wallpaper to let Peter through. I bristle at the interruption.

Eating lobster is part skill, part speed trial. I've honed this ability through years of family banquets, squeezed elbow to elbow between my sister and cousins. I've endured decades of small talk, cross-examinations about my future aspirations, dodged interrogations about my finances and nodded quietly at every uncle's rant about inflation.

Through that, I've learned that diving for treasure requires effort. Patience. Time.

It's not about diving for any piece.

It's about the effort-to-reward ratio.

The most prized piece is the one that's cradled in the curl of the tail. Merely sliding your chopsticks between the soft flesh and hard shell rewards you with a golf ball of meat that'll slide right off. It's pliant but never chewy. Time from plate to mouth? Mere seconds. No extra tools required.

The next tier of meat is the leg. Hold the joint firmly with one hand. Pull back with the other. A satisfying crack will signal success. The real skill is using your back teeth to pierce through the first layer of the shell, before peeling it back to reveal a tube of pink-orange striped flesh. A tube of smooth lobster, all in one bite. Time from plate to mouth? Up to half a minute, depending on how long you have to wait for the metal nutcracker to be passed around and the turn of the lazy Susan to where you're sitting.

The bottom tier includes the pieces of meat left in the puddle of off-white thickened sauce, floating next to strands of abandoned noodles. The weird knobby bit that looks like a small fist which attaches a leg to the torso is also bottom tier, as it requires you to suck through it like a fleshy straw. Sometimes you're rewarded with more sauce than meat. Time from plate to mouth? Minutes. Tools required? Nutcracker, the odd metal fork thing and the end of a chopstick.

Of course, this effort does not deter any of us from the feast ahead. Peter finally takes his seat. Within minutes, juice is dripping down our fingers, cracks reverberating across the table. The juice gets caught in our elbows, staining the white tablecloth a muddy yellow. It's a small price in exchange for the joys of sucking sweet meat through hollowed-out legs. We're culinary chiropractors, cracking spines, snapping legs and popping joints. Nuggets of soft, white flesh are dug out with glee. Sticky fingers pass nutcrackers around the lazy Susan. We wipe our mouths with paper

napkins, staining their flimsy red surface a deep crimson, only to dirty our fingers again. Once the piles of carnage on our plates reach a tipping point, the gorging and gauging stops. Fingertips are dipped in a bowl of clear water, a slice of lemon floating at its edge. Napkins are passed around. By the time the lemon water reaches our arc of the table, the water is a musty grey.

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## MENU

Steamed Fish .....	\$MP
蒸魚	
Seafood Claypot .....	\$27.60
海鮮煲	
Abalone Mushroom Oyster Sauce .....	\$86.00
鮑魚冬菇西兰花	

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Across the table, the steamed fish stares back at me, a grey-blue orb resting against a pool of sauce, its iris hazy with steam. My aunt's chopsticks spear through its flesh. I blink as it jiggles.

'Don't forget that Uncle Steven arrives this week.' The eyeball jolts. My aunt's wrist twists, the chopsticks folding right, then jerking left. A key being jammed into a lock. 'Who's picking him up from the airport?'

Her wrist twists again. With a practised sweep, she lifts the translucent ladder of bones and places them on the side of the plate, picking the spindly, toothpick ribs free from any traces of flesh.

The eyeball stills as she starts portioning its torso. Each fillet of fish that lands in a bowl is punctuated with a glance. One uncle murmurs thanks. Another uncle just continues shovelling food from his bowl into his face.

'Peter?' my aunt says.

The turn of the lazy Susan places Peter under the gaze of the eyeball. He groans, putting the slice of fish into his bowl.

'Can't he just Uber?'

My aunt's head whips towards him. 'That's a waste of money. You pick him up.'

Peter looks at me. I shrug. Years of sharing bedrooms when random aunts and uncles arrive, shuffling between shared bathrooms and

shuttling people up and down the freeway like a free taxi service means I'm all too familiar with being used as a family resource.

'I'm working.'

Peter looks across to my sister. She just grins, happy to be out of the firing line this time.

'Fine,' he says. 'How long are they here for again?'

'Three weeks,' my aunt says.

His glare is mutinous. My sister smothers her laughter.

My shoulders sag, watching as the fish makes another turn around the table. The commotion means I've missed my chance.

'You can take him to Kings Park. Maybe the Pinnacles. Caversham too, the kids will like the kangaroos—but make sure you go before 3:30 so you can see the koala as well.' My aunt is oblivious to the silent mutiny happening on our side of the table. Of course, the itinerary is the same each time any family member arrives. The greatest hits of Perth haven't changed in the last decade: sunrise from Kings Park. Sunset at Scarborough Beach. A day in Fremantle, with chilli mussels at Cicerello's followed by a stroll around the markets. Come home with bags of nougat, nuts and chocolate. A trip up to the Swan Valley for wine, with a stop at Caversham to see the kangaroos. Swoon at the koala. A stop at Chemist Warehouse before the flight for vitamins and lanolin cream. Always crammed in the family car. Always together, never apart, never an expense wasted.

'He just wants to fish though,' my uncle says.

My aunt isn't deterred. 'Oh, then Peter can take him to Busselton too.'

'Why is it always fishing?' Peter protests. He's probably thinking about the petrol bill he's racking up on this imaginary tour.

'It's nice.'

'It's boring.'

'It's beautiful—you don't appreciate nature.'

'It's too far away.'

'Just make sure he doesn't take too many,' I say. Memories of buckets of fish being brought home blur with memories of body camera footage and piles of briefs waiting for me on the glassy slate of my work desk.

'Urgh, they're always so strict about that,' my uncle says.

'Yeah, you know you can only get like two now?'

'I saw the other day someone on the news got fined seventy grand for fishing.'

'For just fish?!'

'No no, that's lobster. Or abalone—not fish.'

'Yah, you'd think they have better things to do.'

My eye twitches. I push my chopstick into my bowl, splitting a chunk of roast pork in two. There's so much I'd like to say. Things like, 'No, that's not right.' Things about fisheries management plans and dwindling population numbers and the need to protect the natural landscape Uncle Steven wants to see. I hold my breath, count slowly, waiting for higher-order thinking to return to my carb muddled mind. Being at the adult table didn't mean I was an adult; I am first-sister, first-daughter, first-granddaughter, still three rungs down the family tree.

A piece of unshelled prawn hits my bowl. I nudge my sister's elbow in thanks.

The argument is derailed by a platter of abalone coming to the table. The patches of my uncle's and my father's bald heads separate just enough to let the wide brimmed bowl through, then they snap back together. The platter is covered in a thick sauce, viscous against disks of abalone and mushroom. A forest of broccoli borders this. The platter, which makes a hefty thump when it hits the table. When I push my chopsticks against the abalone's spongy surface, it yields briefly before springing back slowly.

Lucy scrunches her face. My aunt's eyes light up. Peter continues scrolling on his phone. I can't tell the difference between an abalone and a slice of mushroom.

Tea is poured; two fingers tap in thanks.

'Is this all?' 嫲嫲 says after the kai lan comes steaming in, the seafood claypot tipping the lazy Susan slightly. 'Is this enough?' 嫲嫲 says again, after a hotplate heaped with tofu hits the table and he watches the waiter pour a sauce with nuggets of mince across the hotplate. The sauce sizzles loudly, smoke billowing towards the high ceilings.

'Should we order more?' she says again, once we're all slouched in our seats, picking at the bone of the roast duck and the leftover beans in the claypot and swiping the broccoli against the leftover sauce in the abalone and mushroom dish, careful to avoid any garnishes.

'Ah 嫲嫲, that's enough.'

My neurons are seafood innards. Carbs pulse through my bloodstream. My eyes are heavy. I tap my fingers against the table and my sister stops pouring me tea. She smiles. 'Eat more, eat more.'

The conversation moves away from Uncle Steven's imaginary tour to Lucy's piano recital, to Kevin's soccer game. Cantonese blends to Mandarin, punctuated by the flat tones of English. Then back to Uncle Steven.

'Maybe we can take him to catch abalone somewhere?'

'Well I'm not taking him all the way down to Busselton just so he can catch tiny fish,' Peter says.

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## MENU

### DESSERT

Fried Ice Cream .....	\$13.80
炸雪糕	
Mango Pudding .....	\$11.20
芒果布丁	

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'So don't forget, 9.35 from the airport on Wednesday. Peter.'

The weight of the food makes our tongues heavy.

Peter grunts. Nods.

'Are you full, Peter?'

His tone softens. 'I'm so full!' He smiles.

'It's good to have everyone together,' 嫲嫲 says. 'It's been so long.'

I look into her eyes. I look at the way she touches her shoulder. The way 爺爺 pulls the chair out for her, the way her hand shakes when she pours tea for 爺爺. She says her knees are okay but holds onto the tops of the empty chairs on the way to the washroom.

I watch as she stumbles out, 爺爺 reaching to catch her before she bats his hand away. I see her ask Kevin and Lucy whether they've eaten enough before she continues on her way to the washroom, meandering.

'Well, we'll do another one when Uncle Steven arrives,' Peter says.

'Let's not get the salted prawns again, they were too soft this time,' my uncle says. It kicks off the usual discussion about the food.

'The fish was good.'

'So good.'

'The lobsters were so small!'

'So expensive these days.'

'Everything is so expensive these days.'

Despite the protests, I know we'll be having abalone again in a few weeks, this time with Uncle Steven at the table.

嫲嫲 turns to my sister when she returns. I hear my sister say that she's eaten enough. A sweep of the table, the clink of bowls hitting plates. Familiar routine of wrapping up. Our plates and cutlery are taken away in a whirlwind.

I swap my sago for my sister's red bean. She smiles.

'Thanks. Tea?'

I shake my head, already turning to listen to the commotion on the other side of the table. I watch as my aunts extricate themselves from their seats and fight over the bill.

As I weave my way out, 嫲嫲 holds my elbow.

'Xin Xin, are you full? Did you like the lobster?'

'It's good.' That's all my rudimentary Cantonese allows.

'Good. I know you like it.'

I smile.

We dribble out, leaving empty teacups in our wake.

**Prime Aspect  
Beachfront Hymn**  
Alan Fyfe

Alan Fyfe is a poet and storyteller from Boorloo. His new book is called *G-d, Sleep, and Chaos* (Gazebo Press, 2024), and it's about all three of those things.

A LITTLE SLICE OF PARADISE for the discerning buyer, where you'll pity those who invested in WATER GLIMPSES. You'll gaze past the azure horizon as though G-d, your servant, ran a world-sized bath. REAL RETURN FOR CAPITAL and inputs for every HDMI configuration on the western wall. You'd never really have to look to the sea. With all known streaming platforms and art canvases from that gorgeous NOTHING-IN-PARTICULAR shop in the ACTIVATED CBD, you could soar with superheroes into a hazy sunset in three shades of pastel oils. The paintings are all of beaches too. Your favourite superhero lives underwater: KING OF THE OCEANS. You will look out over your cedar balcony none the less. You will show guests the view, making understated gestures while holding a MARGARET RIVER PINOT GRIS, with a GLOW OF SACRAL CALM as an exclamation mark on everything you achieved. Salutations for the WISE CONSUMER, who paid well to live better.

SALT AIR will be terrible for the metal roof, that reflects like a BLINDING FIRE at one PM. No one thought that choice through. At night, you'll sometimes think you can HEAR IT ROTTING, which will nag hard as toothache. Remember the lessons of the MINDFULNESS SEMINAR you claimed on tax. Remember how much money you truly have. Money will replace the roof-sheets with more resistant material. Money will get you an AIRBNB while the roofers ply their trade over two days. Money will locate a place to stay on another part of the coast, so you don't have to drop a single morning looking at a beach you RARELY GO TO.

There will be a pool if you want to swim, heated and unsalted. It is nice to look at that pale sand, beautiful to meditate on the tides, but you can't control who turns up there. No rights to fence off a beach, not yet anyway. You know people IN STATE GOVERNMENT, so maybe

you'll change the things you can before you ACCEPT THE THINGS YOU CANNOT. There may be some sourness at the periphery of your days, hints of bitterness even—same as a MARGARET RIVER PINOT GRIS—but you'll never miss the lightness, the suggestions of summer fruits and honeydew. You will open an effusive email from a real estate agent wishing you EVERY HAPPINESS in your new abode.

## Fencing Lessons with Hermaphroditic Flatworms

Prema Arasu

for Dmitry

Prema Arasu is a postdoctoral research fellow in creative writing at the Munderoo–UWA Deep-Sea Research Centre. Prema's book of poetry, *Vampire Squid*, is forthcoming with Fremantle Press (2026).

### I. En garde

Non-parasitic marine flatworms (Class: Turbellaria, Phylum: Platyhelminthes) are some of the most structurally simplistic creatures of the sea. They have no circulatory or respiratory organs, simple ocelli and a one-way gut. They lack the molluscan complexity of nudibranchs but imitate their flamboyant forms in two-dimensional facsimile; they are fabulously patterned and hued in aposematic neon to ward off predators. This begets common names like the candy-striped flatworm. The Persian carpet flatworm. The brilliant flatworm. The racing stripe flatworm. The gold-speckled flatworm.

Most marine flatworms are hermaphroditic, possessing both ovaries and testes. Hermaphroditic flatworms mate by duelling. Their sexual encounters consist of a battle with their two-headed stylets, each attempting to pierce the other in a process known as traumatic insemination, or penis fencing. The first flatworm to be stabbed becomes female. She carries the mated pair's eggs.

### II. Prêts

In 17th and 18th century Europe, fencing was a form of training for duelling. A duel was a respectable way for a gentleman to resolve a dispute. Duels were fought to first blood—or death, with the rules of engagement written in a *code duello*.

The modern sport of fencing bears little resemblance to its deadly predecessor. There are three types of modern fencing: foil, épée and sabre. Originating as a training weapon, the foil is the lightest weapon. The sabre is a slashing weapon with a crescent-shaped hand guard. Women's sabre was officially recognised by the global fencing peak body, Fédération Internationale d'Éscrime, in 1998, and first appeared in the Olympics in 2008. The épée is a heavier thrusting weapon. I fence épée.

In épée, the whole body is the target—touches to the head, foot, hand all count. Épée fencing has a reputation as a dull spectator sport, as opponents bounce back and forth, size each other up, and wait for a misstep. When the action happens, blades and bodies collide in a fraction of a second, and only the wires attached to the electronics can reliably tell who got the point.

### III. Allez

My coach Dmitry is named after Demeter, the Greek goddess of the harvest. Demeter is often depicted carrying a cornucopia or a sheaf of wheat. Dmitry uses a French grip on his épée. For our one-on-one coaching sessions, he wears a heavily padded black gambeson to absorb the practice hits. Black, I'm told, is reserved for coaches.

Training begins with stretching. Then, when my quads are warmed up after a day of sitting in an office chair, Dmitry teaches me how to lunge, parry, riposte, counter-attach, toe touch, flick. After our lesson, I fence whoever will fence me, regardless of the skill gap. There is always something to be learned. I try to fence the women, but there are three or four boys for every girl at my club.

### IV. Advance

According to Ovid, Hermaphroditus was the extraordinarily handsome son of Aphrodite and Hermes. In Ovid's version of the story, a nymph called Salmacis glanced upon the young Hermaphroditus bathing in a pool. Overcome with desire, she threw herself upon him, ignoring his protests. Refusing to let go, Salmacis begged the gods to be with Hermaphroditus, and the gods granted her wish. Then their bodies became one, with both male and female parts, and, unhappy with his fate, Hermaphroditus cursed the pool so that it turned anyone who swam in it into a person with male and female genitals.

### V. Engagement

Fencing equipment is regulated for safety. A full kit consists of a sword, glove, mask, breastplate, plastron, jacket and breeches. A wire runs from the bell guard of the sword, up the sleeve and through the body of the jacket to plug into the machinery behind. To this setup, each fencer will add their own knee-high socks and choice of sneakers.

At my club there is plenty of variety—some people fence in Converse and pride flag socks, others wear the football socks of their favourite team and some have proper fencing socks with shin padding. There are always

diverse opinions on shoes. I have Nike Ballestras. The Adidas d'Artagnans are also favoured. Asics Gel Rockets are popular too.

Soon enough, despite the masks, I can tell who is on each piste by their shoes and socks and height and by the way they move. My socks and shoes are white. Fencing is the only time I ever wear white. The white symbolises an ongoing willingness to learn.

## VI. Flèche

The queer poet Mary Jean Chan lyricises the gender-euphoric princeliness of fencing breeches in their first volume of poetry, *Flèche*: 'fencing was the closest thing / I knew to desire, all the girls swapping one / uniform for another before practice, their white / dresses replaced by breeches. I thought we were / princes in a fairy tale' (11). If I ever meet Mary Jean, it will be in princely battle.

Dmitry teaches me how to perform a flèche: a dynamic sprint at an opponent that takes its name from the French word for 'arrow'. I amass the tension of a bowstring and launch myself forward with my blade-arm outstretched. This is one of Dmitry's favourite moves. It soon becomes one of mine. I practice on him over and over. After five or six good flèches, and many more bad ones, I am exhausted.

## VII. Parry-riposte

Evolutionary success is a numbers game. The goal is to produce the highest number of sexually viable offspring at the lowest possible cost of energy. Charles Darwin, struggling to rationalise the energy cost of the train of a peacock, wrote that the sight of a peacock feather made him sick.

He was able to solve this problem by proposing a theory of sexual selection, in which members of the same sex compete for access to the opposite sex. Sexual selection rationalises the large energy cost of growing sexually appealing features such as a peacock's train.

The biologist Angus John Bateman suggested that females play a significantly larger role in their offspring's reproductive success. Females must invest much higher levels of energy to produce and carry a higher number of eggs, while males invest relatively less energy in producing many sperm. Bateman's paradigm thus views females as the limiting factor of parental investment, over which males will compete in order to ensure the continuation of their genetic material.

## VIII. Remise

I have a habit—learned from a life of East Asian martial arts—of chambering my attacking arm, pulling it back like I'm about to throw a punch. In fencing, where strength is nowhere near as important as speed, this odd habit is my tell. Everything should be calculated. Efficient. No unnecessary movements. When I hit, I hit too hard. This is a waste of energy. I still find it difficult to get used to.

*Arm up. Arm straight.*

I ask Dmitry if he gets tired of telling me the same things every lesson.

*No, he says. This is part of fencing.*

## IX. Touché

After every lesson I shed my whites and find pinpoint bruises on the inside of my right arm and the outside of my right leg. Blood seeps out of broken capillaries and spills into the surrounding tissue. These love-bites are red with a purple halo. They blossom blue-green as haemoglobin is broken down into biliverdin, which is then metabolised into sickly yellow bilirubin and, finally, brownish hemosiderin, before fading away.

## X. Corps-à-corps

Women weren't allowed to fence épée until 1996. My fencing club (founded in 1947) is épée only. Foilist Helen Garner writes about the moment she could score a touch without apologising. The women and girls at my club are always apologising for scoring touches. For being aggressive. For winning.

My first tournament was at the beginning of summer. I had recently sprained my ankle. I put on my white epidermis: breeches, socks, ankle strap, chest guard, plastron, body wire, jacket, glove, mask, épée. I sweated seawater under my mask. I collected bruises from all of my partners on my arm, thigh, chest. I fenced everyone present to five points. When it came time to tally the scores we were segregated. There were three of us in the open women's division. I went home with a bronze medal.

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## Westerly Submissions

Westerly publishes fiction, creative nonfiction, comics, poetry and 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 deadlines on Westerly's website.

Submissions may be sent via post or submitted online. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned. All manuscripts sent via post must include the name and address of the sender on a cover page and should be typed (double-spaced). Contributors are urged to retain copies of all work submitted. Online submissions via [westerlymag.com.au/Submittable](http://westerlymag.com.au/Submittable) should be attached as PDF or Word documents. Please follow all style guidelines and instructions as provided, including regarding the deidentification of the submission.

**Poetry:** maximum of five poems no longer than fifty lines each.

**Fiction and Creative Nonfiction:** maximum 3,500 words.

**Comics:** up to four pages (page dimensions: A5).

**Articles and Essays:** maximum 5,000 words with minimal footnotes.

### Minimum rates paid to contributors:

Poems: \$250. Stories, essays and comics: \$300.

Reviews: \$180.

### Postal submissions and correspondence to:

The Editor, *Westerly* Magazine,  
English and Literary Studies M204  
The University of Western Australia  
35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009  
Australia

tel: (08) 6488 3403

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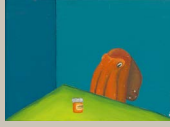
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# Oceans

Since 1956, *Westerly* has been publishing new writing from Western Australia.



**Front cover image**

Big See, *do or do not, there is no try*, 2024.

Acrylic on canvas.

© Big See, 2024

**'Avant-sharke'**

Heather Blakey

The beginning created me  
darkness was over the surface of the deep  
I teemed in the vault and the void and  
    moved about in it  
changing shapes and flowing and chomping  
for four hundred and fifty million years  
*They asked to uninvite me?*  
As if I haven't heard the same thing before  
I'm still here though, aren't I?

**With writing and ideas from**

Stephen Chinna, Kerry Greer, Paul Hetherington,  
Devin Harrison, Andrew Sutherland, Nicole  
Hodgson, Kathryn Gledhill-Tucker, Riley Faulds,  
Anna Quercia-Thomas, Tineke Van der Eecken,  
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Maling, Ange Yang, Alan Fyfe, Ogg Hill, James  
Salvius Cheng, Monty Hoddinott, Sarah Yeung  
and more...