Showcasing the best student work in Art, Word and Music from the USU Creative Awards

The University of Sydney Union acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional owners of the land on which we are located. The USU recognises that the land belonging to these peoples was never ceded, given up, bought, or sold. We pay our respects to the Aboriginal Elders both past and present, and extend this acknowledgement to any other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people reading this publication.
The University of Sydney Union is proud to publish Hermes Creative Catalogue. Founded in 1886, Hermes is produced annually by student editors and showcases the best student work in Art, Word and Music submitted through the USU Creative Awards.

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Editors
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Welcome to Hermes, a creative catalogue brought to you by the brilliant and diverse minds at the University of Sydney. Like all works of art, Hermes has evolved and metamorphised since the first edition appeared in 1886. This year is no different. We have been inspired by the imaginations of this years’ contributors – who have constructed post-apocalyptic lands, critiqued gender dynamics, and ruminated on the very nature of technology and surveillance. The variety of submissions received is a testament to the freedom of artistic license that Hermes encourages – by once again going themeless, and encapsulating all three categories of art, word and music.

The diversity of practice in this year’s catalogue can be pinned, we think, to the diversity in our contributors’ creative and academic backgrounds. It’s always been our aim at Hermes to showcase the work not only of students for whom creativity is a vocation, but the ingenuity and invention of students from all disciplines – from Architecture to Agriculture, Marketing to Mechanical Engineering. Of course, we have excellent short fiction and poetry from students in the Masters of Creative Writing program, compositions from Conservatorium students and astute, conceptually of-the-minute works from the SCA. Equally, we hope this catalogue is able to place alongside these pieces those by talented makers and thinkers from fields as wide-ranging as Business, STEM, and Law. What makes these works cohere to form a unified catalogue, we think, is their common sense of joy in criticality and creativity. The celebration of and engagement with this sensibility – of critical thinking, of risk-taking, of imaginative experimentation – seems largely to be the point of our experience in and out of the classroom at USYD.

It’s been a joy to see so much good work coming from the student body this year. We’d like to thank not only our contributors, but the team at the USU, the Creative Awards, and our partners at Verge Gallery for their invaluable support in bringing Hermes together. Working on this creative catalogue has been a pleasure. We hope that reading it will be too.

With our best wishes on your journey through the catalogue,

Rhea and Erin
Hermes Editors 2018
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13. Black Leak - Elise Gibson-Long
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Hee Won Michelle Lee
Girl with a Coral Bineyo

Elise Gibson-Long
Black Leak
Katerina Mehigan

Oceanus
Alexandra Jonscher
Diddle Daddle

Dustin Jefferys
On The Line
Jeff Chiang
Interlinked

Shababa Salim
Snapshots from a Wanderer
Kim Nguyen
Moon

Tanushri Saha
half different, partially familiar
Tanushri Saha

half different, partially familiar
Air for Air is an interactive installation that challenges the idea of innate musicality, and allows anyone to conduct an electronic orchestra with their hands.

Antony Youssef

Air for Air
This video work holds frustrations and hurdles that aren’t dissimilar to that of a marathon, however they are more alike to those of a bay run, where lots of people are taking up the whole path and walking really slow in front of you.

Y3LLOW SUN BAY RUN

Gillian Kayrooz

This video is a collation of verbatim conversations overheard in the public sphere, commenting on the constant surveillance of contemporary daily life.

Surveillance Over Scrutiny

Gillian Kayrooz
Rosie Eliza Thomas
In/Different Spaces

Michelle Dang
Save The Best For Last
Word Robin M. Eames / Angus MacGregor / Angelique Hall / Alisha Brown / Georgia Tan / Edward Furst / Coco Huang / Benjamin Ezzes / Donnalyn Xu / Gabriela Bourke / James Holloway / Kathryn Lyster / Whitney Van Den Flux / Katrina Kemp
He does not look directly at you, your murderer, fearful that one unprotected glance at your body will strike him down. When the sword falls upon your long neck his gaze is turned aside a little as if from shyness, tinged perhaps with disgust at the monstrosity of your form, or shame, not for himself but for the anathema of your existence, looking only at your reflection. You do not give him the same discourtesy. Your alien eyes, gold and slit-pupilled, are fixed on him the entire time you are dying. The shape of him young, lithe, feet planted firmly, all leather and bronze, one long red line of blood interrupted by splashes of your own blue-black ichor. Mirrored shield held aloft like Atlas burdened with the disc of the heavens. He dims as your vision falters, brilliance dulling, blur of blood and light and dark the shadows deepening as your own shade departs the cave, not for the cold hell of Tartaros but for the rivers of the dark-haired god who accepts all equally and whose kingship over everything under the earth extends already to you and your serpentine kin. Behind you in the mortal realm the husk of your corpse turns to ash as he seizes your skull by its hissing roots, affixing your head to his burnished shield, his own reflection fixed forever in your nacreous pupils, the gilded killer entombed, ill omen to future foe.
Joe, ‘E’, and Me.

A blinding, bright day on Sydney Harbour, and I’m thinking about beauty, and the smell of money. There’s a disappointed looking middle-aged man in a long overcoat sitting beside me. I can see the screw tops of long-neck bottles of beer peeping out of each pocket. Two deckhands are having a conversation at high volume right next to me, but I don’t register to them. I’m a mere passenger, a temporary visitor.

The middle aged one says, ‘There’s plenty of work on the harbour if you know the right people. You ever tried the Whale Watching? They get all these tourists who have never been out to sea before and take ‘em out past the heads. If the sea is running any sort of swell it turns into a spew cruise. And what poor fucker has to clean it up?’

The guy in the overcoat says his name is Joe Lynch. I can tell he’s sad in a bone deep way, and I try to jolly him along, offering him a bite from my Pluto Pup and giving a few random opinions on the AFL. Likes poetry, which I do too, so that’s funny. We pass by a big navy ship, slabs of steel towering over us like a grey sided whale.

From the deck of a boat in Sydney you see the harbourside in relief. On bright days, the light on the water can blind you. On busy days like the start of the Sydney to Hobart Race, the intensity of wealth on display can oppress you. On days when the weather is thick it feels right, like a jacket made to fit.

Joe is reading a grubby paperback book, like one you’d pick out of the stacks at Gould’s in Newtown after a late Thai meal, or a few beers at the Marly. I read the first few lines over his shoulder.

THE GUY IN THE OVERCOAT SAYS HIS NAME IS JOE LYNCH. I CAN TELL HE’S SAD IN A BONE DEEP WAY, AND I TRY TO JOLLY HIM ALONG...

Joe takes a long pull on one of the longnecks. I shift my body surreptitiously so that the Deckie next to me, who I have taken an unreasonable dislike to, can’t see him. Deckie’s loving the sound of his own voice so much he would probably be oblivious anyway.

‘Had a guy on board who was pretty new, he used to keep a baseball bat handy. Doesn’t work. Takes a few hits to kill the fuckers, and by then they have taken a chunk out of you. This guy got a lump as big as my fist out of his thigh, fucker bled everywhere, and the Captain had to stitch him up. Told him he should a used an axe or something, but he never listened.’
As consciousness faded he saw Lee’s face, and then the grip loosened enough for him to spin down whoever stole the myth of her own life. She’d then have them killed.

“Yeah, we’ve got a bad reputation I suppose. Cops always search us ‘cos they think we have drugs and that. Got a .38 I bought in Indonesia. Sometimes you know, you will get a shark, or a marlin come on deck, and its thrashing around and could seriously fuck you up, you know, take a bite out of you or spear you. So, what you do is you pin ’em to the deck with each foot on one of their fins and then you blow the fucker’s head off.”

I really wish this guy would shut up, but part of me is in awe of his complete disregard of any audience besides his surfie mate on the ferry.

“You want to be careful picking your skipper before you go out there. There was this bloke, think he was a journo or something, and he was doing it for ‘research’. Anyway, four days out on a fishing trawler and it’s blowing a bit of a Southerly, and this guy’s just pushing up, pushing up, he wants to go home. He wants to die. So, I don’t know if he was really trying to top himself, but the stupid fucker jumped overboard.’

I look up and Joe seems to have disappeared somewhere, taking his book with him. It’s just me, E. Pennergast, and Sydney Harbour. The sun is glittering on the water and the air is full of possibility, there are tourists and surfers, young parents with strollers, schoolkids.

‘So, the Captain heaves to in a big sea, and picks him up, right? He’s got a couple of miles of nets out the back. Nightmare. Had to cut a whole load of net free, cost us a few grand. Skipper was so pissed off that he tied him to the deck rail outside the bridge, until we got back to Cairns three days later. I never seen him come back for another trip. He might have written the book though. Or maybe it was an e-book. Dunno.’

Our ferry docks at Watsons Bay wharf, and our Deckies swing into action, throwing a rope over the bollard and pushing out the ramp. E. and I are first off, and I watch her beautifully tailored suit recede onto dry land, like a hollow promise of perfection.

Around me there are optimistic young travellers, brimming with possibility. There are weary business people, on a homeward run from work. We all of us belong to this moment, in the warm air and drying sun. Sydney Harbour side, caught in time. The gangplank shudders as we step off together.

The wharf at Watsons Bay has old bones, huge slabs of weathered timber bleached with a thousand days of February sun. Part of it has been done up recently but it looks a little artificial, like an ageing romantic actor that has had cosmetic work. A group of desultory fishermen in board shorts and Roosters gear smoke Sunny Blues among the fish guts at the seaward end of the wharf.

I walk past Doyle’s restaurant, but I don’t want to sit alone, and I consider grabbing a prawn burger from one of the Moldovan beauties behind the counter at the side window. It seems like there are people everywhere, and the colours are turned up too bright and the volume is stuck too high.

Beyond the clamour, this place has memory. On the other side of this headland, is the vast pitiless silence of the Pacific Ocean, where sailing ships once set course to Valparaiso or Cape Town, Utrecht or Aberdeen. Before all that, the Aboriginal Eora people fished and hunted before first contact.
The money slaps you in the face, crystal and sandstone and steel with the best views in Sydney. Property developers and corporate lawyers.
Walking through the park, the sun hammers through the thick glossy leaves of the towering Moreton Bay figs, as old as the colony, planted by the British invaders. Their ridged roots curve crenelated for yards around before plunging hungrily into the earth.

E. Pennergast is waiting on the grass up ahead of me, with an expectant smile on her face, and arms spread wide. Her briefcase is thrown on the ground next to her. A child of two or three, giggling and shrieking, staggers towards her like a sailor on dry land after a long voyage. Barefoot in the lush grass, his hair bleached blond by the Sydney summer, his hat lays forgotten in the grass behind him. His mother scoops him up and whirls him around before hugging him tightly to her.

She looks down into his face, and together mother and son are beautiful and complete. He has been eating chocolate ice cream, and it’s now all over her suit, but she doesn’t seem to mind. Her bloke has the stroller, and he is in civvies, in shorts and a polo shirt. He smiles and pecks her on the cheek, picking up her briefcase as they walk together back onto the path that leads to the houses on the cliff.

Over on the park bench I can see the brown trench coat of Joe Lynch sitting beneath one of the trees. I go and sit down next to him, and I notice he’s got tears running down the side of his face as he cries silently to himself. Awkwardly, I ask him if he is ok, but he just shakes his head, muttering ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci.’

‘Keats eh? Sounds like chick trouble, mate.’

He smiled sadly. ‘The sedge has withered from the lake, and no birds sing...’

I reach over and take his arm. ‘Cheer up, old son. ’The squirrel’s granary is full, and the harvest’s done.’”

There’s a pub on the corner with a table that looks out over the bay. It’s empty apart from an opportunistic Egret, and some

hungry seagulls. I steer Joe over and we sit down. They serve pints, and I order a 150 Fifty Lashes for him and a Chancer for me.

‘What happens in the end?’ I ask him. He looks at me blankly. ‘You know, of the book with Cookie, and the Freemantle drug thing?’

He looks back at me with eyes that might as well be staring out over the endless ocean. ‘It’s not finished yet, mate.’

I nod, and we sit in silence together in the summer afternoon. Sydney moves on around us, as if we are laying on our backs on the wooden deck of a sailing ship and watching the milky way spin in the night sky. What has gone out of view will come again. We are the hub around which everything turns.

1 John Keats, La Belle Dame sans Merci (1819).
The Recovery

T
he city is in ashes now. Concrete pillars burst forth from the shattered ground, and yet people continue strolling, as though this sacred park has always been nothing but a dustbowl. My heavy boots leave uniform footprints in the settled dust, and glancing back the trail is ever changing, veering off course to places I have never been and buildings I have never entered; all identical footprints left by different entities, different realities enclosed in leather and steel. My boots are not quite the same though, the scuffs across the toe and cracking in the heel make me different, whether that is weak or strong I do not know, but I do know that the Enhanced who pushed past me is weak or strong I do not know, but I do know that the Enhanced who pushed past me had been wearing perfectly clean shoes. My friends all ran, but I was caught, fighting against a man whose strength seemed supernatural when compared to his bony frame. Staring into those empty eyes as he pushed me back towards a door at the far end of the room, I felt like I could see the universe – galaxies and constellations soaring through my mind, his eyes as empty as the vacuum of space. The enormity of all I saw caused me to shut down, so much so that I do not remember what happened when we passed over that threshold.

After the bombs dropped, there was nothing left but the underground bunkers, everyone fast or smart enough to be inside staying there until the Geiger counter’s ticks slowed to what authorities deemed as “acceptable for resurfacing.” I don’t remember resurfacing, but I do remember seeing a strange orange haze over the sun when I did, as though marian sand was pouring like an avalanche onto the earth from outer space. I took a walk through what was once my home, a ghostly calm over me as the ruin of what had taken place was visible with my own eyes, worse than any dream or nightmare I had ever had. The Shard was nothing but its namesake now, shards of glass piercing the ground and shattered about like deadly hale, slabs screumed under collapsing construction, or an instant, an instant in which the unlucky themselves for how quickly rolling hills would come down. No one had prepared themselves for how quickly rolling hills would be burned to scorched dirt mounds. It was only an instant, an instant in which the unlucky screamed under collapsing construction, or withered and cried as their flesh melted from their bones as the radiation cooked them from the inside out. Entire countries disappeared; the once first world-power was laid down as a desert from coast to coast. Pictures from the space station of nations once covered in green were now dull and brown, and where once was a maze of lights when the earth turned from the sun, is now nothing, a world-wide blackness.

I remember being inside a bunker, walking with others my age as we perused the concrete chambers, finding canned food and bottled water, before breaking into a room filled with whirring machines. Some of them hooked into long rectangular cases, tall enough for us to lean on as we spoke around them, poking and prodding at buttons as we saw fit. It was not until a tall man with dark eyes and immaculate shoes entered and grabbed me by the collar did we realise that perhaps these boxes and machines were more than simple radiation monitors. My friends all ran, but I was caught, fighting against a man whose strength seemed supernatural when compared to his bony frame. Staring into those empty eyes as he pushed me back towards a door at the far end of the room, I felt like I could see the universe – galaxies and constellations soaring through my mind, his eyes as empty as the vacuum of space. The enormity of all I saw caused me to shut down, so much so that I do not remember what happened when we passed over that threshold.

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I found myself wondering at that moment, when, in the bunker, I had bothered to clean my shoes.

Walking in the crowd, it is strange how you can get a sense of who is around you without knowing anything about the people. I rarely, if ever, see my friends anymore; strangely they were all among the blessed group not assigned with a work detail. It is an odd system, with no real excuses made for whether you were placed into a working force or not, or at least none made when asked. They had become distant once I began to work, walking daily in a mass of clean boots and lowered heads. Very few people spoke within the herd, and when they did, it was with a very precise, polite apology, accompanied by a practised nod of the head, as they passed or nudged against one another. Everyone around me is exactly like me, following orders, following signs, but trapped within their mind questioning why it is that they are doing so. When did I become a silent worker to be manipulated to the will of my superiors? When did I become one of them?

Mindless work, before the drop, had meant sitting behind a computer screen or the repetitive scanning of items at a supermarket. But no, now mindless work meant something entirely different. It is steam-filled factories, on the floor and in the back rooms. Some people would sit for hours at a time with a set of buttons ahead of them, and when they pressed one, those on the factory floor would do as that light instructed. As I enter the factory and walk to the starting station, I pass the elaborate traffic light-like system, the colours addressing different jobs or areas to which workers need to converge. I do not remember reading any manual or receiving any lessons; I remember entering on my first work detail and merely starting as though it was what I had been doing my whole life. The light turns to amber, and my feet begin carrying me as though on instinct towards the furnace areas, taking a station to start pouring the metal down the channel, leading to where it would be cast into screws and rods.

“Thou shalt not make a machine to counterfeit a human mind”
- Frank Herbert

Angelique Hall

Words

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Those who I share the floor with are all Enhanced, I know it. There are ways of knowing whether someone is more than they appear, and the Enhanced are glaringly visible. They are like that man who found me in the bunkers sensor room, all dark eyes and clean shoes, these all wearing uniforms of workers, people of various shapes and ages and heights. The Enhanced are territorial, suspicious of those who are ordinary, and blind slaves to their masters. It is for this reason I often find myself curious as to why I am accepted so readily among them. Perhaps they were blind to all but their purpose, too concerned with jobs to acknowledge my apparent differences; the differences I know are obvious. They are obvious, right?

I glance at the man on my left, then the woman on my right, both different in appearance all up until their eyes. The same empty blackness flicks to me when they catch my eyes on them - galaxies of information in their irises, but I force my eyes away. Their gaze is like a tunnel mole; drilling into my temples and making me shift my body away, which only subjects me to more of the gaze from my opposite side. The steam filled factory is positively stifling, chest tightening trying to remain calm as I feel more eyes turning to me, my reactions out of the ordinary. None of the lights on the wall, from memory, were to indicate it is time for a panic attack, and yet that is where I find myself. I push myself from my station. Every Enhanced I pass slowly turns to assess me, their faces blank, and I try my best to avoid eye contact, walking faster until I exit the building, an alarm blaring behind me as I do. The gravel crunches under my feet as I walk quickly down the side of the factory to the alley, dark brick rough against my palms as I brace against a windowsill.

I am the same as the day I entered the bunker, looking down at myself I see the same pale, freckled skin, the same set of legs I have always known. Everything I can take note of from my hunched position seeming familiar. My sensations are accounted for too, although the inherent tug in my mind to return to the factory is not unnoticed. I bite the inside of my cheek, eyes closed as I slowly raise my head, feeling the wind lap at my cheeks before I look into my reflection. My eyes were once a startling cerulean, expressive and full of dreams, but the eyes staring back at me force me to stagger away from the window, palms flying up to press into the sockets to the point of pain.

“No... No, no...” My voice is muffled as my shaking hands move down to cover my mouth, suppressing the want to sob knowing that no tears would fall. With bleary eyes, dotted with writhing black shadows, I see the areas of my shoes left shiny, and begin to scrape my shoe against the brick wall. It does not help. I want to rip off my boots and rip out my eyes, but the alarm that had sounded in the factory is still echoing in my mind, making me shake my head in an attempt to clear the incessant beeping from my mind. Somewhere, perhaps far away, I begin to hear the thudding of heavy boots, and I push myself back to my feet. Unlike the usual rhythm of the workforce this is aggressive, and despite the beeping, I stumble away from the sound down the alleyway until the sunlight of the open sidewalk once again surrounds me. Glancing back up the alley I see a group of Enhanced, all stomping towards me, and turning I see a similar group approaching from each side of the sidewalk.

My entire body is an elastic band at this moment, pulled tight and ready to snap, and looking dead into the eyes of the approaching Enhanced I begin to kick my boots against the curb so hard I could feel my toes breaking with impact, crunching like twigs. My brain is a chorus of sirens and conflicting desires, staring at the approaching groups before I stagger backward, as though an invisible force had yanked me back by my shirt and simultaneously knocked the wind from my chest. I barely have time to regain my footing before a loud car horn drowns out every other sound within the symphony, knocking me off my feet.

“The world is returning to me slowly, in pieces, to be put together. I can hear the voices, and I feel the hands that slip below me to lift my dead weight into a long container. The beeping suddenly caught my attention, a strange familiarity to it. I see a face appear over the edge of the box, dark hair and eyes and glasses in which I can barely make out my broken reflection, and the figure seems satisfied by what he sees.

“Are you prepared for the reset?” His voice echoed off the concrete walls. I want to run, to climb from this mechanical coffin and never look back but my limbs stubbornly refuse to move. He must have been given affirmation because I see the lid of the box slowly closing over the top of me. I feel my jaw pop from the tension in my neck and finally find myself able to let out a desperate, strained scream, although it is drowned out as the box screeches shut.

I blink a few times, eyes and mind slowly coming into focus, looking out onto the street as the workforce passes by, a small content smile forming on my lips as I step down into the brigade.

We are the recovery. We will carry on.
When your clock finally unwinds
and you find yourself parked upon
the kerbside, head lolling to and fro
with each sweep, slide of the windscreens
wipers ring ring when you can feel
your phone buzzing in your pocket hive,
be silent, bee stinging you with each call,
who’s calling, how did they get /sweep, slide/
ring ring when you can still taste the
stale coffee on your tongue, when you
think it might be morning, evening, when
it’s been a while since you’ve called
your mum ring ring Mum? /sweep, slide/
when your job feels like lead or maybe
that’s just the colour of the bags under
your eyes ring ring when there’s a list
of things to do /sweep, slide/ a list of
things to do ring ring when there’s a line
of cars up your arse and somebody,
someone is beeping BEEP BEEP /sweep, slide/
when you think, maybe, maybe things
could have been ring ring maybe BEEP BEEP
things could have been different /sweep,
slide/ ring maybe things would have
been different if ring BEEP BEEP who
the fuck is beeping? /sweep, slide/ you
think maybe you should call your mum
ring ring BEEP BEEP who the fuck is /sweep,
slide/ ring ring hello, yes boss? BEEP //

Alisha Brown

Prey

Georgia Tan

Thudding, fleeting heart of tin
flutters, shivering and bare
The prized nightingale falters, song obscured
by royal finery and prying eyes
A single rose drains of its scarlet giddiness, bloody
thorns piercing any that dare to pick.

Exposed, the frantic songbird pauses
Licking her chapped lips, lost
Skin too chilled for words to flow
Drowning in billowing, snowy bleakness
Paralysed and surrounded by thin ice
Too precarious to cross.

Thick, dusty grime clouds her vision, fractured
like cracked, dirty glass splayed across the floor
Heart of gold trampled by passers-by, unaware
plodding through in mechanical stupor, not unlike
Dull and plastic toy figures, manufactured
with starry smiles and perfect masked faces.
Bloodhounds are a very respectable breed of dog. Competent, trustworthy and generally considered a safe pair of paws among their canine companions. Indeed, over the ages many of the great and the good of this world have been Bloodhounds. And among this special class of dog none were more competent or respectable than our own John Bloodhound, who at this very moment, was finishing his morning routine and preparing for breakfast.

At nine o’clock sharp, John entered the breakfast room in his characteristic slow and measured gait, imparting much consideration into each step in a way that usually made an impression on onlookers. He wore a smart buttoned-down morning suit with a chequered tie, striped pants, and shiny black shoes, while sporting a perfectly combed moustache that bristled underneath his large black nose. Not known for his morning joviality, John was particularly grumpy this morning, owing to the fact that he had been unable to locate his favourite striped bow tie among his wardrobe accessories - an unprecedented disruption to his morning routine that had convinced him of the unpromising merits of the day.

Nonetheless, John, with a brave face, pulled up a chair at the head of the table and, in his endearingly eccentric way, turned around three times before making himself comfortable. Stretching out his arms, he opened up a copy of the Woofington Times that had been laid out for him. As the reader may well infer, John Bloodhound was a successful dog who had done well for himself in life (by what means we need not interest ourselves now), and currently enjoyed the gentle retirement of his ageing years. He lived in a large house with five floors, three flights of stairs, and only one window, although – it must be said – it was a very large window. What the house lacked in fenestral respects, however, it made up for in doors, of which at least three were assigned to each room and in some up to seven or eight. It was generally agreed upon by John’s close friends that it was a very nice house and that dinner parties hosted there were invariably first-rate.

As John flicked through the pages of the W. Times, two stiff, upright flamingos entered the room. Each was dressed impeccably in black pants and white shirts that buttoned across the torso with four large black buttons. The first marched to the door through which John had entered and stationed itself next to it with much dignity, while the other approached John and stood expectantly nearby.

‘Ah, good morning. I’ll have my usual I think,’ said John in a gruff voice.

‘Of course, sir,’ the flamingo replied, bowing slightly and heading off towards the garden, where it proceeded to procure each part of John’s breakfast. First, with experienced talons, the flamingo picked two of the very finest pieces of toast from the Toasting Tree, which had branches spreading tall and wide, and dangled enticingly slices of every kind of buttered and spread toast. The jam, marmalade and curd toast made the tree a very pretty sight in the morning as it flashed various shades of red, yellow and orange at onlookers.
After examining the pieces of toast and giving a little nod of satisfaction, the flamingo then made its way over to a large fountain in the middle of the garden, featuring four elephants with trunks arched upwards and angled towards a funnelled bowl in the centre. From each one of the stone elephants’ trunks ran a gushing stream of hot porridge which collected in the bowl, slowly sifting down to the bottom where a pipe produced a steady stream into the wider fountain. It was under this pipe that the flamingo placed a bowl until it was full. It then raised the bowl towards one of the stone elephants’ tusks from which a slow trickle of honey flowed forth. Having done this to its evident satisfaction, the flamingo then collected the remaining breakfast items in a similarly traditional manner and returned into the breakfast room, placing them methodically on the table before John.

After some time, during which John alternated between eating and flicking through pages of the W. Times, a loud chiming broke the silence. It came from an impressive wooden grandfather clock which stood on one side of the room, with a swinging pendulum passing back and forth behind decorated glass panelling. Engraved across the top were the words *Peterson’s Most Illustrious and Grand Limerick Clocks* and below this a pair of smooth wooden lips had begun to speak. In a lively voice they announced to the room:

*The time is now quite half past nine And every last Bloodhound must rise If you don’t move your head, And remain in your bed, Then laughing and howling are mine.*

John looked around impatiently, ‘Where are those two lazy, good-for-nothing, supposed Bloodhounds of mine?’ he asked irritably. John, you see, lived with two sons who, despite being quite grown-up with full-length tails and long protruding canine teeth, still enjoyed the convenience of living at home, somewhat to John’s disapproval.

At that moment, as if on cue, two young Bloodhounds came bounding into the room, arguing in loud voices as they entered.

‘Now really, come on, you can’t be serious. I’ve been chasing mine for years now without any luck. You really must have been mistaken and caught something else.’

‘No, I assure you,’ replied the other, ‘As clear as day, I was going round and round and making progress all the while when all of a sudden, bam! I caught it! Only someone gave me a sharp bite at the same time that made me let go . . . ’

‘Hurry up you two, or the breakfast will go cold,’ grumbled John, frowning at the pair.

‘Hold your hounds, old man. No need to rush,’ replied one.

‘Exactly,’ replied the other, ‘There’s nothing to be gained by military precision at the breakfast table, you know. I mean, just look at what came of old King Alsatian the Fourth. Breakfast-based military operations were the undoing of him.’

‘Humph,’ John replied, scowling. And then, before returning to his breakfast ‘Do either of you know where my striped bow tie has got to? I couldn’t find it this morning.’

‘Not the foggiest,’ replied one, ‘sorry old dog, can’t help you there,’ replied the other cheerily.

The two young Bloodhounds proceeded to set themselves up at the table, giving their orders to the waiting flamingos and chatting away blithely. You see, the two sons had not adopted their father’s sombre outlook on life and were on the whole quite carefree and foolish young dogs. The elder one was perpetually lazy, doing nothing all day every day before heading out in the evenings to attend group barks or howling sessions. John had often tried to rectify this indulgent lifestyle in his son by finding things for him to do, but to no avail.
Meanwhile, the younger Bloodhound was not much better. He was more energetic than his older sibling but had absolutely no consistency whatsoever, always devising harebrained schemes that would capture his imagination for roughly a week, before promptly losing interest and moving on to his next obsession.

Now recently John had had some success in finding the elder Bloodhound an occupation by organising a farm for him to run. It was on this topic that the elder of the two Bloodhound sons now addressed the table, informing them of his plans to visit today and do some work there.

'Yes, there is much to do,' he was saying happily. 'I haven’t been down in a week, and how the jobs pile up. I believe I need to walk the sheep, milk the pigs, give the horses haircuts, have a good sit down with the cows and a long talk with the ducks. It’s a farmer’s life for me, all right.' This seemed to loosen John up a bit, who approved of anything that kept his eldest son busy. So with slightly less gruffness he engaged his son in conversation about the farm for a while.

The younger of the two Bloodhounds, who did not have a farm, had focused throughout this conversation on picking boiled eggs from the small Egg Plant that sat in the middle of the table. He jumped at the first arising opportunity to change the topic of conversation by announcing his latest obsession to his companions.

'I would like you both to know that I am heading down to the snail races today,' he proclaimed. 'You see, I have an interest in one of the snails there and I’m terribly excited to see it race. I’ve been training it with a fellow canine on the tracks for a few days now and I’ve become very invested in it.'

'Is that so?' grunted John, who did not think much of snail racing as a hobby.

The reader might observe from this speech that the young Bloodhound was both very excited and very stupid. Having worked himself up somewhat he continued for a few minutes, finishing with the declaration that 'I have no doubt whatsoever that I have found my calling in life and snail racing is the only thing to make me truly happy. It is my passion. My life. My raison d’être.' As the young hound was prone to making statements like these, there was little reaction from his fellow breakfast companions and he returned somewhat moodily to his boiled eggs.

By now the time had crept by and the face of the Limerick Clock showed that it was ten o’clock. Once again the wooden lips began to speak:

'If ten lords should quite rightly be leaping
And the counting inclined shepherds be sleeping
Then the time must be ten, let me say it again,
While I join those ten lords who are leaping.'

'My word, is that the time?' said John, putting down his newspaper and double-checking his pawwatch. 'I really must be off. It doesn’t do to linger and I have a busy day today. You can clear away the breakfast things now, thank you,' he said to the nearest flamingo, who bowed its head and went about the job quickly. The two younger Bloodhounds looked at each other and wolfed down the last of their breakfast before it was promptly snatched away. Standing up, they brushed down their shirts and followed their father out of the room, heading off to their various activities.

And with that, I think, the time has come to leave this little scene of canine domesticity and continue with our lives, trusting that accounts of the dogs’ various endeavours will be given tomorrow morning, in great detail, at the breakfast table.
leak,” he added, gesturing at my flask.

“I must find the Ocean, where all the leak-fixers are.”

And why, I wondered, would he go to such trouble to find a plumber?

He laughed. “Where I live,” he began, “there are no pipes or houses or magnotrains. Only me, my water-giver, and a burbling stream flanked by grandfather trees, whose branches are adorned with nests and in whose hollows other creatures reside.”

As we climbed over the crests of sand, he spoke of his home and I walked to the steady rhythm of his voice. It was a welcome distraction to imagine his water-giver, a grand bird with startling red plumage, raking its magnificent wings through the clouds above until it rained. But one day, they discovered, night never came. The sun drank up the little stream, and his water-giver worked tirelessly to gather the clouds together in the empty sky. She could not rest for even a night, for there were no more nights, and began to leak.

“Well,” I said, “you may as well share it with me. I won’t make it much further.”

As he handed me his woven canteen to fill, I was surprised by its weight. I swirled it around and the faint slosh of water was music to our ears.

“Oh, a water-giver!” the boy exclaimed, his face twinkling with delight. “I am truly in luck.” He drank in contentment, then handed his canteen to me. Even after I had drunk my fill, the canteen remained full, brimming with water. A trick of the mind, I thought, and closed my eyes for a second and pinched the bridge of my nose – but both water and boy were miraculously still there.

“Where are you headed?” he asked.

“Oh – I’m tracking a snake,” I replied quickly. “The last of its kind. I last saw it moving west.”

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“Leak?” I interrupted. “But how does a bird leak?”

“Just as your flask leaks,” he explained. “Her feathers loosened and fell. She could not keep up with the sun or the sand that clogged the water and choked the poor creatures.”

“I could not make any sense out of his words, which swirled around my mind like a sandstorm as we walked, so I asked him where he was from.

“From far,” was all he said. “I must find the Ocean, where all the leak-fixers are.”

He was subdued afterwards, contemplating the fate of his beloved bird. Although I doubted any of it was real, I smiled to myself, thankful that instead of descending into madness, my mind had conjured up this elaborate fantasy, down to the deep pool of thoughts in this strange boy’s eyes.

The next day, as I tried to pinpoint our position on my map, he told me about the Metromen.

“They don’t need maps. Their magnotrains take them wherever they need to go.”

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“Then I will come too,” he said. “Every snake knows the scent of a leak-fixer.”

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“They don’t need maps. Their magnotrains take them wherever they need to go.”
“Excuse me, sir,” the boy had asked after the train pulled into the main station for the umpteenth time. “Are you still here?”

“Ah,” the man replied, pulling off his glasses with a flourish. His voice was croaky from disuse. “Because I’m the water-giver.”

“But the dam already has enough water.” The train was circling around the thundering mass of water beyond the window.

The man shook his head. “The faster I move, the faster the water flows, and the faster the water flows, the faster the turbines turn, and the faster the turbines turn, the faster we make energy to drive the train faster!”

The boy was bewildered by his logic. “So, the faster you move, the faster you move. What good does it do you?”

“No much,” he admitted, “but it generates enough power to keep us connected.” He tapped his glasses.

“My friend,” I began, and my eyes had moistened, “I am certain we will find your leak-fixer in time –”

“Ah,” the man replied, pulling off his glasses again. “Yes and no.” With a few creaks of his joints, he handed me the glasses. The boy looked at me, but his hair was a lurid green-blue and his cheeks were unnaturally smooth and taut. There were dots along the side of his vision which enlarged suddenly if he focused on them.

“Is this how they see everything?” He asked, with a rueful smile, “but he walked ahead with twice his usual vigour, and left me baffled and panting in his wake. I feared I had said something to upset him, as he strode away and was halfway up a dune before I could respond.

But how? How could I explain to him the mess that was my world, how things that had to be done could not be undone? How could I warn him of the many people worse than oil-makers or Metromen, of how they dropped bombs on each other and drenched his Ocean in oil? He would see it soon, the bodies of water-givers and oil-makers washed ashore, slick with black and suffocating. I wanted to run after him, but my knees gave way and I saw a flash of silver before I could comprehend the two bit marks on my calf. My flask spilled open, and I cupped a handful of water before it could sink into the sand, the last handful I would ever have. I drank, urgently, as my body went limp and wasted away.

When I opened my eyes, the leak was no longer there.

“I’m sorry,” I said, with more remorse than I expected. “I have orders. There’s a war going on and people are going to die. People have to die, before it can be over.”

“And what if one of the people you kill is a water-giver? Or a leak-fixer?” He fixed me with a defiant glance, and I began to falter under its intensity.

“You don’t know – it’s not that simple, you do the job to stay alive. I mean – I wish I didn’t have to, but –”

He shook his head. “You carry a gun and use it to kill without justice or reason. That makes you worse than an oil-maker.” With that, he vanished, but kept awake by the sand that accumulating in a pile by our feet like a coiled snake.

Then, one day, when we had crossed what felt like half the desert, he became silent. He would no longer talk of his encounter with the dried-up water-givers in the great Antarctic wasteland, nor of the oil-makers from whom he had unwittingly bought a canteen of oil. I thought he was ill – but evidently not, as he moved slower and slower, until I was as his height, and left me baffled and panting in his wake. I feared I had said something to upset him, as he drank from his flask without meeting my eyes. Eventually, I could stand it no longer and begged him to speak his mind – and I shall never forget the hurt in his voice.

“You cannot kill a snake just by shooting at it,” he said.

I asked him to elaborate.

“They move too quickly and bite before you know it. Snakes are cleverer creatures than you think; they won’t bite leak-fixers, but they hide near them in wait for water-givers. If it weren’t for them, we would have plenty of water-givers and no need for oil-makers, who would rather keep making and drinking oil than letting water-givers rest during the night!” His voice broke, and I tried to comfort him, but he shook me off.

“My friend,” I began, and my eyes had moistened. “I am certain we will find your leak-fixer in time –”

“No, I should have known better. And to think I mistook you for a water-giver . . .”

He unscrewed the cap of his canteen and inverted it. Fat globules of oil glistened as they sank slowly into the sand. I was speechless with astonishment.

“Your snake,” he said. “How did you intend to catch it with a gun?”

And then I could not contain the truth from him. “I’m sorry,” I said, with more remorse than I expected. “I have orders. There’s a war going on and people are going to die. People have to die, before it can be over.”

AT NIGHT, LYING BESIDE THE BOY UNDER THE STARS THAT WERE NOW SUDDENLY WARM, I COULD NOT REST; HIS STORIES FILLED THE SPACES BEHIND MY EYELIDS AS I LINGERED ON THE THRESHOLD OF SLEEP.

But you are clearly not blind,” he said, “nor deaf, nor senseless.”

“But you are clearly not blind.”

“No,” the man said with a rueful smile, “but they think that I am. They have seen what you are seeing for so long that they have forgotten the way a cat purrs when stroke, or how music changes the colour of water. It has been a while since anyone has asked me what melted chocolate feels like. Or what it’s like to taste at all.”

The boy removed the glasses quickly, suddenly afraid of forgetting. The real world already seemed blurred and hazy.

“But even if they could,” the water-giver continued, “the water tastes like oil.”

At night, lying beside the boy under the stars that were now suddenly warm, I could not rest; his stories filled the spaces behind my eyelids as I lingered on the threshold of sleep. And if I focused hard enough on it, I could empty out the contents of my mind, even forget my shameful lie, and simply admire this beautiful – unreal, but ethereal – being. Later, when I was much, much older and much much wise in the eyes of the young, I would derive greater meaning from his tales of the Metromen and oil-makers and leak-fixers and their silver snakes. But in those moments, I only wanted to curl beside him, too afraid to touch him in case he vanished, but kept awake by the sand that beat against the tent sporadically and forced its way in through the gaps between the zips, accumulating in a pile by our feet like a coiled snake.

First, he walked ahead with twice his usual vigour, and left me baffled and panting in his wake. I feared I had said something to upset him, as he drank from his flask without meeting my eyes. Eventually, I could stand it no longer and begged him to speak his mind – and I shall never forget the hurt in his voice.

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“No, I should have known better. And to think I mistook you for a water-giver . . .”
Benjamin Ezzes

Anxious Song in a Narrow Valley

I am evaded by sleep like a stalking lion.
Grasping at oiled reeds for purchase here, but the effort must be worth it.
There must be some of it in prescription papers; liberate the mind to catch it.
Find a door with sand beyond it, up to knees and naked on it.
Tell me there's more in foil dots because I've waded, and wading in groups isn't better, only gets hotter.
Here in Canberra it's called 'meeting place' but it's the space between two holy mountains. Nganbra truest: the sacred convergence and it's closer here, getting tighter and less light, less light in here.

Arrest my chatter in the bones of the bones of the bones of the bones.

(How do you like my third arm, flailing, dumb? They call it 'high-functioning anxiety', this noxious partner, cruel foe.)

Find an island.
Success and survival are the same. Luck, luck and a general apathy towards moaning. Hope to never be a Jewish kvetcher. Here's a dictation: when you're here, there is a sense of hunkering down.

isolation. Breathless around you, callous misery.
Let's draw building blocks to aid you at a wider nib, broader take on things: 'It's been a while!' I say, whilst a hug whispers neglect.

(You've been manning checkpoints in my psyche, far, far away - I don't want to use you.)
Nothing about this hyper-personal approach that will tell you truth.

This is graceless poetry. It and Them and They, just like Here.

(Rationalise, says Elaine, sitting in the high-backed chair.)
Write to cope, not to hide passion. All fire.

Be straightforward. There's no narrative here. Just a slow, upward spiral.

Excuses slide out like an assembly line, measure for measure words in specific order, unsaid louder in the head.

Not an echo but a resounding terrorist of thought-pile. A chasing sin, unworthy sacrifice, and I have told you you're not worth writing for, so stop trying to be my muse. There's nothing about the cleavage of words that entices me finer than moonbeams on toast. Eggs a little runny.
Saturday mornings away from your cold, hyperventilated embrace. There's nothing about the perfect eyes-meet pause that reminds me more of home. You are a failure and maker. I frankenstein you to death when you undo me, I litter with my anger, I want you desperately outside of me. I can't think of anything, no, nothing that makes me sicker.

When you are ready, I have arranged your shoes quietly at the door.

What is the source of the bud that gives life to this thing? It is clear as ever that I am not fighting life, but fear and death.
Life is a busy exercise, and here I make me care.
Life is not the enemy, but I am.
All night, I dream of water –
a strange longing to be held
out of human hands, slipping
through cracks in the dirt.

Inside the soft animal of my body,
some bloody beating just goes & goes,
fat stubborn breath in my lungs:
you are not dead yet, you are not done yet,

think of the laundry
left hanging on the balcony.
We are still waiting for the rain to come,
no one knows when, if ever.

Who knows what tomorrow wants,
if we have earned ourselves a good death,
if we must fight the old fight,
turn the wheels out of the cul-de-sac,

say amen. What if God is a woman
on her knees? What if the colour red
just means red, not blood, or wine
or the echo of a siren,

& I wake one day, to the light on my face,
but no thoughts to harm this gentle ache,
my love; what if the heart sings,
& we just bless the days with our silly living?
Suspension

There’s a long, wide highway linking Bathurst with Sydney. It snakes through the mountains and at their foot the landscape flattens, broadens, small dams and grazing brown cows replace the endlessness of eucalypts whipping past the car window. The highway is a vein taking us home, oxygen-poor from breathing city fumes, or an artery carrying us back, replenished but not by much. The highway is slinky and sinuous, black as blood.

As a kid there were two ends of the highway. At one end was home, fresh-cut grass and the pool, our dogs, home was Kat being well, bad music pumping from under her bedroom door, Mum smiling, the possibility of going places, doing things. St Vincent’s hulked at the other end, clinical cleanliness, the death-scent of flowers in neat bouquets, interminable rasping breath.

Me and Jack (we were always that, me and Jack, Jack and me) sat in the waiting room on level ten and filled out our home-school textbooks with the park laid out far below us and straight ahead the glinting red light of Centrepoint Tower. At the end of each chapter Mum would go through our work with us, never marking, just discussing, occasionally frowning and showing us a new way to work out a maths problem with a pair of scissors and a jelly snake. Other times we’d skive off the hospital for the morning and go roaming through bookshops and libraries instead, eventually tumbling into Kat’s room laden with heavy volumes like Latin for Dummies and interactive computer games set in Ancient Rome.

Sometimes, on the bad days, me and Jack would roam around the hospital, going up and down the lifts in the private wing and imagining there might be celebrities reclining in the plush-carpeted wards, because there was one once, Mum showed us in the paper. We’d get treats too. It didn’t take much effort to coax a few dollars for an icy Pole each, and sometimes she handed over the big bucks for Magnums or triple-chocolate brownies or both. Most of the time I’d sit quietly in an orange easy chair pushed right up to the big window with the skyline arranged in front of me, a novel propped on my knees, watching the ant-people wander in and out of the Bandstand Café far below and dreaming.

Up there in the eyrie I read dozens of books, delving in and out of all kinds of lives, hungry for new places and different lives. I ingested characters, families unmarked by the fluttering heartbeat of a very sick sister, open spaces, new countries. I voyaged backwards and forwards in space and time, little southern towns and their unjust court cases, Hogwarts, the famous five, Narnia and the Emerald City. I’d fly free from the eyrie day after day, but the best kind of freedom was piling in the car (finally) and speeding along that highway.

One day we came home and Patch was asleep in the dust next to a long brown snake with a flat, bloodied head and strange, pale curved teeth gleaming in the sunlight. Patch is dead, Mum said, her face blank and hard with the pain of it, I felt the first spear of fear for blankness, death and dust. I stroked poor Patch’s fur and thought furious, grief-stricken thoughts about how we could have saved her, had we just been there. Had we just been present, and normal.

Often on the weekend there’d be other kids. We’d glance at them covertly, Jack and me, intimidated by the way in which they didn’t belong to the waiting room like we did, the casual confidence with which they’d say, ‘when are we going?’ One sunny Saturday there were loads of them, maybe two families visiting at once. They’d pushed all the chairs together and were making an elaborate tent with a pilfered sheet. We sat unobtrusively at the edge of the room and tried to look like we weren’t watching, while the adults poured lemonade into plastic tumblers and laughed, as though they were at a party. We knew from listening that they were going to the zoo after, and I thought about long giraffe necks stretching into the cloudless sky and dignified lions sunbathing in long waving grasses and felt my stomach twist.

After that, I sat in Kat’s room on the weekends, contemplating what I could see of Paddington and Darlinghurst, where tiny terraces stretched for kilometres. I scrutinised at them intensely, ravenous for the tableaus I imagined inside, kids with school bags and bedtimes, mums coming in from work, pale stone benches wiped clean and free of jars of tablets and boxes of diabetes needles.

The paraphernalia of sickness made me furious. I wanted to hide the medications, the asthma puffers and little strips of clear plastic with splashes of dried blood. I wanted to put them away, which in turn made...
Mum angry, because she thought I wanted to put Kat away. It was just that when she was sick, when it was visible, I couldn’t float away. I’d pick up Hazel Green but the text would swim and Mr Volio’s pastries smelt like disinfectant and steamed potatoes. There are lots of sounds in a hospital, nurses’ voices bright and brittle, the food trolley rattling along the ward, someone’s visitor covering up their discomfort by speaking too loud. When she was sick, all I could hear was the rattling of lungs caged in mucus, battling to breathe.

We were supposed to go home that day. I wanted the wide highway, the sense of breath moving freely through my body as we swarmed from the clogged Sydney streets to the fast-flowing roads beyond, the up and down ear-popping sensation of the leafy mountains, the sudden falling away of paddocks when we came clear of the trees, my lungs feeling cleaner too. I wanted Spot, my wiry terrier, her wet nose snuffling into my hand, pleased to see me. We had to stay though; they thought she was dying again. I was upset both because I didn’t want her to die and because we had planned to bake brownies at home and now we were stuck, mired in the swampy hospital air for another whole weekend. They kept playing this Nikki Webster song because Kat loved So Fresh and it went, these are the best days, these are the best days, these are the best days of our lives, and I thought, no. I stared out that window, envisioned myself down there somewhere, out there.

She didn’t die. We went home, baked brownies, ate them, came back. They sent her home too, then ambulanced her back again. We moved to Sydney for good, so Jack and me could go to real school. We’d visit Kat in the afternoon sometimes, but I was safe in my uniform and the sight of kids my age didn’t make me hurt anymore. I wonder if Kat hurt, when she saw them.

I read my way through all the countries in the world, and then I stopped sitting in that waiting room altogether because I had my own car and I could take myself up and down the highway, claim uni commitments, being kept back at work. Mum’s face got tighter as it went on. We knew it couldn’t go on. I travelled to real places, London, Paris, Berlin, anything to fly free, to get away, and I learned that sometimes it was better seeing new places on a page in black and white, safe in a waiting room easy chair. No entry fees, in a book. No reeking buses or armed militia standing silent and scary on a street corner. No creeping fear of white vans plowing through you as you meander around the market, either.

I was twenty-two and had finished the final semester of my undergraduate degree, getting ready to go out to a bar to celebrate the end of exams. Jack was going somewhere too, a friend’s party. Mum called us, Kat was sick, they thought maybe it really was the last time, this time. Slowly, wearily, we changed out of our good clothes and drove to the hospital, pumped back into the ward by our own beating hearts. Life had expanded so much, it was hard to believe how small it all was, and how much the same, the waiting room, the ward, the window looking out to the terraces glinting down below.

Kat was all hooked up to machines like in some of those early days, and there weren’t enough chairs for us to sit around her bed now we were all too big to share. We took it in turns to sit, looking from her open mouth to Mum’s swollen, lined, red face, listening to Mum talk to her, receiving only the remnants of a rattle in response. I thought, I can’t listen to this one day longer. She died that day, dust and sleep and blackness.

I had always known my sister would go away one day. Most of me felt relief, sheer release that she had finally found a way out of those stuffy rooms, as we had. I hadn’t known, though, that a part of me would fly away too, a part of Jack, and most of Mum, leaving our bodies changed inside, ragged, sucking. We soared away that night, the four of us. Clean through the window, spiraling amongst the stars. Free.
The ute starts and sputters diesel smoke thick and black and acrid. Roger, Terry, and Terry’s son Tim sit in the tray facing backwards, an old beat up Mitsubishi Triton, used rarely now except for times like these. The trio watches the ends of the sun set behind the distant basalt hilltops. Across his lap Terry nurses a .233 bolt-action rifle, a powerful 55-watt spotlight is fixed to the roof of the ute. Roger’s old man drives. Though his eyesight is shot he always drives, knowing these parts with a sort of deep and mythic understanding, barely needing even to see the dirt road, and after a while he stops the ute and turns the headlights off. The three men turn and lean forward now over the cabin of the car, the sun completely gone, seeing nothing really, just listening to each other breathing; then the flash of two glowing black eyes in the reflection of the moonlight. Roger’s old man flicks a switch. It’s a kangaroo standing there, just small, about three foot, stone still and hypnotized by the spotlight. Terry holds the rifle square firmly against his shoulder and fires. It’s a clean shot and the roo falls with a thump to the ground, its legs twitching for a moment. Then they spot another roo and Terry passes the rifle to Roger who aims and fires and hits the roo once, then twice, and the animal limps away into the vague dark of the night to die. They leave the roos to settle, Terry turns his eyes up toward the endless stars, the cloudless sky.

With the stopping of the rain the kangaroos have been moving more and more onto Terry’s farm in search for grass to eat. His property, only medium sized with 50 head of cattle, can’t sustain the increased competition. And so every few weeks they drive out with the rifle and thin out the herd. It’s not a thing anybody enjoys.

After some time they spot another roo, and this time Terry is holding the gun and he fires and this one falls to the ground with a solid thud. Tim jumps. No one speaks. Roger’s dad drives the ute over to the carcass, driving over grass and cow pats, the ute swaying unevenly from side to side as he navigates the field’s natural divots and bumps. Terry holds on with one big hand clasped onto the side of the tray, his other hand on Tim’s collar. Tomorrow, Tim, 18, leaves for university. Tim has an older brother, Josh, the two of them born twelve years apart, and Tim born when Terry and his wife Margie were already racing toward their fifties. But Josh had left the farm to move to Sydney when Tim was only five, so he doesn’t remember him much, and sees him now only on holidays. When Tim told the family he had been thinking of university in Bathurst it struck his father like a bullet out of nowhere, though the news wasn’t all that surprising. Still, since then a wide gap has opened up inside Terry’s mind, occupied by what he can only describe as a thick and dark storm cloud, black as oil, lingering there – always.

James Holloway

Empty Sky
Terry shot the roo in the abdomen, so that its guts all hang out of its stomach in a deep, dark red that can be seen even despite the darkness of the night - he's made a mess of it. There's a deep sadness in his heart when he looks at the body but he doesn't show it on his face, carrying just a glazed and frozen stoical expression. It's the same face Tim tries to replicate, but with less success, the corners of his mouth betraying him, his eyes staring forward a bit too intensely, serious, not carrying the tired relaxation Terry and Roger have trained themselves to carry after decades on the farm. Terry knows Tim must find this whole thing repulsive.

About a year ago, the town hosted a meeting at the bowling club for all the men to discuss what they called mental health. All the men, farmers raised in a previous generation, were sceptical of the talk - confident really, in their own abilities to deal with things. Giving the presentation was a baby-faced young man from the city who wore an ironed white and blue button down tucked into chinos. When he spoke he didn't make eye contact, he just looked out past all the heads to the boards at the back of the hall. When he spoke he had a high voice and he spoke about how important it was for men to talk about that night's feeling tired but right, and talks to Margie, the sweat on his back, returns to the house hard feels his muscles expand and contract, some great universal way. And Terry working course, there are good days too, when the cloud appears in front of Terry every morning and follows him out into the fields where, with the drought in full bloom and the grass dried up, it mocks him and tears through him like dirt. He wants to say something, every day he wants to say something, but he doesn't know where to begin. He doesn't know how to articulate even in his own mind what is wrong, just that something is. His mind has slowed to a black treacle-like sludge so that the only clear voice in his head is the one screaming at him, telling him that whatever he is feeling is fundamentally dumb, and childish, and that whatever pain he feels is a result of his being weak, and that this is all just something he needs to get over. Of course, there are good days too, when the smell of the farm and the fresh air fills up everything, and the sun shines off the hills in some great universal way. And Terry working hard feels his muscles expand and contract, the sweat on his back, returns to the house feeling tired but right, and talks to Margie, and listens to Tim talk about that night’s rugby training, and offers him advice. These days make everything all the more confusing and painful when, the clouds do return. They leave him on uncertain footing, afraid to trust his feelings, even more afraid to talk – struck dumb, silent – as always.

The night is quiet but for the muttering of the ute. The roof rises like a lump atop the ute at the feet of the three men. Steam faintly rises off the body. They drive for a little while longer before stopping again and it’s Tim’s turn with the rifle. The spotlight comes on and they spot what looks to be a young buck, and Tim aims the rifle and fires but misses. The kangaroo, startled, runs off, and Tim fires again but he can’t land the shot, and he can’t cycle through fast enough, and just watches the roof bound off beyond the reach of the spotlight until it’s gone from sight completely.

When Terry and Margie had been much younger – when Tim was just a toddler and Josh hadn’t left the farm yet - Terry had tried to describe to Margie a similar type of feeling he’d been dealing with, though in no great detail, afraid to test the waters. In her general exhaustion from raising two kids, from running the home, and maybe because Terry hadn’t spoken well enough, hadn’t made the extent of the troubles clear enough, his words dumb and simplistic, and maybe because at the time she had been going through her own sort of darkness, she had left him in an embarrassed silence. It’s a memory that still makes Terry wince.

At some point the four men call it a night, and Roger’s dad turns the old ute back around toward the house, Terry and Roger having killed a number of roos but Tim having shot none. Terry has no idea what Tim will do with his rifle sitting in its rack by the side of the door. Steam faintly rises off the body. They drive for a little while longer before stopping again and it’s Tim’s turn with the rifle. The spotlight comes on and they spot what looks to be a young buck, and Tim aims the rifle and fires but misses. The kangaroo, startled, runs off, and Tim fires again but he can’t land the shot, and he can’t cycle through fast enough, and just watches the roof bound off beyond the reach of the spotlight until it’s gone from sight completely.

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In the morning Terry walks out of the house and kicks up brown dust and looks out at the property his grandfather started almost a century ago. The farm seems empty at first, but he knows that’s not fair. In the cold of the night Terry closes his eyes tight and sees the roo gone, the farm empty, the sky empty: the rifle sitting in its rack by the side of the door. Terry follows Tim back into the house where an old sports bag full of his clothes sits waiting by the door.
Her skin is warm, turning a blotched pink in the sun. A thin line of ants marches over the amber daisies printed across her chest. A grasshopper clings to a tall blade of grass, hops to her forehead. Two crows glide down from a pine tree and stalk towards her like miniature bow-legged cowboys. There’s a morning buzz of insects, movement in the long grass drying of dew. She has been lying like this for hours; soon her family will find her, but for now – it is just her rain-soaked hair, a pool of blood beneath her head and the slow creep of a new day in Cape Town.

A

n overcast day. Grey sky hangs low, bulging with clouds too small for rain but thick enough to obscure the sun. He veers the car off the bitumen, drives part way down a dirt track to a sandstone wall; he cuts the engine.

‘Shall we?’ he says as brightly as he can manage. Caro shoots him a glance that makes him stiffen in his seat. A trio of kookaburras cackle into raucous laughter in a nearby gum, the sound still so alien to them both. ‘I wish they’d shut up,’ Caro says, ‘nothing funny about this day.’

She pulls a navy cap over her head and opens the car door. Smith reaches for her arm, ‘Pass the bag here, I’ll carry it.’ She wrenches out of his grasp and slams the door behind her. The kookaburras intensify their ear-splitting sounds; Caro narrows her eyes at the birds and walks off.

‘Wait for me!’ Smith calls, jogging to catch up with her.

Caro sets a fast pace, stretching her legs out on the path of fine white sand glinting in the strange yellow light that has set everything to hypercolour: eucalypt greens are startling against the bruised sky. Trees are shedding bark that lies scattered like hastily discarded clothes, revealing naked trunks in smoked salmon hues, wet and glistening from last night’s rain.

‘Aren’t they beautiful?’ Smith gushes, rubbing a hand on a trunk growing straight out of rock, its base hooked like a nose over the boulder’s edge.

‘Can we just walk?’ Smith nods, bends a hand around to the backpack and takes out a water bottle. ‘Thirsty?’

‘We’ve been going for three minutes Smith, Jesus.’ Caro strides ahead, finding a neat path over the steps carved into the earth, trellised by roots and large stones. She’s nimble on her feet, eyes down to find the next best footing. A small rivulet flows alongside the path, over rich soil and clay the colour of foxes. Either side of the path is thickly vegetated with red gums, banksias and staghorns holding rainwater in their leaves and straining towards the light.

They walk in silence, Smith wondering what Caro is thinking, Caro with her hands shoved in her pockets, concentrating on the way ahead.

‘Isn’t it nice to feel so safe in the bush?’ Smith asks, side-stepping a mud puddle.

Caro stops, turns to face her husband. ‘This bush is empty, Smith, it’s just a soup of trees. You think I’m going to get excited about a bloody possum, forgodssake?’

‘I don’t mean lions, I meant more in a metaphorical way.’ His voice trails off. ‘Metaphorical?’ She bites her bottom lip. ‘What exactly do you mean?’ ‘Well, as in, I suppose, the way that our lives aren’t in danger, from other people, I mean.’ Smith takes her hands in his. ‘We made the right decision, you know we did. I think about her every day, I do, but at some point we have to start living.’

‘Living? What, you mean like going for a nice hike?’ Caro pulls her hands away. ‘Don’t you see me here in the kuring gai national park, or whatever the hell it’s called? I get out of bed every morning. That should be enough for you.’

‘It’s not for me, god, Caro, losing a sister is a terrible thing. You’re doing the best you can in Sydney. I just – ’ She interrupts, ‘You just want me to forget that my sister is dead? And that while I was incapacitated with grief you moved our lives across the world to Australia?’
‘It’s not about forgetting, that’s not what I’m saying.’

‘Whatever you’re saying, just stop. You dragged me here to walk and that’s what I’m going to do, okay?’

Smith lets her go, stalling his natural response to chase after her. Vivid memories shroud him. That morning: he was the first one to see Trisha’s body lying in the grass, a pair of menacing black-eyed crows staking the scene like they had something to do with it. The dogs chased the birds off and went bezerk, licking her face until he caught up and pulled them off, yanking at their collars, desperate. From the blood pooled at the rock under her head it was obvious that she was already dead. Caro came around the bend, he’d tried to stop her from seeing what his own eyes would never see; they’d scuffled, Caro was screaming, trying to get to her sister. To stop her, Smith had tackled his own wife to the ground.

‘Somehow I was afraid to touch her. I can’t get her body out of my head. I’ve been running ever since.’ ‘Huh?’ Smith says, coming to stand by her side.

Caro shakes her head. The layer of cloud has thinned and dissipated. A pale blue sky stretches over the river. The sky stretches over them. She strips off her leggings and shirt, takes off her underwear; her skin raises to goosebumps.

‘Caro you can’t, there are other walkers.’

Caro shrugs and steps into the water, trailing her fingers behind her until she is up to her neck. She goes under. Holds her breath. Opens her eyes to the brackish diluted world. Caro surfaces, gasps for breath, throws her neck. She goes under. Holds her breath.

‘Caro, you can’t. What if…?’ Caro looks up at him, raises a hand, saying ‘I can’t.’

Smith nods. ‘I didn’t know that.’ ‘I can’t go back there, Caro. I know you want to. Maybe even need to. But I can’t.’

Caro shakes his head. ‘I’ve been running ever since. Somehow I was afraid to touch her. I can’t get her body out of my head. I’ve been running ever since.’ ‘Huh?’ Smith says, coming to stand by her side.

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Turing Complete 1 Me

Turing complete function machine, Functioning, fluctuate-entity. Turing complete me.

A universal iteration, And cosmic manipulation, Of our blueprint-seeding.

Stare into the eye of my seedling father, A far more communal density, Than gritty slicked between my teeth.

Enclosed in your arms, Encompassed in a glance, You carry me from here to next, Vexed we beseech finer things.

A-stroll in cunning heart, You’ve been here from the start. Distracted, I won’t notice, ’Til a few imposters steal my lotus-home again. Alleviated in my misery, plucked-petal-menagerie.

A freeform father free from biology, And predetermined functionality. Father won’t you give me for now, While I for give the other? How do we fill up on this lost matter?

Radial radiation stem in microcosmic wave plates,’ Pulse ‘n’ pulse ‘n’ pulse ‘n’ vibrate, False ‘n’ fall ‘n’ flow ‘n’ ra-di-ate.

Closure creeping closer to the contents of the soul, Immaterial matters matter after all, Immaterial matters are matter, This is all.

1Turing Complete: A computer or computer language that can approximately simulate the computational aspects of any computer or computer language. Note, a universal computer is defined as a device with a Turing complete instruction set, infinite memory, and infinite available time. - Wiki

2The Cosmic Microwave Background radiation: a faint glow of light that fills the universe, falling on Earth from every direction with nearly uniform intensity. It is the residual heat of creation—the afterglow of the big bang—streaming through space these last 14 billion years like the heat from a sun-warmed rock, reradiated at night. - Erik Leitch
Katrina Kemp

Number Eight Last

The room was quiet for a minute, but not peaceful. Peace might imply harmony, or equilibrium, neither of which was the purpose of the place. It could have been a pub lounge, but it was almost featureless, with no sign of beer or any other incitement to revelry. Defeated, someone sat in the only faded-brown-that-had-once-been-green armchair, head forward on his knees, hands trailing on the floor.

The movement of the players in the room was considered, but for the Novice this was emulation without knowledge. The Master demonstrated what to emulate and refrained from concluding the game too early so that the Novice had a chance to practice. Between shots, they could hear strangled breath finding a way out of the folded-up man in the chair.

The Master’s patience was intense, conveying the impression that understanding this game was important, if not vital. It was difficult to see why, but at least gave a sense of purpose to the visit. The game removed them from the horrors of the hallways and adjoining rooms. Just a short visit, then the Novice was free to go. The Master was not.

An occasional intruder would wander in and behold the colours all over the table. One had taken the yellow and white ball and tried to put it in her mouth as if it was a huge egg. The Master coaxed it from her, hoping she would not bite. Another came in giving advice and testing the Master’s patience.

"Try orange next!"

"Righto Freddy."

"No, no, mustn’t touch the black one!"

"Yes mate, that’s right."

"Number eight last."

"Not your turn now mate," Freddy was told when he tried to take the Novice’s cue. Freddy held it tight until his knuckles turned white.

"What’s your number?" he demanded, blasting the Novice with an urgent breath.

"I’m fifteen."

The Novice let go of the cue, but he didn’t want it.

The Novice picked up the cue and took aim at the egg, but it bounced off the orange and away from the pocket, letting the white get swallowed instead. The Master shook his head.

"Not like that, you should have aimed at the other side of the yellow."

Should have, but the sobs and shrieks down the hall were distracting. He showed how it was done, just the right angle, just the right control of the cue. He sank three in a row and only had two left. The Novice’s colours were still bright all over the green felt. This game was harder than it had looked, sitting by on other visits with captive men pacing around the table, aiming from various angles, standing back holding the cue upright when they’d lost the turn. The rituals of the game seemed to soothe them.

"Put your fingers like this, then the cue can slide straight at the centre of the white," the Master instructed.

The Novice concentrated and was astonished to see the egg followed by the orange plop into a side pocket with a satisfying click. The Master twitched a slight smile on one side of his face, but there was no light in his eyes. His mind inhabited a bottomless pit. The gentle balm of electrical currents applied to the sides of his brain had as yet failed to break his fall. The short drop of a coloured ball into its safety net was a more effective reminder that falling could not be eternal.

Outside, Freddy had undone his bandages and was observing the ruby gashes on his knuckles and wrist.

"Ruby is next," he told the players through a missing pane.

Number fifteen was there behind the eight ball awaiting the Novice after the Master sank his last colours. It sat ready to fall, the white almost straight on. The Novice leaned over to aim at the far corner.

"Too much angle," the Master said. "Just a gentle tap and it’ll go straight in."

But it didn’t go straight in at all; the white didn’t even touch it and clipped the black instead. The Novice stood up as red-faced as the accusing ruby ball. The Master no longer exercised his patience. The lines of his frown...
drew a clear conclusion.

Freddy gasped when the black hovered on the lip of a pocket, Lady Luck sitting astride, poised for a moment of torment.

“Number eight last!” he cried through the square gaps in the door. “Number eight goes last!”

But just to spite him, the Lady leaned towards the pocket. The black fell before its turn.

“Oh dear,” he said and bit his injured knuckle. “Bad luck, bad luck, always bad luck.”

Freddy squatted again, humming with his face hidden between his knees and his arms wrapped around them, this time revealing the number eight tattooed on the back of his skull. The man in the brown armchair sucked in a great lungful of air, sat up and laughed.

“You’re a fucking idiot Freddy, it’s just a stupid fucking game. There is no such thing as bad luck,” he declared.

“No!” Freddy protested. “You… you’re just a mad cunt who can’t see what’s going on, here, there, in your head. Everywhere there’s lucky and unlucky. Don’t follow the rules, lose your luck. Out of luck here, all of us here forgot the rules.”

The man laughed again and stood up with his knees creaking. He picked up the unlucky fifteen ball and the white ball.

“See these?”

He knocked them together, the click now an ominous sound. He leaned right down and spoke into one of Freddy’s ears, though he had covered them both again with his hands.

“Which one will break the window better if I throw it? Which one will crack your stupid number eight skull better? Let’s try your luck, eh, eh?”

The Master reached for a buzzer on the wall. Two nurses ran in to disarm the creaking man before Freddy’s luck ran out altogether. They passed a woman in the doorway with a gaunt doctor standing behind her. She observed the scene, crumpling a soggy handkerchief and wiping her nose. She watched the Master, still frowning while he rolled the redundant fifteen ball into a pocket and put his cue away. She spoke to the Novice after the offender had been hustled away for his afternoon medication.

“It’s time to go home now, did you have a good game?” the woman said, smiling as if they had been visiting a friend’s house for the afternoon. The smile didn’t reach her red eyes.

Not sure of a suitable answer, the Novice put the cue back in the rack, and turned towards the future decreed by their visit.
Music Laura Dee / Alana Patmore, Kazunari Benson / Alvin Chung / Lachlan Mitchell / Sam Parker / Coco Huang / Oscar Saran / Chelsea Stutchbury / Lara Goodridge / Ruby J / Henry Lin /
Laura Dee

Little Wonder

But it’s little wonder that you and I are still so far apart

Somehow I thought
That I could catch a feeling if I tried
Change us from the inside
Somehow I thought
That I could trick my head into being my heart
forget who you really are

So I’m waiting in anticipation
breathing and hoping and praying
Maybe love will find it’s way to us

But it’s little wonder that you and I are still so far apart
When you won’t give me your heart
Little wonder that you are there and I am over here
When your love seems more like fear
No more than friends, it’s little wonder
You’re my little wonder
We’re a little wonder
That’s all we’ll be

Somehow I thought
That maybe you were different from the rest
Though I feel you even less
Somehow I thought
We’d overcome the memories of your past
But your eyes are filled with scars

So I’m heavy in manipulation
Tryna draw up an equation
Man plus girl equals love, right?
And maybe you still see me as a sister

Or maybe I’m just too young in the end
No baby I don’t see you as a brother
But if you don’t step up you’ll still be stuck on ‘friend’
i’m still trying to deny we could be special
How I felt when you looked at me in that dress
i’m still trying to forget we could be lovers
But right now I’m feeling we are far, far less

Somehow I thought
That I could force a feeling
But I can’t
With you, it’s little wonder
Alana Patmore, Kazunari Benson

Like Me Like That

Music

Alvin Chung

While the Angels Were Passing By

You can have my soul
for a night
while the angels were passing by

You can have my love
for a night
While the angels were passing by

You can have my soul
for a night
while the angels were passing by

You can have my love
for a night
While the angels were passing by
Lachlan Mitchell
Walking in the Same Direction

When you won’t give me your heart

Sam Parker
Lost

Head jolts awake as summer sunlight on skin comes creeping
While disapproving glances from quiet strangers reminds me, I shouldn’t be sleeping
I look outside to the clear blue sky that’s beckoning
But I’ll just look, no more than observing.
But is it really the right thing to steer that boat away from unknown seas
Feel as though that calm blue water could come back to haunt me
And I, need to find something to believe in
Before it’s too late
And I, need to find a purpose
Before it’s too late
Before I drift away
Before I’m gone (x2)
I need to set my sails or stay
But first I need to find some self direction
To find my way home
Finding it hard to concentrate on proper things
Prefer to let mind wander to places I’d rather be
Where salted lips and sunburnt skin is all that’s troubling
But instead I’ll be behind this wood vinyl desk attempting to act more sensibly
And I’ve been listening to, concerning amounts of sad post lately
Wondering if that once yearning whole is something I still should be chasing
Pensively

Coco Huang
Reflections
I am free to dance
Free to fuck, to decide,
I want to take myself for a walk,
I want to dress how I like

Il va la toucher comme
Si elle lui appartenait
Il est nul, il est petit
Mais il se sent comme il a
Toute la puissance, la puissance

Je suis libre de danser
Libre de baiser, décider,
Je veux me promener
Je veux m'habiller comme me plaît

Tu n'as pas le droit de me
Violer, m'attaquer, non

Je vais protester dans les
Rues où j'ai une voix qui peut
Être entendue avec
Toutes les femmes qui n'ont plus peur

I'm sorry but I'm a disgrace
I'm drowning here alone
I'm drowning here a-
I'm drowning here a-
I'm drowning here alone
But I'm staying afloat
staying afloat
although I didn’t see the signs I wonder if you could see the lines you always asked me
Learning to know when to quit trying to change what can’t be changed

Henry Lin

Loneliness

Wonder when it’ll fade away? Play the waves; humming frequencies in major may just reanimate the grey monotone Everyday’s the same, plagued with rain but still can’t seem to cleanse the pain Or corrode and break the chains stretching temporally through memories except to maybe wait Learning to know when to quit trying to change what can’t be changed, like fate ‘Til my lungs inflamed Weight, rib-cage caving Decay the faith to try again A razor blade, a horizontal cut across the Adam’s apple Now that you’re “Gone Girl”, I struggle to see the point Carried the both of us when you couldn’t, baby, it’s fine ‘Til you grew complacent and blown me off thinking ‘I’ll wait ’till you make the time’ But you were right I waited and I waited ‘cause I loved you way too much to let you go ‘Til weeks turned into months, winter comes but the only snow’s the static drizzlin’ onto your silence over the phone I guess I should have known, but through the rose tinted lenses, all the red flags seemed so normal It’s all just perception Wondering if any of the things you’ve ever said to me you meant it Now the trust turned opaque, tainted with the doubt Infected cut oozing like the sewage of her decadence Sitting insensibly in the residual love Lingers ambivalence that only the evening's palette can paint what it feels like You’re right, maybe we should just end this here while it’s still light.

*Please be aware the following content references to self harm, violence and gender violence.*
CONTRIBUTORS
Alexandra Jonscher - Diddle Daddle
Alexandra Jonscher majors in Painting and Art History. Her practice falls under expanded painting, exploring abstraction through photography, sculpture, installation, and painting.

Antony Youssef - Air for Air
Antony is a multimedia and interactive artist. He uses technology to create art which oschews expectations and invites participants into unique and powerful experiences.

Dustin Jefferys - On The Line
Dustin currently studies in the Faculty of Medicine. He typically employs conceptual imagery and compositing in his photography to tell a story.

Elise Gibson-Long - Black Leak
Elise materialises her ideas through installation, sculpture and print, exploring concepts of fluidity, flesh and perception while maintaining an influence from the natural world.

Gillian Kayrooz - Y3LLOW SUN BAY RUN & Surveillance over Scrutiny
Gillian Kayrooz is an emerging multidisciplinary artist from Western Sydney, currently completing her Honours degree at the Sydney College of the Arts.

Hee Won Michelle Lee - Girl with a Coral Binyeo
Being an amateur artist, first year student moving onto bachelor of design computing from commerce. Loves to portray the emotional nature of human portraiture.

Jeff Chiang - Interlinked
Drawing influence from the concrete jungle of Hong Kong, the Sydney based photographer captures the urban environment to invoke a feeling of peace yet disturbance.

Katerina Mehigan - Oceanus
I am a honours year Visual Arts student. I work primarily in traditional 2D animation, sequential art and digital illustration (with an emphasis on horror).

Kim Nguyen - Moon
Emerging artist and student at Sydney College of the Arts. Kim Nguyen’s image based practice engages with ideas about the body, object and perception.

Laura Moore - Scene #2
Laura Moore is an emerging artist based in Sydney, currently undertaking her MFA at Sydney College of the Arts.

Michelle Dang - Save The Best For Last
Michelle is an aspiring photographer with a proud refugee heritage studying a bachelor of law and media. @mldphotography

Rosie Eliza Thomas - In/Different Spaces
Rosie Thomas (b. 1997) lives and works in Sydney. Her work is suggestive of sensitivity to ecology, memory and a relationship to a non-linear time, endeavouring to highlight the dual rhythms of each moment we occupy.

Shababa Salim - Snapshots from a Wanderer
Shababa Salim is a second year architecture student who has a passion for art and photography.

Tanushri Saha - half different, partially familiar
Tanushri’s art practice explores postcolonial feminisms, futurism, ecology, and decolonisation. She is the visual arts editor for Peril magazine, an Asian-Australian arts and culture journal.

Alisha Brown - BEEP://
Alisha is a Media and Communications student and aspiring writer. She drinks an excessive amount of strawberry tea and loves dogs.

Angelique Hall - The Recovery
I am a second year undergraduate studying a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English.

Angus MacGregor - Joe, ‘E’, and Me.
I grew up in Scotland and moved to Australia in my twenties. I write in both Poetry and Prose.

Benjamin Ezzes - Anxious Song in a Narrow Valley
Benjamin Ezzes is a pre-service educator and proud campus Jew. In between managing anxiety and serving in the community, he enjoys poetry and public speaking.

Coco Huang - A Handful of Water
Coco Huang is a writer of fiction, poetry and music. She is also a medical science student.

Donnalyn Xu - You Are Not Done Yet
I am currently studying a Bachelor of Arts (Media and Communications) majoring in English and Art History. I am an avid reader, a clumsy artist, and a sometimes-poet.

Edward Furst - A Very Canine Breakfast
Edward Furst is a fifth year Arts and Economics student completing honours in political economy.

Gabriela Bourke - Suspension
Gabriela has written stories since her hands were big enough to clutch a pencil. Currently she is completing a Master of Creative Writing at USyd.

Georgia Tan - Prey
Georgia Tan is an aspiring writer who loves sunsets, the outdoors and travelling the globe. She never stops dreaming about writing that next piece.

James Holloway - Empty Sky
James Holloway is a fiction and non-fiction writer from Sydney, Australia. He studies Media and Communications.

Kathryn Lyster - we are not the world
Kathryn is a MA Creative Writing student. She writes short stories, poetry and through her work grapples with ideas of home and belonging.

Katrina Kemp - Number Eight Last
The power of the written word has taken me to worlds of wonder, both real and imaginary. I think I live on the border.

Robin M. Eames - REQUIEM FOR MEDUSA
Robin is a queer crip punk poet living on Gadigal land. Their History Honours thesis examines transgender historiography. You can find them online at robinmecares.org and @robinmecares.

Whitney Van Den Flux - Turing Complete Me
Resurrected through excessive panic, Whitney writes with the hush of the jaded and the urgency of burnished love. A conduit of great ferocity: @_.chrysal.ism._
Alana Patmore, Kazunari Benson - Like Me Like That
Paper Stranger are a pop band from Sydney, Australia. They combine their love of music and songwriting in this project.

Alvin Chung - While the Angels Were Passing By
Alvin Chung studies Law and Media/Communications at the University of Sydney.

Chelsea Stutchbury - R O B I N
Chelsea, 21, is a second year Sydney Conservatorium student studying Contemporary Music. Her style is heavily influenced by historical dramas and their emotive, cinematic soundtracks.

Coco Huang - Reflections
Coco Huang is a writer of fiction, poetry and music. She is also a medical science student, an art enthusiast, and enjoys people-watching.

Henry Lin - Loneliness
I am a recording artist from the Northern Beaches, infusing Australian hip-hop with boom bap, lofi, cloud trap, and melancholic, introspective lyricism.

Lachlan Mitchell - Walking in the Same Direction
Been playing music for years in my home town of Jindera, near Albury. Finally recorded an album last year under the stage name "LockKey". Now in Sydney to study postgrad medicine.

Lara Goodridge - La Puissance
Violinist/singer in electric string quartet FourPlay and French outfit Baby et Lulu, and more. Currently enrolled in Masters in Music Studies.

Laura Dee - Little Wonder
Laura Dee is a second year Law/Media student, chocolate addict, Jesus lover, and piano tutor by day, and aspiring singer-songwriter by night.

Oscar Saran - So Social
DOOM CHRONIC, SO SOCIAL, Music For Listening.

Ruby J - Stranger
A singer/songwriter, I'm slowly finding my way in electronic and dance music while using my acoustic roots to create resonant melodies and lyrics.

Sam Parker - Lost
Second year Commerce Science student, been playing guitar for a while and started writing and recording songs this year.