

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL

# overland

143



ISSN 0030-7416



9 770030 741006

PRINT POST APPROVED  
PP 328858/0003

A B C D E F G H I  
J K L M N O P Q R  
S T U V W X Y Z  
( & . , : ; ! ? ' "

C O N T E N T S

A B C D E F G H I  
J K L M N O P Q R  
S T U V W X Y Z  
£ | 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
9 0 \$ %

# overland

**4** THE INTERNET  
RELATIONSHIP  
• Justine Block

**9** KILLA • Chris Newton  
DUCK POND • Chris  
Newton

**10** YOU MEET HER  
AT A BAR • Neil Boyack

**14** GENERATE  
• Michelle Griffin

**18** MY COUSIN JEAN  
• Annamarie Jagose

**24** SPOKEN WORD  
• Peter Salmon

**32** AUNT ANASTASIA  
AND HER JOKE • Luke  
Icarus Simon

**34** PASIPHAE AND  
THE BULL • Edwina  
Preston

**38** A ROAD AND  
REFERENCE MAP  
• Ben Maas

**40** OUT THE BACK  
• Tony McGowan

**49** IN SEASON • Tracy  
A Forbes / LOWKU •  
Chris Newton

**49** THE RICKSHAW  
• MTC Cronin

**50** PUBLIANUS  
FORTUNATUS  
• Raimondo Cortese

**55** LOVE AND THE  
ASYLUM ONE MORNING  
• Tom Ball

**56** HITCH HIKING  
AGAIN • Mic Smith

**58** A VERY LARGE  
BEAN • Eric Dando

**62** YELLOW CAR  
• Susan Williams /  
SURREALISM &  
DAMAGES • MTC Cronin

**62** THE FIRST TIME  
• MTC Cronin

**63** OLD BLUE CAR  
• Natasha Treloar

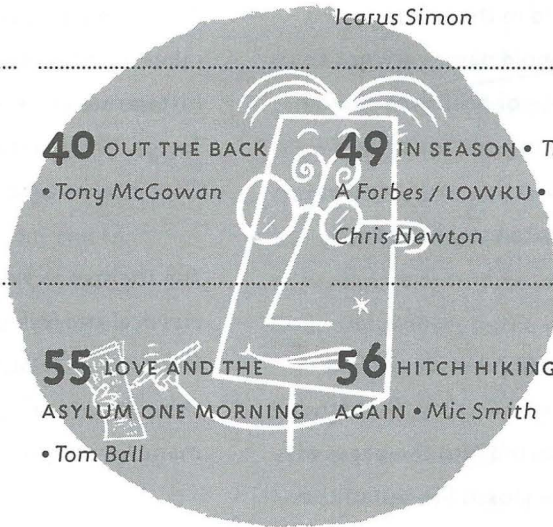
**64** CHARLIE  
• Bernadette Taylor

**67** YELL  
• Eric Dando

**68** EPHEMERON  
• SJRR

**74** MOCK CHICKEN  
• Chris Gregory

**81** REVIEWS  
Snail • Blur • Dirt  
• Zines • Wonderboy



## Welcome to Next Wave Overland.

*Next Wave Overland* is a 'project' as much as it is an issue. Next Wave Festival is a biennial contemporary arts festival that showcases the work of emerging artists. One of the festival's objectives is to put independent emerging artists in established art spaces and institutions and in, the company of established artists, to give them a voice in the community, and in the arts industry. Writers who are not household names are not so because of any lack of quality or brilliance or even determination. There are many enthusiastic, committed, talented voices in this country that don't often find their way into established and respected literary journals.

This is not the first collaboration between *Next Wave* and *Overland*. In the 1994 festival, *Overland Extra* was produced and inserted into the pages of the Winter 1994 edition. The glossy lift-out in the broadly distributed *Overland* exposed many younger writers to new and wider audiences. This time, we went a step further in the collaboration, and emerging writers in 1996 have found their place in the bound pages of the journal.

Some writers in this issue have large bodies of work published by mainstream publishers, some have been published in anthologies, some in small independent magazines and zines, some have performed their work at small venues or national festivals, some have self-published low budget collections of their work, and some have never appeared in print.

In this edition people explore issues, toss round ideas, and opinions conflict. Peter Salmon tells us why spoken word is not poetry. Michelle Griffin provocatively suggests that someone born in 1972 is too young to write a novel. Justine Block gives a personal account of the internet, while another common domain of younger writers, the zine, is dissected by Steve Grimwade. Scott Robinson takes us through a landscape of allergens, histamines and hypersensitivity, Bernadette Taylor through the seedy side of St Kilda, and Eric Dando takes us up a beanstalk.

The themes explored in these pages range from classical and folk mythology to urban mythology, from sexual relationships to internet relationships to familial relationships. And there are as many writing styles explored as there are themes.

Five students of editing courses worked on selecting and editing work for this issue. This editorial committee was assisted by Des Cowley, who worked on the 1994 *Overland Extra*, and myself. But the editing, the selection, and the tough decision making was accomplished by the five members of the committee. Michelle Ainley, Thuy On, Jo-Anne Printz, Natasha Treloar and Susan Williams are responsible for much of the slog that went into this issue.

It was decided from the onset of this project that the look of this issue should reflect the nature of the content. Stephen Banham of The Letterbox, who was asked to design the issue, has an approach to design which was perfect for this collaboration. The fiction, poetry, articles and reviews were read thoroughly before the right way to present the magazine was chosen. The intended audience was considered; the aims, voices and styles of the writers were considered; the nature of *Overland* as an established literary journal was considered. Fonts and page layouts were chosen to complement the text, and to present it visually. A new typeface (Engine), which has not been used in an Australian magazine before, was chosen. As with the writing, as with the editing, everything is as it is for a reason.

The individual perspective of the designer sits in these pages with that of the editors and the writers. This small selection of diverse individuals in collaboration represents a unique whole, and maybe goes some of the way toward giving a glimpse of the talent and diversity of the next wave of artists.

Situating these artists in an established space is important to their acknowledgement as contributors to the literary community. Thanks to John McLaren, Ian Syson and Alex Skutenko from *Overland* for providing this opportunity, and for assisting the project at many levels of production.

Thanks to all involved in this issue - editors, designer, the Literature Board of the Australia Council, Melbourne Co-operative Bookshop, and most of all the contributors. Many more exceptional works were received than we had space for in this issue. Works were received from all over Australia.

All these voices are brought together in one publication. *Overland* has long represented works from many areas of the Australian literary community. It is an example of the quality of literature produced in this country. I welcome new readers to this issue of *Overland*. I welcome *Overland* readers to the next wave of writers.

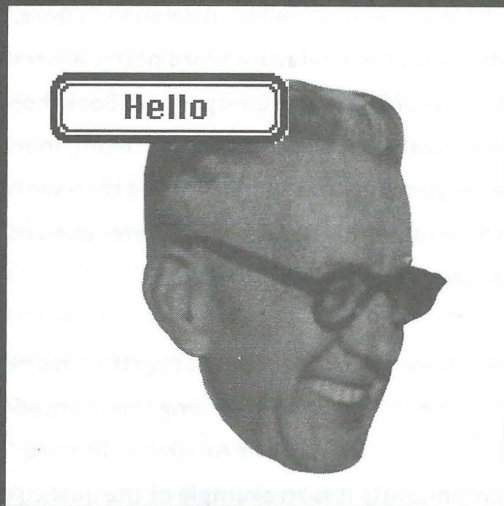
**Kerry Watson**

Writers Program Co-ordinator  
*Next Wave Festival Inc*

---

## Sponsors





# The Internet

relationship



*Justine Block*

**Have you ever wanted to be someone else, just for a few minutes?** Perhaps you have wanted to experience what it feels like to be free of gender, or of race, or even free of your body. The Internet has not only opened up a channel for instantaneous transmission of multimedia, but has also provided a forum in which users can re-create themselves. Computer personas that are created online interact within virtual worlds. These worlds can be as simple as text on a screen, or as complex as a 3D animated galaxy in which participants can take on any visual form they wish. This online communication is commonly called IRC (Internet Relay Chat), or 'chat sessions'. More and more people who explore online worlds are participating in IRCs.

My experience with online relationships began when I discovered e-mail. I was studying at the University of Iowa and used e-mail as a cheap and fast way of communicating with friends in the UK and at home. I began to e-mail an acquaintance who lived on campus with me. Every day we would swap news of daily activities and general gossip. Gradually we began to discuss more personal issues until we formed a close friendship.

The first time we met for a coffee after developing our e-mail relationship felt very awkward. Although we had been intimate with each other, we did not physically know each other. I was not familiar with her facial expressions, her vocal intonations, her body language, nor she with mine. After meeting regularly for coffee over a few months, this feeling subsided and the cyberspace friendship and the physical friendship merged.

My e-mail relationships paved the way for chat sessions on the Internet. Chat sessions have been available on computers for many years, but the Internet has made them widely accessible and cost-efficient. This is particularly true for international access where chat sessions are much cheaper than the phone. Chat sessions allow people who have never met to hook up with each other and talk directly. It is similar to talking on the phone except responses are typed and online users, or 'babblers', can chat with many people at once as long as they are online at the same time.

Chat sessions are like instant relationships. Imagine you have walked into a crowded room where you do not know anybody. How will you choose who to speak to? You will probably base your choice on physical appearance, voice and possibly even smell! As you speak to these people you will glean more information about them through non-verbal communication such as body language. What makes chat sessions unique is the total absence of the physical presence. Users become their cyberspace persona.

In a text based, rather than graphics based, computer environment there are three pieces of information that make up a persona. Firstly, all babblers are listed online under a code name which they have chosen for themselves. While babblers have the option of revealing their real name, address and e-mail, most hide their identity. The code names usually indicate something about how the users want to portray themselves. Secondly, the electronic address of a babbler often indicates where they are from, such

as a university, region, or country. Thirdly, most babblers have a user profile. Every registered user has the opportunity to write a five-line profile about themselves. This is often used to encourage other babblers to send a message, or x them, as it is called. In a 3D world, users can import or select a graphical image to represent themselves. This may be a butterfly, or even a photograph. Therefore, when I x someone for the first time I already have an image in my mind of the person I am contacting. The image of the other person is not based on physical appearance, but upon the limitations of the product that I consume, namely the Internet. I may not know their gender, age,

the Internet. You can log off or even put other babblers on a personalised enemies list (which is an electronic protection device that deflects messages from designated babblers). In fact, most online users are liberated from some of the emotional reactions they feel when meeting someone in real space.

I have not been babbling very long and still react emotionally to the screen much as I would to the physical presence of a person. Recently a fellow babbler taught me how to disable the world. This meant that no other online user could interrupt our conversation. Once we were

*'The image of the other person is not based on of the product that I consume,*

race, or class, which I normally determine by physical appearance, vocal intonations and non-verbal communication.

Many Internet buffs claim that this freedom from nationality, gender and so on will reduce or eliminate the xenophobia and prejudices that are so commonly based on physical differences. This lack of physical presence can also be very liberating for babblers. Users view Internet relationships as much less risky than real situations and can model many new behaviours without great harm to what they see as their real identity. Physical presence can often be closely linked with feelings of powerlessness and fear. There is no blushing or awkward silences on

disconnected he told me that we were isolated, much like floating in an ocean. While I understood that I was physically safe, emotionally I felt as if I had found myself in a dark alley with a stranger. In time I will become 'acclimatised' to Internet relationships and develop a new set of emotional responses in line with the code of the Internet.

When we develop relationships on the Internet we are not relating to the physical, but to the imagined physical. Our emotions are reactions to events and people in cyberspace. Therefore, Internet relationships are relationships of the mind and the imagination where identity and personality are more controllable than ever before.



As relationships are often an area where people feel most out of control, it is not surprising to hear about love affairs in cyberspace.

You could say that this is the ultimate method of safe sex. Within a few years most computers should have sound boards and even video cameras. It is likely that we will communicate through the Internet rather than the telephone (as opposed to the phone line). While video cameras on the Internet will re-establish physical presence in cyberspace, perhaps we will be able to distort or manipulate the image with programs like Photoshop.

## *physical appearance but upon the limitations namely the Internet'*

Whatever happens, relationships will be increasingly contained within the four sides of a screen. We will be relating in a screen-based culture.

There is no denying that the prospect of a world that is free from race and gender is exciting. However, a disturbing vision of the world also emerges. Computer relationships dissociate us from the physical world, reduce human differences and variety, and ultimately make us less capable of dealing with emotional highs and lows.

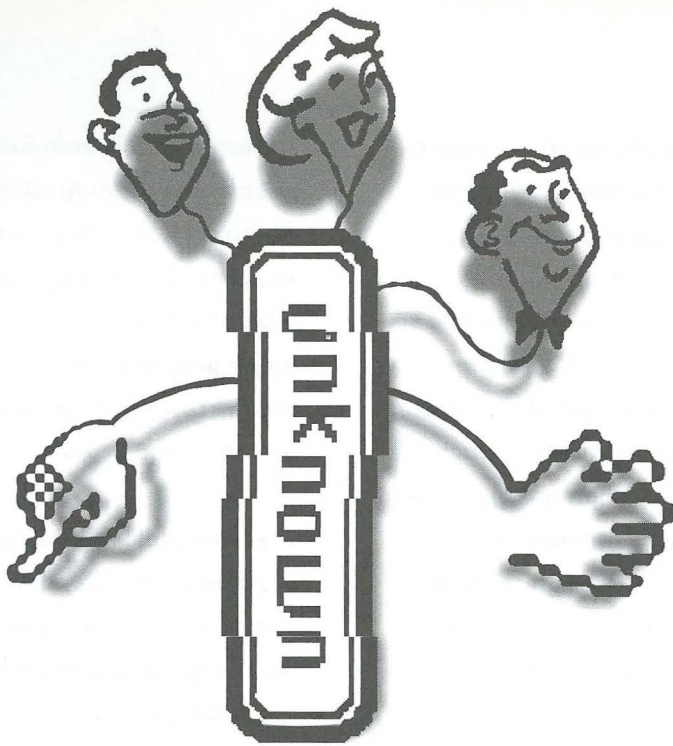
William Gibson, author of *Neuromancer* (the book that started the cyberpunk phenomenon), has a startling vision of the future as a software society.

The future that Gibson has created is an awful place where the only relief is in a world of virtual reality with the inhabitants being a society of escapists. Dr Timothy Leary, who has been researching virtual reality, contends that in the future people will not go to work. They will put on their virtual reality suit and meet their colleagues on virtual landscapes.

The same could go for personal relationships. This could mean that we all, at some time, become a computer image in someone else's mind. This is not to say that the Internet and technological relationships will replace physical relationships.

All that will happen is that technology will give us the option of communicating more efficiently with people than ever before. However, what is obvious is that our bodies, our minds, other people and the natural world will increasingly be defined in a technological way.

The questions raised by this vision of the future are many. Will we value efficiency over other qualities in communicating with others? How far are we prepared to go in dissociating ourselves from the physical in relationships in the future? And if we create a society in which the mind and the body are, in a way, separate, will we have to re-create our emotional, moral, ethical and legal frameworks? Most importantly, what will our



*'What will our image of human existence be?'*

image of human existence be? Will we use technology as a prosthetic extension of ourselves?

Last week, I saw a university student spend two hours babbling through the Internet to an online user who was physically sitting next to her in the computer lab. Last night I wiped an eyelash away from the cheek of the little girl I live with. Perhaps the most important question is how we will

reconcile or find the balance between these two images of relationship. I don't have the answer for that. What I do know is that when I sit down to babble or surf the net, I am faced with the ultimate act of imagination—the creation of the self. And although I am not unaware of the problems associated with Internet relationships, I am willing to participate in, utilise and attempt to understand the new technology in all its strengths and weaknesses. ✖



## Killa

Chris Newton

Must've been four foot long  
that goanna and me  
but both of us bigger in memory  
I was a slip of a thing  
he a strip of the sun  
hissed and held this city kid  
mesmerised

till the farmer's hand fired out  
swung him round like billy tea  
and brought him down steaming  
on a rock

it was his land afterall  
he said tossing string  
and guts to the sun

then a bushfly landed on the little heart  
not at all bothered by the beating  
which continued in the sun-dry grass



## Duck pond

Chris Newton

i dreamt of some ducks with their heads  
behind their wings dreaming  
of a still duck pond they were on  
so that another one of each grew  
down into the water and they were  
butterflies with ducks for wings  
until a hawk flew overhead  
frightening the ducks  
    who woke  
and killed all the butterflies  
by smashing one wing of each  
to pieces before realising  
the hawk was a scientologist  
in a light aircraft painted  
brown and they all calmed  
down and stuck their heads  
behind their wings again  
so that fragments of duck  
which weren't really duck  
again sought to be duck  
which were not.



*You meet*

Neil Boyack

**When she called, the thought of questioning her identity never crossed your mind, there was surfing on the television, pink flowers in the vase.** She said she was patient by nature but since she has found where you are she is very anxious to meet you. Said she would send you a photograph of herself for you to keep. Her voice was thin, had to fight the shifting static, seemed like she was calling from another state but it was only across town. She started to tell you how it all happened, like when she met Ray at Cindy's party, how Cindy was such a good friend of hers. She didn't tell you that Cindy was so drunk that she couldn't stand up, or that she screamed at Ray's friends to stop spitting on Cindy's back. There was Cindy, floral dress shining in fifty watt lounge room light as she crawled on hands and knees through the Carlton Draught long-necks towards the front door.

## her at a bar

She picked Cindy up dragged her to the front porch, a chair, a pillow. Heard this slow thunderstorm settling in.

Ray was older than her. She was fifteen at the time, had this straight red hair that curled at the shoulders, it did somethin' special to those sea blue eyes, had that fair skin although she tanned quite well. Had these new white boots. Ray had startled people with his different coloured eyes, he could be buying a newspaper or crossing a

street, no-one ever looked at him a second time, people thought he'd been in an accident or had a birth defect but his eyes were just different colours. By now he had this joint between yellow thumb and forefinger, and he cracked her perfect lips open with it, helped get the rise and fall of the stuff into her system. She felt his mechanic hands massage the back of her neck, felt the cool doorway on her back as she melted into it, let the knot in her stomach go wherever it wanted to. And Ray was leaning in over the top of her, letting her finish off the last of his warm beer, smelling her hair by this time, sucking back her bubble gum perfume. And it was August '66 as Ray ran his hands through his greasy hair then cupped her little breasts, her head spinnin' with a little heaven as they kissed, took short steps towards the torn green couch as the mornin' sun was breakin', light was warming the roof tiles, the

tops of the pine trees in the front yard. Ray was on top of her now, kissed her neck until she was as hot as hell. And she opened her dreamy eyes and looked down to her right, where she saw scattered long-neck beer bottles, which glittered in cracks of early morning light that came through the curtains, looked back to see Ray's eyes squeezed closed behind the hair that hung over his face, short breaths through the hair as he held himself up above her, and she looked back to her right, a yellow lamp in front of a waist-high bookshelf.



She went on to tell you that a couple of months after she had you, she met Cyrus. He was a racing car driver from Florida. Said he was goin' to take her back to the States to live. They were married late in the year they met and seven months after that she had Marie. That same year Cyrus died in a car accident. He was dragging this GT Falcon from a set of lights over there in Braybrook. Orange streetlights reflect off a wet road. GT Falcon had its Koocaratcha air horn blowing as his Mustang slid through an oily puddle, he was an experienced driver but the road was steaming from the midnight summer storm, slid sideways, hands turning wheel hard right, hit one of those top heavy power poles flush on the driver's side. She started to cry when she was telling you this, had to put the phone down, push the hair away from her face, back of her hand wiped red cheeks. Surfing was still on the television, riders finding flat surf difficult. She told you it wasn't the crash that killed him it was the fire. She went on and wished you well and said that the last thing she wanted was to be unwelcome in your life, asked you if you could maybe meet her somewhere.

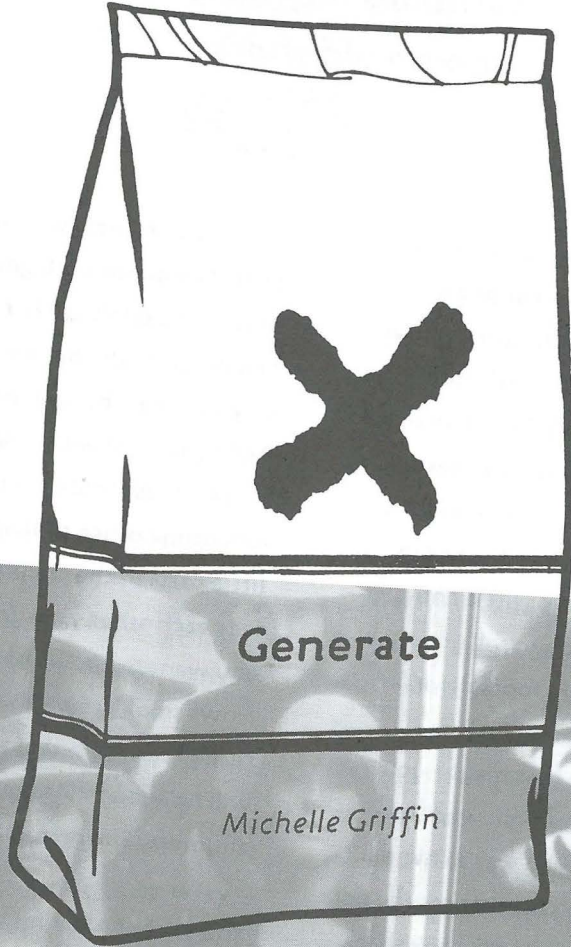
So you meet her in a bar called *the Golden Eagle*, a little street in the city, mid morning, sunny Monday. Your shadow appears on the green carpet through the glass doors, the woman at the bar, looks at a clock, swings her chair to face you, your eyes still adjusting from the heavy change in light, and then you see her, your mother there to the left, the woman at the bar holding the pink flowers out to you. She is younger than you imagined, bottle blonde, tan face, green on her eyelids. Ink dots in the crows feet either side of her eyes. She hands you the pink flowers, keeping it all as low key as possible, trying not to break up. You see the reflection of a chandelier in her eyes, see yourself. After about ten minutes you say, I'm here in a quiet voice and she tells herself that you got her eyes, tells herself she better have a cigarette. Keeps lookin' you up and down, keeps touching your hand. You don't say much to her, just look at the curves in her face, the crimps, the dips. She has stunning wrinkled lips, they address her cigarette without strain, the wrinkles like scars on an old shark. Those lips have slowly kissed the stomachs of men, thrown kisses across old town halls, those lips have been currency.

*She has stunning  
wrinkled lips, they  
address her cigarette  
without strain, the  
wrinkles like scars  
on an old shark*

She tells you about where she lives in Newport now, just over the Westgate, near the power station. Tells you about Dave, her husband of five years. Says that Dave's quiet, keeps to himself, smokes pot watching low volume TV, got married in their backyard, but the actual service was moved into the kitchen due to the poor weather. In the video of the wedding you can hear a tap dripping, in the video she throws a little bouquet to the left of screen. She goes on to tell you that she has a cousin who played VFL football for Carlton, imported from Western Australia, nicknamed the Buzz, thought that maybe you might have seen him play if you followed the game. Says she has an Uncle who was a channel seven football commentator, says that maybe you heard his voice peak when Jesaulenko took that mark over Jenkins in the '70 Grand Final, you got the same blood as them she says.

She mentions her twin sisters, died soon after birth. She doesn't tell you she fights when she drinks. You don't tell her you find her attractive. She doesn't tell you she has breast cancer. You don't tell her that you never really thought of her. And by this time it's been a couple of hours, there's a few more people in the bar now, the lunchtime office swillers; they have their own little parts of the circular bar to lean on, they all face each other. And you ask about Ray, what do you want to know she says lighting a cigarette; blows smoke towards the roof, says she didn't really know him that well, says it as though that will be enough for you, as if you won't ask anymore. She recrosses her legs.

You ask her what his surname was, she says again, she didn't really know him that well. She looks down at the ashtray under the bar, next to her feet, throws her half smoked cigarette, looks up at you, says he doesn't really know about you. ❧

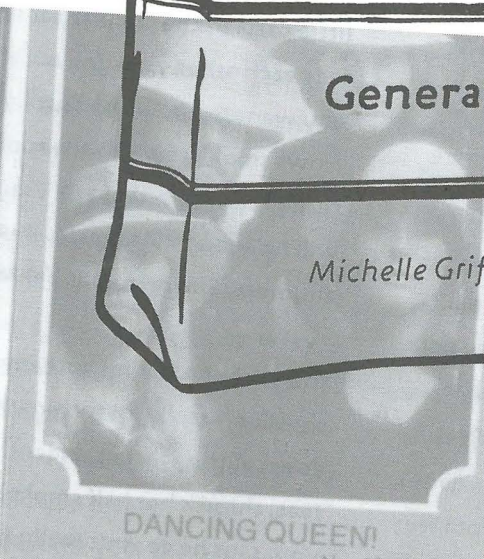


Generate

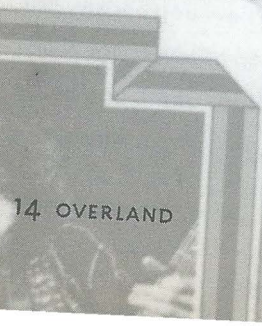
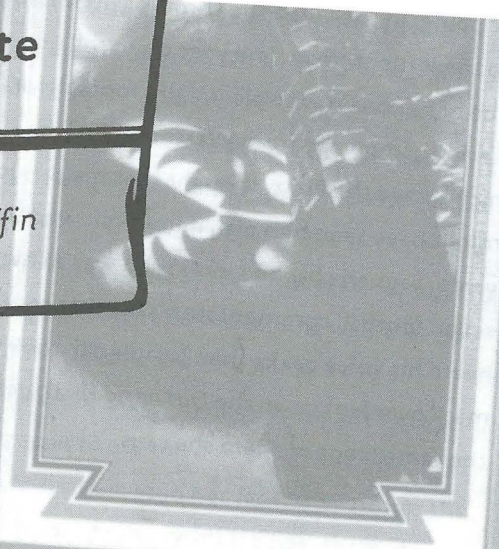
Michelle Griffin



35



DANCING QUEEN!  
No. 19 of 72A



14 OVERLAND



BAND  
No. 48 of 72 B





Here are 26 letters of the alphabet - go write a novel.

And so we did, cruising across the keyboards at full speed, like kids behind the wheel of their first car. How hard could it be? we thought, enrolling in the many creative writing courses that have sprung up around the country, buying notebooks, positioning the desk to catch the sunlight, speaking at spoken word performances, talking up our novels.

In our diaries, we noted the closing dates for the *Vogel*, the *Angus & Robertson*. We sent off sections of our works in progress to *Picador New Writing* and *Republica* and *Overland*. And they wanted us, finally, they wanted the voice of youth. For too long, the AusLit shelf in the local bookstore had been lined with the morbid interior novels about the lost loves of tenured academics.

Now we are not the TV generation anymore, we are a target market. The paperbacks amongst the local new releases look like the cover art of alternative CDs. The author snaps are shabby, blurry but undeniably 'youf'. Flipping to the author bios, you find they were born so recently, it's amazing their mama lets them

### What is a gen-x novel?

*It isn't just a novel written by somebody under 30.*

*It's so much more complicated than that.*

use such rude words. 1972? How could I read a book by someone born in 1972? Hope I write before I get old. While mainstream publishing is still a harder gig to crack than any record deal, there are more openings today for younger writers than we have seen before. The publishers want manuscripts that signpost themselves as products of generation x. There are criteria, and it's not just a certified birth certificate.

What is a gen-x novel? It isn't just a novel written by somebody under 30. It's so much more complicated than that.

Look at the recent winners of the Vogel Award for a first novel written by somebody under the age of 35. It's been won by twentysomethings all this decade, but their images could not be more different. In 1990, Gillian Mears won with *The Mint Lawn*, a gorgeous story of a bored young wife, her enmeshed family life and her small country town. It was followed by Andrew McGahan's *Praise*, a rapidfire spruik through a Brisbane bedsit love affair, ripe with bad sex, hard drugs and good jokes. Then Fotini Epanomitis' take on Greek magical realism, a little earthier than your average Latin American version, but considerably more ethereal than McGahan. Then, as we all know, came Helen Darville's *The Hand That Signed The Paper*, and we need not précis its contents again. Poor Darren Williams' sweet country novel *Swimming in Silk* was

swallowed whole in the Demidenko farrago, but I believe the next, a down-and-out-in Melbourne tale, returns us squarely to the youth market.

Like anything written in a western democracy in the late 20th century, all these writers are frank about sex and cynical about power. But only the urban nihilism of McGahan got the gen-x gong. Was it his hair? Or the sound track of alternative songs racing through the book? Or is it true that today's 'youf' reader responds more immediately to the deadpan first person voice than any attempt to get arty?

There is one line of thinking that says the whole youth-gen-x-grunge genre thing is a media-manufactured beat-up, and there is nothing in common between the authors of various Under 30s novels and short stories out there.

Oh no, I'm afraid not. You can so make generalities about this genre. It can be identified in a line-up.



One writer told me the other day that he was lucky, for he  
Ah, yeah, he had.

The novels and anthologies that do huddle together, however reluctantly, under the gen-x banner, have that deadpan voice in common, as if they were all narrated by *Talking Heads*' frontman David Byrne. Even the third person blandishments of Edward Berridge in *The Lives of The Saints* have that flat factual acrylic surface, like pop art in print. Some of the under-30s novels are in fact written by authors at the far end of generation x, writers in their mid to late 30s, people who saw the *Boys Next Door* perform, even people who can remember the dismissal. Consider Leonie Stevens (b.1962) and her first novel *Nature Strip*.

Shareflattening. Drugs. First relationships. First person. Familial alienation. Urban tribalism. Check it out, it's like a blueprint for the new gen-x novel, right down to the superb Wakefield Press cover art, a gorgeous streak of negative imagery that should be a poster on every wall.

There's also Kathleen Stewart, the occasional rock singer who wrote two extremely clipped and wall-eyed accounts of suburban desolation - *Louis*. *A Normal Novel*, and *Spilt Milk*. Both these stories fit into the gen-x genre more than that of Gillian Mears, who stuffs every sentence in every paragraph with literary symbols, and lavishes her landscapes with scientific detail. She, too, gives her attention to sex and violence, or even the two combined, but - important difference - her characters and readers get to enjoy the sex. It's really been neglected in literature recently as a source of enjoyment. While I find some of her literary embroidery



extremely tedious, her obsessive descriptions of breasts and thighs and faces are some of the most erotic in the country, with twice the appeal of anything Jeanette Winterson tried to pull off in *Written On The Body*.

Don't get me wrong. We needed this genre to happen. Australian literary culture was suffocating under the weight of weighty weltschmerz metaphors. We needed some kind of impetus to drag fiction into the present tense and shove it through the doors of inner city tenements. It needed a little loud music to blast through the dusty paragraphs just as badly as progrock needed punk back in the long ago dreamtime of our aunts, uncles and older brothers. Trouble is, like punk, pop-art present-tense nihilism is a concept that exhausts itself too quickly. Where do you go from going nowhere?

And too many younger writers are starting to sound like they've swallowed the genre whole, like they know what they're supposed to write. Their personal voices may be warm and funny, but the irony-by-numbers is heavy-handed or forced. The action may be lively and realistic, but the host of characters are rolled out like some grunge version of *Seinfeld*, quirk by quirk.

*had found his writing voice at the age of 21.*

*His 21 year old writing voice.*

And the rage may be genuine, but like any rant, it begins to whine somewhat somewhere after the first 100 pages. Like anything, a youth novel has gotta move on, at least rhythmically, and a youth author has gotta grow, at least in skill.

One writer told me the other day that he was lucky, for he had found his writing voice at the age of 21. Ah yeah, he had. His 21 year old writing voice. Unless we wrap ourselves in some dope-denial haze, our experiences will change what we have to say as we make our way.

Every bookseller can tell you the holy trinity of writers bought by aspiring young authors – Kerouac, Burroughs, Bukowski. And in too many 'youth' novels, the signposts all point back to these beat-up beat guys and their disciples. They were the masters, sure, but there are others, too, from all sorts of cultures and creative urges, even if they weren't groovy enough to be marketed by Hollywood, Gap Clothing and Nike, as these three were.

Yes, it's good to be part of the market. But it's not enough. Beware your own market and be suspicious of your influences. Write what you know, but don't believe them when they suggest drugs and sex and rock'n'roll are all you know. ❌





# My Cousin Jean

*Annamarie Jagose*

Jean is not really my cousin although I call her that. I often introduce her to people as *my cousin Jean*, that title enabling strangers to imagine a closeness, a kinship, between us when its proper purpose is to draw between us the unbreachable line of family. In the last twelve years, I fancy we have grown to look like each other, not as closely as if we were indeed cousins but there are increasingly those subtle, laughable resemblances often observed between pet and owner. We have a kind of mutual gingeriness and our faces seem to be getting older in similar ways, chins rather than corners of the eyes, hairlines receding in the same corrugations. Jean has a way of hunching her shoulders against

laughter that I recognise as my own and sometimes I catch myself shaking my head in abrupt jerks, as if clearing the ear canal of water, which Jean does if agitated. I can't remember this gesture of hers before the accident or is it that she was never agitated then? Jean's accident is a horrible event which is impossible to imagine living without. It seems as if she should look different, have some cross-hatched scar or limp, but she is as she always was, Jean, Jean, my cousin Jean.

After her accident, Jean used to write me wild letters, broken in places by what I was still thinking of as *Jean's real voice*. I had visited her in hospital, of course, and seen the change in her. This was shocking enough but did not prepare me for the possibility of her real voice coming back at me in remnants with the alienated edge of a taped message. There was something revolting in this recognition, like seeing in vomit bits of your last meal. Her mother would often say, "Michael still visits, you know. He's in every day unless he has cricket practice." Jean's visitors passed the message back to me. "Her mother's very taken with you. She says how nice it is that you visit." I knew though that Jean's mother, sitting for ten hours at a stretch by the hospital bed, was alarmed by what her daughter had become, her flesh yellowed and wasted, trellised with lattices of wire in places, in others bursting like swollen blood plums around its stitches. Bedside, the clock was her only calendar. Days of the week lost their value, boiled down to a simpler timetable of mornings and afternoons, days and nights. She never grew used to the nurses coming and going

in shifts, relentlessly cheerful, their mouths full of Jean's name, *Hello, Jean, I'll just plump that pillow, Jean, we're not drinking as much as we could be, my sister's got a cat called Jean*, as if the word held a private store of pleasure for them, as if they had a better grasp of her daughter than she did. She was not reassured by the shrewd calculations that held Jean at their centre, fluids in and out, blood pressure, heart rate. She valued my daily visits not for what they said of me or even the distraction they offered but for the way in which they maintained the fiction of Jean, as if Jean's continuity hung on the thread of my ceaseless devotion.

Jean's mother and I had some absurd conversations that summer. Whenever I arrived, she would give up her chair on the window side of the bed for me and take the identical chair on the other side.

"Call me Gladys, Michael. Please." The air hung thick with our names, an inoculation perhaps against the rollcall of *Jean, Jean, Jean*. This was two or three days after the accident. To call Jean's mother Gladys seemed a liberty I was not prepared to take but I smiled and nodded a deferential politeness that comes easily enough in hospital wards. "Thank you, thank you," I might have said, acknowledging the gesture with no intention of taking up its invitation, as you accept a cigar from a new father who has forgotten for the moment that you never smoke. "How is she today?" I could not stop myself asking this question although my ears were always stopped with embarrassment by the time I had the last word

*On the front was a picture  
of a cat wearing a jaunty  
Father Christmas hat*

out. Jean's mother would say "Not bad. Not bad" or, "She's had a quiet night." Only once did she look at Jean, lying as I had left her the day before, point at her as if words were not fine enough to catch at the brutal unchangingness of her condition and weep the largest tears I had ever seen. I didn't know what to do. I wanted then to call her Gladys, to have the word between us as a warmth, put my hand to her shoulder, perhaps even arms about her neck, but coming around to her side of the bed upset our balance. As if we were ruled by magnetic forces that held us at a close but fixed distance from each other, she understood me to be offering her my chair under the window and took my place there until the end of my visit.

"No cricket today?" "Wednesday," I would say or, "It looked like rain." We kept up a little patter between us as if we were auditioning for parts as extras in a hospital drama. We worked through a range of hand gestures, facial expressions and – not too often – risked laughter of an inoffensive kind. "Jean had a card from Herbert today." "Herbert?" Jean's mother caught at my question as if it were a dropped stitch, wound a couple of loops around it and we continued, line by line, like a knitting machine. "I don't know if Jean ever

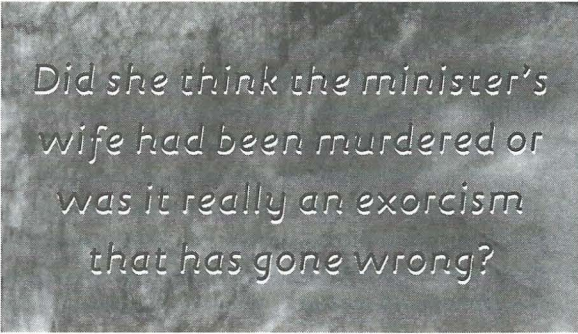
spoke of him to you. He was our neighbour when Jean was younger but his family shifted back home, oh, some years ago. He's been good about keeping in touch." Jean's mother passed the card across the bed. On the front was a picture of a cat wearing a jaunty Father Christmas hat and a collar made of holly or mistletoe, I have never known the difference. Its eyes were slightly crossed. The note on the back said that it was painted by a man with leprosy who holds the paintbrush between his toes. I wondered if the cat's cross-eyes were a consequence of the limitations of this technique or a political statement. This was not the sort of conversation I could imagine having with Jean's mother.

"You can read it, if you like," she said now. "He's a very dear friend." Herbert's handwriting was large and his lines sloped down to the bottom of the card as if they could not wait to get there. *Dear Jeanie*, he wrote, *I heard that you are not well. Ralph and Posie have gone away to camp this summer. Maybe I'll be up your way between Christmas and New Year. Get better soon. Love Herb.* There were some kisses under Herbert's signature, I can't remember how many exactly but enough to convince me that Herbert's lips had never touched Jean's. I could almost wish, Herbert's card in hand, that he had kissed her, that it had been him who was allowed to push his hand under Jean's shirt, undo the button of her jeans and feel where the dip of her flat belly ended in hair. Then it could be him sitting here every afternoon with Jean's mother, him going home to dream of Jean waking at last, her lips opening but her mouth barricaded by the white chalkiness of

cuttlefish shell, the wet gleam of some impossible bone. I don't know what difference I thought it would have made but I caught myself thinking *Thank God we didn't sleep together*, under the cradle which kept the sheets from touching her, Jean's body bruised and split as if we had already done something much worse. "A card is such a nice way to remember someone, don't you think?" Jean's mother was fussing inside the drawers of the bedside locker. "We used to hang them all on a string over the fireplace at Christmas time."

In the mornings I would read the newspaper for topics that I could raise with Jean's mother that afternoon. Did she think the minister's wife had been murdered or was it really an exorcism that had gone wrong? Who would win the by-election? The latest model Brookdale pie-maker was being recalled because of its association with a string of kitchen fires. These preparations reminded me of the days when Madame de Groot would test our class's conversational French. "It is a beautiful day," Madame would say in French, and so a creaking exchange would begin. "Yes, madame, that is so," or more ambitiously, "The prediction for tomorrow is also fair." Jean's mother and I went back and forth with the good intentions and thick tongues of people speaking a new language. If we were earnest, it was because, when conversation between us faltered, we would have to speak to Jean.

I don't know whether Jean's mother spoke to her when I wasn't there or even whether I would have been able to without anyone else listening, but the prospect floated between us like bilge.



*Did she think the minister's wife had been murdered or was it really an exorcism that has gone wrong?*

In our first week, a nurse had come in to turn Jean and, hearing us address each other across the bed, said "But you must speak to Jean. For all we know she's listening to everything we say and when you're good and ready, you'll tell us all about it, won't you Jean?" Jean's mother looked at Jean's face on the pillow, first facing the door, then the window, as she was turned, as if she expected an immediate answer. The nurse kept up her chatter. She had a voice like a tinfoil plate. "I'll tell you, I wouldn't mind a lie down in that bed of yours, Jean. I could hardly get up this morning, the kids kept me up that much in the night, and then the car wouldn't start. It's December 12, did you know that Jean? December 12, nearly Christmas. I've turned you now and I'll be back in a couple of hours to do you once more before I go off. You've got a couple of visitors here and I shouldn't wonder they'll be wanting to tell you about this and that. I'll be seeing you." She gave the two of us a hard little nod at the door, eyebrows raised, as if cueing us in and then she was down the corridor, her shoes squeaking away to nothing.

"Well." Jean's mother gave me a nervous smile. "Jean." She was speaking too loud as if Jean's coma were a long tunnel at the end of which the old,





familiar Jean lived, ears straining for just such a moment. "Michael and I are here. Just the two of us, the three of us, that is, the two of us and you." She reminded me of my own mother on an international toll call, reciting the names of everyone present as if it were some historic occasion and asking what time it was in that other place, something she had already worked out in order to make the call. "Do you want to say something?" Jean's mother whispered to me. I shook my head in a way that managed to suggest manners, her own precedence in these matters. "You're in hospital, Jean. That's why there are all these nurses. You had an accident. You were knocked off your bike but you're going to be alright." "Yes, Jean, that is so." Jean's mother looked gratefully at me across the bed.

Nobody saw Jean's accident. She was riding along Garton Street when a car hit her. The driver didn't stop or report the accident despite police requests on local television news for him to "come forward". That was how they phrased it. "We urge the driver that it is not too late, even at this stage, for him to come forward." I asked one of the policemen how they knew it was a man. "It's almost always men." He shook his head in sorrow, eyes shut. "Hit and runs, the psychological profile, they're nearly always men." He said *men* in such a confiding manner that I thought he might have me pegged for a suspect. All the police movies I had ever seen were coming back at me in chunks: *have me pegged, alibi, come forward*. "It could even be a manslaughter charge we're going up against." When the policeman took his hat off, I saw he was probably not much older than me.

Jean's bicycle – Jean too, I suppose – had been thrown clear of the road. I half expected to find a chalk outline of her lying spread-eagled on the nature strip. The accident site had been roped off with orange plastic ribbons that read *Hazard. Chemical Spill*. My policeman lifted a section of the ribbon so he could get under it. "We're out of the ones that say 'Accident'." He gave a half-shrug, as if all these things were part of the same problem. "We're having some new ones made up." Some car paint had been scraped off what was left of Jean's bicycle and sent for testing. Some nights later, I saw the policeman on television again saying that they were interested in questioning anyone who drove a metallic red car that had needed panel-beating recently.

I hadn't seen Jean that day. She wasn't coming to see me either. Garton Street is nowhere near my place. I don't know why I would mention that. It made sitting across from Jean's mother easier. It wasn't exactly my innocence that was being established but it was something close enough to be mistaken for that thing. Like being glad that we had never slept together, I was relieved that Jean had not been en route to see me. Jean's mother had to sit with her daughter day after day but I was there because I chose to be, because I was a decent person. The only indecent thing about me was the store I laid by my decency. Sitting every afternoon between her and the hospital window, I was allowed to stand clear from the live bomb that Jean's body had turned out to be. "No cricket today?" "It looked like rain." Jean said nothing. She lay between us like a kitten with its eyes put out, like a ouija board. ❌

HE STATE OF  
AFFAIRS, WILLIAM! NO  
MORE POCKET MONEY  
UNTIL YOUR CONDUCT  
IMPROVES!

ENTERED  
MY DREAMS  
TODAY!

HE IS UTTERLY LAZY, AND  
THE BIGGEST DUNCE IN THE  
SCHOOL! I AM ALWAYS  
HAVING TO CANS HIM FOR  
HIS HOPELESS ARITHMETIC!

HE ONLY  
FIRST IN THE

LAST  
ON!

A FINE STATE OF  
AFFAIRS, WILLIAM! NO  
MORE POCKET MONEY  
UNTIL YOUR CONDUCT  
IMPROVES!

I HATE ARITHMETIC!  
YAKOO!

HE ONLY LAZY  
BUT DUNCE  
AS WELL

I AM AFRAID YOUR LAD WILL NEVER WIN  
A PLACE IN THE BROTHERS' GALLERY OF  
HEROES, MR. BUNTER! THESE FINE FELLOWS  
ALL GREW UP ON OUR FAMOUS RICE-  
PUDDING, YOU KNOW!

SPOKEN WORD

- towards an aesthetic, maybe

HE TABLE MANNERS ARE  
QUITE SUCKING!

BOY! GOTTEN  
RICE-PUDDING FOR  
DINNER AGAIN! I  
HATE THE HORRIBLE  
STUFF!

Peter Salmon



What is important – as Walter Benjamin argued concerning visual art and the birth of photography and the cinema – is not whether these new media are to be considered ‘Art’ or not, but how the new mediums *change* ‘Art’. How, for instance, they expose and challenge such things as the cultural and artistic assumptions, the economic forces, the ‘ways of seeing’ which shaped previous media, in this case the novel, and how they were, in turn, shaped by it. How, also, the new media evolve from the previous *episteme*, and how they break with it. And, finally, how the new media relate to the new *episteme*, that is, how the dialectic between each medium and the *episteme* is played out.

**A spectre is haunting the novel.** Literature is moving away from the book. Through new media such as the Internet, CD-ROM, and spoken word (as well as older media such as television, cinema, and performance poetry) the adequacy of the printed text as a literary vehicle is being challenged. It is a process which is causing considerable consternation among those who have come to regard the book as the exemplar of the literary space, and there has been much debate concerning the legitimacy and status of the new media – whether works on the Internet can be considered literature which is to ask if they can be considered ART. These debates will no doubt continue for some time, and be regarded as suitably quaint in the not too distant future.

This process has begun in the areas of new technology, but I would like to concentrate on the explosion of interest which has occurred in the area of spoken word, an art form which consistently draws large crowds in Melbourne, and which is being found in an increasing number of venues. While drawing heavily on Melbourne’s strong tradition of performance poetry (as well as a number of other literary precursors), spoken word differs in important ways, and we should be wary of any act of conflation which would ignore these differences. As I will argue, the spoken word performer, and the spoken word audience, have a different set of assumptions, a different set of questions, works within a different epistemological framework than previously. And these differences are not merely coincidental to the new medium (no art is ever coincidental with its medium), but are both consanguineous with, and inherent in, the new medium.

## A bundle of words

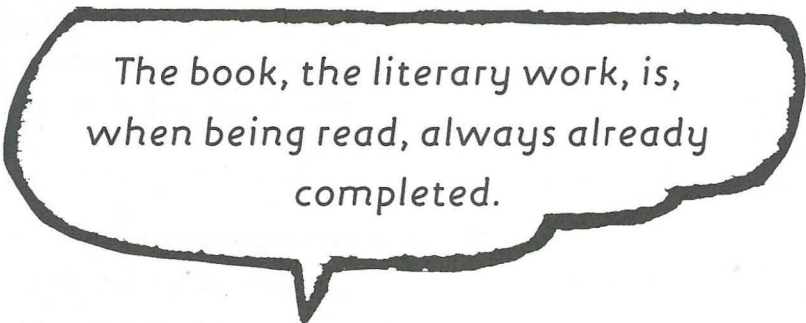
The paradigmatic literary space of the twentieth century is the book magazine periodical. It has been a useful and enduring space, evolving through a series of concatenations to keep itself contemporary – changes in style, from the classical novel of the days of steam, to the modernist novel of the motor car and self doubt, and then to the post modernist of the television, of advertising, of the three minute song. It has functioned as an object of beauty (the expensive hardcover) and of utility (the cheap paperback). It has moved from the raised leather cover to the plain Penguin, from the plain Penguin to the raised letters of the cinema hoarding. In short, it has adapted itself in form and content to the social, political and epistemological concerns of the day, and will no doubt continue to do so.

I would like, however, to concentrate on a constant of the book – the absence of the writer – through which I hope to draw out a number of distinctions between the book and spoken word. And then between spoken word and performance poetry, Beat poetry, and Dadaism.

## The absence of the artist

The absence of the artist has functioned in the traditional aesthetics of literature (as well as visual art, and so on) in a number of ways – none of them purely serendipitous. Two such functions of the absence of the writer present themselves immediately.

Firstly, the absence of the writer serves to author-ize the work. The book, the literary work, is, when being read, always already completed. Always already whole. Always already closed.



*The book, the literary work, is,  
when being read, always already  
completed.*

The **act of creation** is finished, there can be no slippage, no spillage, nothing can be added or taken away without undermining the integrity of the text, without challenging our fetishization of the artwork as divine creation, the cultic object. We can point at this thing and say “Here is a new book by X”, or “There is an old poem by Y”. The text has borders, the book has a cover

THERE CAN BE NO INTERRUPTION

there can be no interruption, and therefore any interpretation can only be subsequent and supplementary to the work, more or less true.



Many of the devices of the post modern novel, reacting against this limitation (which only becomes obvious with modernism, and painfully obvious with post modernism), have attempted to open up the work - by moving away from the linear narrative (which is always Hegelian), the stable (and therefore unquestionable) protagonist, the stable (and therefore unquestionable) authorial voice, etcetera, etcetera. These manoeuvres have been more or less successful, as have the critiques of literature by proponents of reader response theory, which have sought to privilege the participation of the reader in the work as much as that of the writer, and occasionally more. And yet the book remains whole, a commodity bought in a sealed package, read from page 1 to page 156, and then carried to a friend, stored on a shelf, or swapped for a new one. The form of the book, as a closed literary space, strives toward closure.

A second function of the absence of the author we might call a mythological function. The absence of the author introduces and legitimises the notion of the author as God. The author is unseen and therefore speaks from without. S/he is the great observer and also the great creator. S/he has an intention, which may or may not be fulfilled. In the absence of the writer, his or her corporeality is effaced, his or her position within the political and the social is erased, and the material

conditions of the work's production become hidden and thus mysterious (the birth of the muse). As Barthes has argued,<sup>1</sup> in their absence we become fascinated by the personality of the writer - the writer's personality becomes a cultic symbol (The Author) - it suffers for its art, is rewarded by inspiration etcetera. We devour literary biographies (often instead of reading their subjects), which seek to humanise the writer and in so doing expose the assumption of otherness of

*The absence of the author introduces and legitimises the notion of the author as God.*

this literary creature. We stare at the back cover photographs on *Picadors*, looking for the mark left by the touch of the divine.

The cultic nature of the artwork is also reiterated by this so the work becomes the rarefied creation of the

writer. In combination then, the closure of the artwork and the deification of the artist serve to create what we might call an "aesthetics of the transcendental" - art as otherworldly, with, as is the habit of transcendents, a direct access to the True, to the Quintessential (this being the dream of the romantics, and the sneaking suspicion - which is to say the hidden assumption - of many since). Moreover, these structures serve to legitimise notions of wholeness - the artist and the work of the artist are both whole, complete, indisputable.

**An aside**

Importantly, while this aesthetic has served to glorify art, it is only within such a transcendental

aesthetic that we can conceive of art as somehow separate from worldly concerns. It is only within such an aesthetic, therefore, that we can conceive of the **Death of Art**.

### Spoken word

Spoken word directly challenges this transcendental aesthetic by the simplest of means – the writer is always physically present. As opposed to the novel, the writer speaks from a position in-the-world (on-the-stage, under-the-spotlight), from a point of origin (sociological, ideological, idiolectal). The co-dependants – transcendental and the whole – are here directly challenged.

A useful distinction between the traditional aesthetic of literature and that which is made possible by the presence of the writer is M. M. Bakhtin's distinction between the monologic and the dialogic.<sup>2</sup> Both the book and the spoken word performance are predicated on language. Bakhtin represents a radical shift in our understanding of what language is, and how it works. Bakhtin challenges traditional epistemologies of language (and therefore the language games such as aesthetics and philosophy) where they are based on an assumption that language strives towards completeness and towards truth, and that the world therefore is completely representable in language. Excuse me while I roll a cigarette. The effects of this theory of language is twofold; on the one hand it presupposes "a unity of language (in the sense of a system of general normative forms)", and on the other "the unity of an individual person realising themselves in this language".<sup>3</sup>

Bakhtin terms such an epistemology of language monologic – utterances as a discrete series of signifiers referring to a discrete series of signifieds, spoken by a discrete series of individuals. CLOSURE CLOSURE CLOSURE CLOSURE. Bakhtin argues that language does not function this way, is not *mono*-logic, but is instead *dia*-logic. Far from being a unified system of signs, language is always already a dialogue – a dialogue with the language of others (who respond, are silent, interrupt) and with itself (clashing idiolects, fields of knowledge, shifts in meaning and emphasis). We might describe the former as inter-textual (the incompleteness of the utterance) and the latter as intra-textual (the incompleteness of language). Dialogic language – i.e. language – does not move toward a completed state, it just moves – as a whole (its frames of reference change, its borders are permeable), and in its use. Any utterance presupposes the possibility of a response. Any individual presupposes the possibility of an interlocutor. Therefore an utterance cannot be closed, cannot contain all meaning, nor can it take place in isolation. Any notion of language that strives toward completeness, wholeness, closure, denies the dialogic nature of language, and the mutual dependence of its speakers.

The traditional aesthetic of literature does exactly this. The novel, in its form, strives toward closure. Response is unnecessary, supplementary in the creation of the text (response remains reception, rather than conversation). A tripartite artistic structure is set up by this aesthetic, writer/text/reader, in which any of the terms could



conceivably exist without the others (much ink has been spilled trying to get around precisely this problem - including reader response, which is merely a shift in emphasis, from writer to reader, which leaves the structure in place).

As well, a special relationship between the writer and the text becomes established, an erotic, where the writer, confident of the expressive powers of language, has, in Bakhtin's words, an "unmediated power to assign meaning", as a "pure and direct expression of his own intention". The writer writes "without quotation marks".<sup>4</sup>

As we have come to recognise the parochialism of particular epistemes, the polysemous nature of human interaction, the constructedness of the True (as well as metanarrational devices such as ART and AESTHETICS), and so forth, notions of unity have been radically deconstructed. Spoken word is implicated in this deconstruction.

### **Pull up a chair**

The spoken word performer is always present in the performance. S/he speaks. Absence is impossible, the artwork cannot be viewed as closed. One cannot feel the back cover when viewing the performance. The performer enters into the intra- and inter- textual nature of the dialogic of language. Those in attendance, be they

on stage or off are, dialogically, implicated - are co-participants. Through this, the performance moves forward, as dialogue moves forward. Dialogue is predicated on a desire for understanding, dialogue continues until understanding is reached, and understanding is never reached for language is dialogic. Closure, therefore, is always deferred.

*Dialogue is predicated on a desire for understanding*

### **"Monogamy sucks" <sup>5</sup>**

Where the poet had an unmediated, one might say monogamous relationship, with their language, with their audience (reading as a private experience), the spoken word performer is a literary polygamist, with many partners, each given due privilege. The saxophone drowns out a sentence. The audience coughs. Computer projections are overlaid on the performers. The flautist waits. Here is a quote from a film, there a nod to the Beats. The form of the performance dictates the dialogic relationship, the dialogic relationship dictates the form of the performance.

(The audience is an important dialogic partner here. We should not, however, mistake the influence of the audience for, for instance, "heckling", which is predicated on the tripartite writer/text/reader structure, the art work being forcibly disrupted by a process of interjection. The point is that the work is constructed in the

awareness of its dialogue with the audience, with the parochialism of the crowd, with its politics, and so forth. In this way we might draw a parallel between the spoken word audience and the audience dreamed of by Brecht – interrogative, questioning, concerned, drinking and/or smoking. The correct audience response to bad poetry is to say to your neighbour “This is boring.” In spoken word one says “This is shit.”)

In its openness, the spoken word piece, as opposed to the written word, is created in its performance, is created dialogically. It is not merely a text based art form transferred to a different medium.<sup>6</sup>

We should not, therefore, mistake spoken word for merely word that is spoken (even if the performance involves only words, even if they are only spoken). As long as the relationship between the writer and the words and between the words and the audience, remains monogamous, the performance is not spoken word. The monogamous performance can only be exhibitionism (in the case of performance poetry) or voyeurism (as in the reading – the poet hidden coyly behind lectern or desk, drinking rapidly a glass of water).<sup>7</sup>

The second presupposition of the monologic utterance – the unity of the speaker – is also called

into question in spoken word – the unity of the artist in particular. Again, the dialogical construction of the work undermines the monogamy of utterance – the writer is forced to re-position themselves within the spoken word conversation. The spoken word writer has no access to soliloquy or Truth.

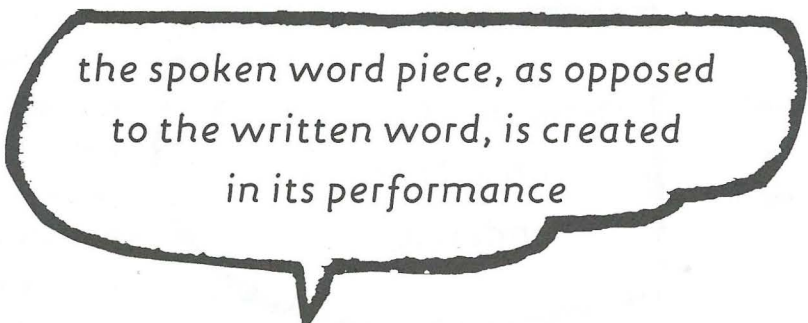
Thus, by the physical presence of the writer, and by the construction of the work in performance,

the transcendental notion of the writer is challenged, that is, it is demythologised.

The writer puts

down his or her drink, emerges from the audience, performs, returns to the audience, and attempts to scam a cigarette off any would-be acolytes. Audience members, during open mike sections, put down their drink and follow the same process. The distancing of the artist, and therefore the art, does not occur as it has traditionally.

(Dick Higgins, the fluxus artist, further deconstructs the notion of the unified artist, by acknowledging that artists tend to move away from having a specialised discipline – X is a writer, Y plays guitar and so on – by moving between different disciplines, thus prising apart the artist/art form nexus, a nexus which re-legitimises the unity of the artist and the work).<sup>8</sup>



*the spoken word piece, as opposed to the written word, is created in its performance*





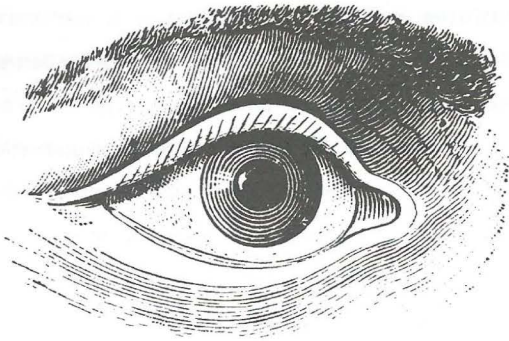
Spoken word shifts from performance poetry, Beat poetry, and traditional oral poetry insofar as it challenges the monologism of these forms. It is also different from Dadaist work, and 1960s avant-garde 'happenings' insofar as it refuses to reduce words to a purely acoustic or phatic function.

These forms dragged language out of its dialogic function, and much of their use of words can be seen as a reaction against monologism without a recognition of dialogism.

Spoken word, then, while remaining an art form within a literary tradition, is a product of the realisation of the dialogic nature of language. Any aesthetics which we propose for spoken word must be aware of this new *episteme*, and must therefore seek to overcome the writer/text/author structure, the unity of any one of these terms, and notions such as artistic intention. These have been major challenges of much contemporary literary theory. Spoken word is these concerns made flesh. ❌

## Endnotes

- 1 See Barthes, R. "The Death of the Author" in *The Barthes Reader* (ed. Sontag, S. Vintage, London, 1993)
- 2 See Bakhtin, M. M. *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Ann Arbor, Ardis, 1973) and *The Dialogic Imagination* (ed. Holquist, M., University of Texas, Austin, 1990)
- 3 Bakhtin, M. M. (1990), p. 246.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 254.
- 5 Title of a work by Tom Ball.
- 6 This is not to challenge a Derridian deconstruction of logocentrism by privileging the spoken over the written, rather it identifies how the uncertainty of the spoken is in fact emphasised by these performances, where the written word seeks to hide them.
- 7 One can often identify such a performance by the presence of someone trying to sell books.
- 8 See Higgins, D. "Performance, Taken Socially" in *Horizons: The Poetics and Theory of the Intermedia* (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1984), pp 82-6. Higgins is also of interest in that he proposes the term "inter-media" for such art forms, which seems to me a happier term than "multi-media", privileging as it does the interactions between media (the text and the music, for instance), rather than simply the fact that they are various.



## AUNT ANASTASIA

— AND —

## HER JOKE

*Luke Icarus Simon*

Aunt Stashia was good for many things; nobody could match the bread she baked, no one could upstage her at a funeral. She would beat her breasts at the slightest tragedy. She would jump into the grave just before the coffin was lowered as a sign of her true grief. Once, when we accompanied her (behind Mother's back), she did just that. Jumped in.

We were aghast.

Embarrassed. Hated ourselves for not realising that the dead man was, as Phil pointed out in a self-satisfied tone, Aunt Stashia's one and only true love. Later we fished for information. We burned with curiosity. But Aunt Stashia recovered too quickly from the jump.

"Who was he?" we begged in unison pulling at her black dress.

She shooed us away.

Like she did with her chickens and ducks. She wasn't in the mood to fulfil our fantasies.

"I don't know. A stranger. An old man," she answered.

"So why did you jump then?" dared Phil and Dinos and I went crimson at my siblings' boldness.

"They paid me," was all Aunt Stashia said and we were once again left with our mouths wide open in wonder.

We usually had an ally when Aunt Stashia came to visit. She had a certain cross-generation appeal with children. "The poor thing doesn't have any of her own," Mother was fond of saying.

"She's a virgin," Dinos would say and Mother would fix him with a look which meant that Dinos would be getting another haircut two weeks earlier than planned. Dinos only hated school more than haircuts.

Aunt Stashia always arrived just as we were setting off to school and this made the day go past so fast for us; we couldn't wait to get back home so she could drown us in her demonstrative love. No matter what separated us from her, she was dripping with affection for us all, even though Dinos was her favourite. She made no secret of this because Dinos reminded her of her dead father whom none of us had met. Not even Phil, who in every other respect seemed to know



everything and everybody. At least that's what I thought then.

Aunt Stashia smelled differently to Mother.

Mother wore French perfume. Aunt Stashia smelled of flour and sweat and wheat and warmth. She was big bosomed and forever dressed in black on account of her father and the two husbands who had died on her. Not literally on her you understand. Not that we would have known really because sex, the word Dinos was obsessed with, did not encroach into our Aunt's life.

She always wore her hair in a bun which she wrapped like a snail at the back of her head and which she covered in a black scarf. She didn't wear her hood right to the forehead like Grandma did in the village but rather, courtesy of her rebellious reputation, just midway around her head. For she was known as a bit of a rebel. For a start not many women married twice. Not in Father's village anyway. She cheated on her fasts. The local priest was told and she had to rush to confession. Somehow the whole devout village found out. Aunt Stashia was god-fearing on the one hand and unrepentant on the other. If anything she was more superstitious than religious.

Once she predicted that a certain woman, who had visited us while we were on holidays at Grandma's, would cast her evil eye on us. Sure enough, not long after the woman's departure, I was laid out in bed. The doctor couldn't find anything wrong. I had fevers and sweated. I ate and threw everything up. Aunt Stashia blamed

herself. Grandma vowed that 'that vile woman' was not to be allowed to visit in future.

To this day I still think of the evil eye, and what it can do.

When she was visiting us Aunt Stashia couldn't understand why we had to be in bed by 8.30pm and supported us in our protestations against Mother's dictum. Phil always maintained that the real reason was that Mother wanted to watch *Peyton Place* in peace: that was the real reason why we were packed off to bed. Aunt Stashia would volunteer to tuck us in and we would spend a couple of hours mucking around, her fat bosom the best cushion we could wish for to send us off to sleep.

One day I found her sitting out on the verandah staring at the radio intensely. She wasn't listening to it. Just staring at it, turning it this way and that.

How do they get in there?

Who? I asked, not sure of her question.

The people who are talking.

They're not in there, I laughed, feeling smart.

Well how come they can talk to me?

They're talking to lots of people not just you.

She wasn't convinced.

Mind you. I wasn't quite sure myself where the announcers were but I knew for sure that they weren't inside the actual radio.

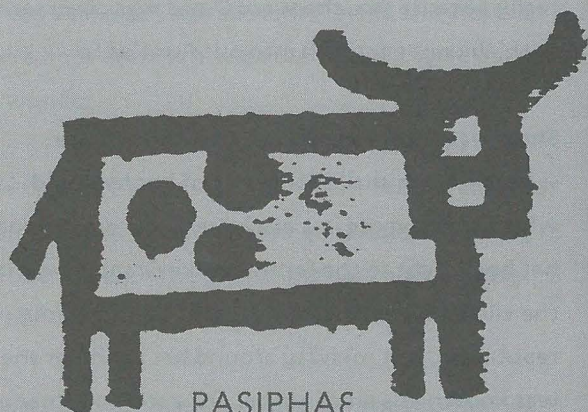
Come here, Aunt Stashia encouraged. She turned the radio around and showed me the lit fuses you could just see inside through the crack of the hard mould packaging.

Isn't that the light from their house? She was unrelenting.

I don't know. But I don't think so.

Well you think about it and if you find out the answer you can tell me. Then we'll both know and I could explain it to your Grandma.

I agreed and hurried off to grab the encyclopedia wondering if my Aunt was a complete intellectual moron or if she was just teasing me into learning. I couldn't accept the first proposition, for adults always knew everything (or so they made out), and as for the latter, I didn't think Aunt Stashia so cunning. ❌



PASIPHAË

— AND —

THE BULL

Edwina Preston



she loved the Bull

the fates had come down in the night and planted it  
she loved the Bull for she thought  
the Bull was softer than the cow

at first an unnatural attraction  
Pasiphae cutting at the whip  
her husband – guessing her whereabouts –  
found seeds in her hair  
they were scarce times nothing much  
growing his pot was dry

– see here i have clues of you  
he said  
but Pasiphae – shifty – was darning hide for the  
– winter weather  
the cloth around her scalp hid her thinking  
from him

in the mornings the Bull grew frantic  
with getting warm  
so she took the hide out  
– it weighed her down but it fit the Bull like skin –  
the cows and calves said nothing when she went  
to and fro  
she had uncanny memory – Pasiphae – of hay and  
the taste of grass

at home her husband makes uneasy sounds with  
his tools and thinks of the time when his wife  
was Pasiphae made lowly on his wedding ring  
but happy with it  
now she has taken Pasiphae from the hearth put  
her in the stalls  
his words that had once charmed her struck the  
air chill  
drunken

---

the Bull grew lush under its Winter coat

Pasiphae talks softer with her head bent to the ear  
but inside her heart she knows herself  
the accomplice of leather she is  
the product of her mother's sewing box and her  
father's blessing  
her hand lies flat on the Bull's sleeping back  
and she feels the cage of its animal bones

in a bed made small with absence  
Pasiphae's husband dreams of a courtyard of  
virgins preparing to  
deliver themselves for the milking  
some with features so sharp they'd carve away  
your purpose  
where Pasiphae was always soft  
known for a nature well suited to arable land

when the Bull comes to her choked by the wires  
planted in its feed  
- the chewing mouth made ribbons -  
Pasiphae takes from the house a butter dish to  
tend to it

the Bull follows her in the day and she  
performs the ablutions leaning in closer  
to the swollen gums  
than she might

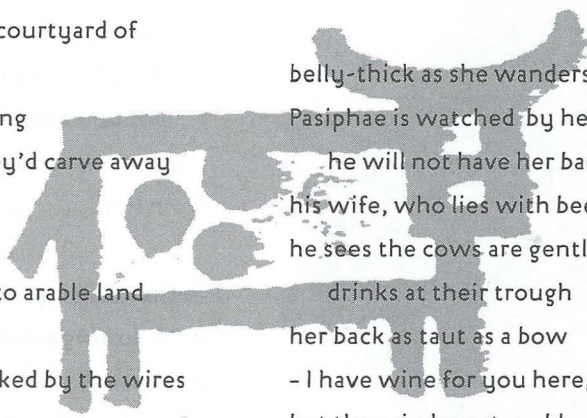
Pasiphae's husband sees them and  
abominates the kiss  
- my wife is anathema, he says and closes the door  
to her  
presses himself hard against the bench  
cuts bread to fill his mouth and ears

in Spring  
the Bull bucks to kick its legs free of Winter  
its hair moults  
it notices  
Pasiphae grown larger  
unruly  
lost to the points of navigation  
she can see the light in her husband's house  
- how strange, she thinks, for a light to be there

the Bull nuzzles her when the load gets heavy  
belly-thick as she wanders in the field  
Pasiphae is watched by her husband who swears  
he will not have her back  
his wife, who lies with beef  
he sees the cows are gentle with her when she  
drinks at their trough  
her back as taut as a bow  
- I have wine for you here, he shouts  
but the window stays blank to Pasiphae  
- she wonders what would build such a turret

the Bull is tireless collecting the things she  
craves keeping out of her husband's way  
but Pasiphae's husband is patient  
mounted on the hill with an arrow stretched  
patient  
coming home with clean unbloodied quivers  
the sheep obscure the straight lines of his avenue  
- there is only one Bull, he thinks, and only one  
Pasiphae

in the glass jar hours  
he drinks a toast to himself and the bull who once





made him  
excellent  
– a girl will marry a man with a Bull, his father had said  
so the Bull came home with them  
quietly  
rope around its neck  
parts of it still plaited

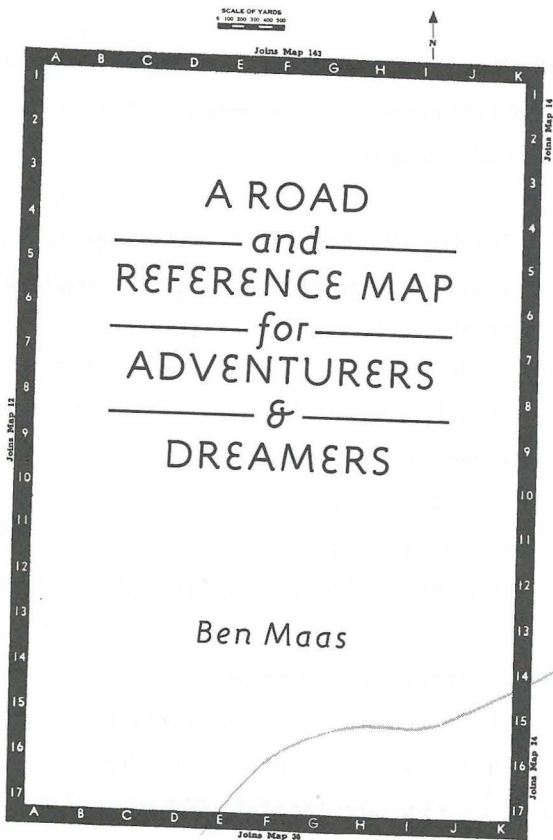
Pasiphae had known him first as a man with a Bull  
it had been part of the reckoning  
a clause to hang the purse on  
the arrow could not strike it down  
but now the sweat of Pasiphae,  
all over the house from door to lintel,  
does not come away quickly  
though he scrubs at wooden frames  
and clock  
and her metronome  
and the chimes she liked, and the thick white  
pillowslips he dunks in vinegar  
til his fingers peel back and there is new pink flesh  
underneath  
– in no sense will i be bull, he says

Pasiphae's hour comes with water  
and the sound of ripping  
there is a bellowing from the stalls  
where she pushes up against hayricks  
the bull is mournful watching Pasiphae digging  
out the ground around her as if she thinks the  
child will need burying  
hearing sounds from her mouth not cow not woman  
there is a chord of dying in her throat  
but the baby splits free just as he thinks the air  
will break and  
the neat cloven limbs are four

of different shape and each  
expertly manoeuvres to standing  
and looks to suckle

But Pasiphae – haunches testing her weight –  
rocks forward to look her baby full in the face  
its grin of an imbecile  
its twin hoof and finger  
its fur sticky with membrane  
the Bull in her ear is sour  
the sweet Bull she loved is coarse  
the smell of its cud sickens  
its soft hoofs pace like they will trample

her screams crack open throats  
the bellow in her mouth is made of teeth  
and the skin on her hand is without hair  
the baby is too large for her to dash its head  
and nowhere a rock an axe a grindstone  
she runs to where the house gapes open windows  
fire hearth-mat  
– drown it, she screams to her husband – drown  
this thing that carved me open  
but her husband thick with wine  
has his head down dull on the table  
and Pasiphae  
hands and knees become harder  
makes her way to the drinking trough  
where the cows and calves move away now  
and there with the water in her lungs  
goes the minotaur's mother



She had been red when I first met her, grinding greasy gears across the Grampians. We'd met on bicycles. We got drunk and dangerous off those bikes.

A good private school girl from Sydney. Drank like a fish, drove like a demon, and was passionate about her land, her home.

On New Year's Eve she necked the champagne's neck, icy bubbling white rapids spilling over her teeth, soaking her dress, and then she necked me for my hot rushing whiteness.

We stripped back our fears to let ourselves be crafted, shaped, sanded back by the passing view, and the turn of the wheel took us, there.

We saw ocean heaving like lovers under the hot sun, we saw the sea brooding jilted under the quiet clouds, we saw the waves, old and wrinkled, stroke old friends that were once rocks.

The map told us where to go.

A mocha curl drifts across her face.  
Obscuring the Great Northern Highway.  
She sweeps her aromatic hair back into place  
And studies the map.

The trip had begun with a book of pictures and a map. A Road and Reference Map for Adventurers and Dreamers.

It was more than I'd ever dreamed.

The mocha hid her natural fiery red that exploded across the Nullarbor when she found out about the sunburnt girl in Robe. Two weeks too late.





We were the dreamers. We slammed adventure with lemon and salt. We screwed life long into the night for all it could take, leaving, while it sweated and panted for we'd screwed it so.

We argued from Perth all the way to Darwin about the difference between a cafe latte and a cappuccino, and when we got to the hotel all they had was Nescafe. We pissed ourselves.

Under the shadow of ancient rocks, in the middle of a Trip, we painted each other with our desires, drawing, scribbling, brushing, cutting, printing, and on our backs beneath the five million star restaurant we had made a little art.

She bit me once, bitch, and laughed as the blood seeped into the dried crevices of her sunburnt lips. She devoured me.

We yelled about the meaning of love in the rain forests and accused each other of love, both of us dodging between the trees and commitment.

One day we got so sick of the tapes in the car we gave them to this old Aboriginal dude by the road. I don't think he knew who Björk was.

El Guapo, our pet frill necked lizard, hid under the tarp when I cried, and she pulled her curls and consulted the map.

As we drove through a corridor of swaying wheat red yelled to stop, she needed to throw up, and she needed to be by herself. I ran off into the wheat, got lost, came back and it wasn't until we hit Queensland she told me she'd been pregnant. Until she miscarried.

Sticky, yellow, mango juice ran down her chin and curved across her throat, climbed her brown breast to peak neatly on her nipple. She told me to lick it.

We were in the dreaming.

Around, where, across, are, down, we, through, who, stopping, are, halting, you, seeing, and, smelling, why, kissing, am, tasting, I, knowing, with, learning, you, kissing, sucking, loving, fucking,

What for?

Don't ask she said.

I want to know.

You'll wake up.

I need to know.

Shit! You've torn the map. 



# *Out the* **BACK**

Tony McGowan



**It's too deep** to hook into the sand and the boy with only door knobs for swimming shoulders is left to flounder like a skinny frog under the shuddering turbulence. His imploding lungs can bear no more and he makes for the surface, only to be greeted by an enraged washing machine that immediately tries to pull him back under. He tilts his head back and runs up a flight of wonky stairs, flailing his arms to stay afloat. The churning subsides and he sucks in the sharp sea air as another dumper steepens; its aquamarine skin stretching and splitting, ejecting clots of spume. He fills his lungs and burrows under the retreating water. Neptune wraps himself around the boy and blocks his ears, carries him through Stygian gloom, vast corridors of squelching. The surf thunders above. Billowing clouds of subaqueous foam come tumbling down, sending the currents into a frenzy. The boy is pummelled from all directions, twisted, up-ended, the roaring sea sneezing through his

brain, a million tonnes of cold liquid concrete crushing the wind out of him.

The ocean rubs his face into the sand like a bad puppy who has soiled the carpet. He knows all too well that he shouldn't be this far down. Coiling into a panicked ball, blood pumping in his ears like the cymbals of a shorebreak, he launches off the sand, arm outstretched, blurred eyes straining.

Invisible hands conspire to keep him down as he struggles to get to the top, that shifting warping blue maze of magic mirrors; the midday sun was in the house of fun. He perforates the seal expelling the last of the stale air bubbles and in his haste to breathe he draws in seawater. It slithers down his trachea: gagging coughing inhaling exhaling inhaling kicking clutching at suds he coughs up warm saline fluid into mouth, accidentally swallows.

giant dumper. It stands straight up, flexing its might, and contemptuously flicks its mane over Dominic. The whitewater tangles around his legs and threatens to take him with it as it cascades through air before clashing violently with its placid brother. The two waters rumble and hiss in a battle of kinetic energy. Dominic thrusts hand over hand, striving to escape the inexorable pull of this white carnage.

Johnny shoots out of the foam and shouts: "Come on Dom Dom!" He's wearing flippers. "It'll be dark by the time you get out the back." Dominic wants to belt him. He drops his face and thrashes the water instead.

Dominic finds himself undulating on pure cobalt devoid of foam. He catches a glimpse of his friends' heads surmounting a swell, then they're hidden behind the wave's bulk. It's rolling in but he knows it can't harm him out here out the back. Dominic rides up the side of the blunted pyramid and pierces its curling apex with a ragged frog-kick. He makes his way towards the others, snatching at his breath, eyes stinging.

"Dominic," Charles says. The three are treading water tight-knit. "Where you been man? You look heaps wrote off." There are other swimmers out here besides his mates, among others a stocky man with a grey beard. A flurry of powerful strokes and he's fearlessly shearing across a chunky wave bore, cheered on by a lifesaver screwed into a red and gold skullcap.

"He looks fucked," Billy says. "You alright?"

**Another wave is building.** "I'm gunna drown," he groans in between furious breaths. From the corner of his eye he spots a disembodied head cutting through the foam. Relief floods through his body. "Hey!" He raises an arm and waves. "Hey, I'm really..." his hoarse shout falters in his throat as he recognizes the swimmer's blond hair. If it had been any one of his other friends he would have been scrambling on their back, pleading for them to take him in, to save him. Not Johnny. Never. Pride gives him strength.

The water is swelling up, transmutating into a froth-dripping Leviathan. Dominic needs to piss. Breaststroking with the trough like a feeble old man at the Bondi Baths, he decides to scale it rather than risk going under again. The wave rises majestically and reels him in, swinging him to the very top. His stomach does backflips when he glances behind, over the cragged brow of this



"You should have a rest for a while," Mic adds.

He despises their concern, their sympathy. "I'm okay," he puffs, squints. He tries to relax in order to urinate, but can't. "Just got chundered on a huge one. Should have pulled out earlier."

Johnny comes flippering in on his back. It looks as though he's reclining in the water and someone is pushing him along from beneath. Nobody else in their group is wearing fins. "So you caught a wave yet or what Dom Dom you little Westie," Johnny says. His forehead is plastered with whitish-blond streaks of hair. A booga hangs from his nostril. Dominic replies but Johnny booms over the top of him: "Did ya's see that tube I caught? It fully speared me heaps bad. Hit the bottom I went so deep. One I got before that was a full-on barrel - had this wicked left-hand drop that... hey, here comes a spesh!"

They all turn. It's definitely a big one. "Let's go the Kamikaze. Whoever pulls out is a poofa chicken." They fan out, Dominic included. The swell tugs the quilt of water from underneath the five as they stroke. When the pull suddenly switches to a shove, however, Dominic flips onto his back and kicks and pushes at the crest, heart hammering as he retreats. Johnny's voice trembles through the misty air: "Kamikaze!" He is extended momentarily out of the glassy concave, then he is airborne, disappearing into the crunching turmoil. The others are not so bold, preferring to roll into balls and fall off the cliff.

Waves come and go. Come and go.

An inexhaustible supply. The bodysurfers plummet down them, bounce down them, whatever. Dominic tries to catch one, yet every time he's on the verge, teetering on that pinnacle, taking in that dizzying drop, he loses his nerve. After a while he gives up and floats face down out the back, pretending to be a drowned body, but no-one notices. He turns over, ducks under, experiments with different methods of treading water, whatever.

His friends come splashing back out to regroup after each dumping, clamouring over one another to describe their exploits above and under the plangent waters. Dominic broods in silence on the perimeter of their circle.

"Should have seen that one I caught then Dom Dom, you would've shit yasef," Johnny gibes. Bill and Mic chuckle. Dominic has no comeback.

## **Johnny, with his brawny upper-body and big mouth, is the assumed leader.**

“Are you havin’ a wank out here when we catch our waves?” The others laugh louder.

Grey Beard feels sorry for Dominic and offers him a few curt hints on how to surf a wave. Charles volunteers to swim in with him so he can practise in the wash directly off shore, where the shrieking toddlers play and fat mammas wallow. All Dominic wants to do is to catch the biggest wave of the day and show them, then he could get out and never come to the beach again. In the meantime he has to pee, the sharp pressure is almost painful now. Concentrating hard he slows the oscillatory movements of his limbs and then, bit by bit, manages to relax his bladder. A familiar warm eddy fills his costume. A siren winds up and drones its fear across the bay. Dominic instantly assumes he’s been busted for pissing in the sea.

“Shark alarm!” shouts Grey Beard and swims off, not bothering with a wave.

“Fuckin’ ell!” says Mic and takes off as well, Billy fluttering at his ankles. Inshore, a stampede of legs stumble and churn the shoals in their drive for dry sand. The shrill noise of the alarm is unremitting. It reminds Dominic of a World War II documentary, where German bombers are approaching London.

“Everybody in!” orders the lifesaver, “there’s a shark out – ” He’s gone, surging down a wave with several others.

“Come on, Dominic,” says Charles, eyes flitting across the water. “I’ll swim in with ya. It’ll be alright.” A lumbering swell lifts them up and then lets them down again. A few seconds later it peaks and topples under its own mass, turning the surf zone into a frothy vanilla milkshake sprinkled with agitated swimmers. “We’ll catch this next one,” says Charles, already moving away. Dominic watches him with a bemused smile.

“Naaah, you go in,” Dominic calls to his friend. “I’m gunna hang around for a while.”

“What!?” Charles shouts back. His sidestroking is picking up before the swell.

“There’s a shark out here, come back to the beach you fuckwit!” He sprints onto the wave with the determination of an Olympian. Dominic’s smile disappears when Johnny bobs out of the water in front of him and gives him a fright.



"Aren't you goin' in?" Johnny asks.

"Doesn't look like it."

Johnny sizes him up, contemptuous of this weakling with wingnut ears and dark, nervous eyes. "You're only staying out here because you're shittin' ya pants about the waves," he scoffs, scanning the ocean over Dominic's shoulder, swirling his arms. "Can't believe you'd rather be eaten by a shark than catch a wave."

"I can catch a wave whenever I want. I'm just not afraid of sharks."

"Bullshit, you little poofta." Johnny makes a nasal grunt, swallows phlegm and flippers away.

"You're the poofta!" shouts Dominic. "You're the one going in."

Johnny stops and glares behind. "Whatjew fuckin' say ya little weed?"

"You heard," Dominic says less confidently.

Johnny swims back over and uses the ball of his palm to shove Dominic in the jaw, making him bite his tongue. A swell heaves them up. Dominic spits. There is blood floating in his saliva.

"Shit, the inshore's empty, look," says Johnny.

Tiny figures are milling at the water's edge, hands shielding eyes, searching.



"You scared?" sneers Dominic.

Johnny leans his head to one side and blows out breath between clenched teeth. "Check ya."

"Bet you go in before me."

Johnny blows out snot and reconnoitres the ocean. They are the only ones beyond the breakers now, besides a couple of surfers far, far down the south end. Johnny forces a grin. "Don't know why everyone's shittin' their selves. Probably a dolphin or somethin' anyway."

"I'd say it's a shark alright," replies Dominic.

Johnny glowers uncertainly at him for a moment, then says, "If I stay out here longer than you, you have to catch in the wave I tell you to."

**“Sweet.”**

“And you have to do a Kamikaze.”

“I was gunna anyway.”

“Bull-fucking-shit. You couldn’t even catch a ripple. Couldn’t even catch a fuckin’ cold if you...” Johnny’s words trail off as the siren strangles and dies. Silence. On the shoulder of a billow they both check to see whether people are returning to the water. They’re not. Johnny already regrets taking up the dare.

Several minutes of tense silence follow. They softly tread water. Johnny vigilantly keeps watch, his apprehension growing. Dominic gently probes his tongue with a finger. “You know there’s been a shark attack out here before,” he says.

“Shut up, Dominic,” Johnny replies, gazing towards shore.

“No there really has been.”

“Fuck off.”

“It was only about a month ago. A guy had his leg bitten off.”

“You’re full of it.” Johnny peers into the cambering translucence, watching the languid dance of his flippers. His ankles hurt.

“Didn’t you read about it in the papers? He was swimming in big surf, like today, when he was pulled under and then thrown through the air. The clubbies came out in a rubber duckie to rescue him. He was screaming his head off and when they pulled him in the boat they saw that his right leg was mangled and hanging by a piece of skin. Blood was pissing out everywhere and one of the lifesavers had to pinch the artery to stop the blood. The other lifesaver was throwing his guts up. The shark was – ”

“Shutup! Shut the fuck up !” Johnny shouts, flinging his hand out near Dominic’s face, splashing him in the eyes. “You’re a fuckin’ little smartarse. There’s never been an attack here.” His voice cracks. Dominic blinks repeatedly, grinning at the same time.

Another spell of heavy silence.

“They reckon it’s a rogue shark, and you know what that means.”





Johnny pretends to ignore him, but he can't stand the suspense. His eyes jerk from the shore, to the open ocean to Dominic. "What's it mean then?" he snaps. Dominic dunks his head into a hump. "It means that the shark will probably come back and attack again. This beach is its feeding ground now." He laughs at Johnny's reaction; he didn't expect him to pale. Feeling a bit guilty, and a little spooked himself, he says, "Why don't we call it a draw and swim - "

"I'm gunna smash you when we get back to shore you little wog," Johnny says spitefully. "You fuckin' wait, dago."

Dominic's indignation rises with the swell. "There was a white pointer around here in the fifties. My old man told me. Huge thing with scars on it where fishermen had tried to hook it." His teeth are chattering; he's been in the water for nearly two hours. "It kept coming back to the same beaches and attacking people, this one included, it tore apart three swimmers, killed them, caused two more to have their legs amputated later in hospital. There's an old drunk on crutches who hangs at the pub across the road, he was one of 'em. My dad reckons the shark that attacked the guy the other month is a rogue noah too. Some people reckon they saw it last weekend at the next beach round. It's supposed to be huge - fuck, look at that fin!" Dominic shoots out a finger and Johnny lets out a frightened squeak.

"Where!?" He's already flippering.

Dominic is splashing at the water, but in the throes of harsh laughter.

"I'm gunna fuckin' hammer you!" Johnny lunges towards Dominic, who suddenly stops laughing.

"Did you feel that?" His face becomes blank, scared.

"I'm gunna smash you," Johnny grips him by the arm and Dominic raises his free hand, more as a command than in defence.

"No! I really felt something brush past my legs. I'm not mucking around this time."

"You serious, dead serious?"

"I swear on my mother's dying oath," he quavers, crossing his heart. "Something's circling us. I can sense it. Can't you?"

Johnny releases him, stricken with fear.



**“Oh God, oh Christ, oh fuck.”** Frantically looking about the water, he whispers almost pleadingly. “Let’s get out of here, Dominic.”  
“Alright, alright. When I say three, we’ll make a break for it. Okay?” Johnny swallows and nods.  
“Don’t leave me behind.”  
“I won’t, I won’t. Let’s fuckin’ go.”

“Ready, one, two - ahhhhhhhhhh!” Dominic screams and thrashes wildly at the water.  
“Dominic, the shark!” “Help me! It’s got my legs!”  
Dominic’s in convulsions of froth, jerking his head, flinging his arms this way and that, before directing them backwards to cup the water and pull himself under.

Once below, he levels out and swims down slightly deeper, snickering out air bubbles as he heads to where Johnny should be. He comes up roaring like a monster from the deep. Johnny is

not there. The siren is sounding out bursts and people are flocking to the water once again.

Dominic warily swims in behind a brutal dumper. Further in he decides to take the plunge on its smaller cousin. It is an excellent wave, probably the best he’s ever caught.

When he comes across Charles wading through the shallows he breaks into giggles and tells him about his prank, the look of dread on Johnny’s face. Charles says, “Where is Johnny, anyway?”

Rubber duckies are sent out. Two hours later the JRB and rescue helicopter are radioed in. The search is called off at nightfall. It resumes the next morning. Three days later a fisherman discovers a flipper washed up on rocks forty kilometres down the coast. He drops it in horror. The foot is still inside. ●



## In season

Tracy A Forbes

Night heavy with jasmine, heat-heavy,  
 Hangs  
 Over me, hangs full of mosquitoes, watching.  
 Heat.  
 I eat strawberries, one by one, thick and ripe.  
 Drips  
 Fall on the page, pale sticky stains, framing your letters.  
 Words,  
 Ripe with innuendo, stare at me: you and strawberries,  
 You  
 And what you'd do to me with strawberries.  
 Sweat  
 And humid air taint the scent of your thoughts.  
 Licking  
 My fingers, I taste salt, I taste fruit; the tongue accepting  
 Me  
 Dry and adrift here in the stale summer night, you  
 Damp  
 And slick in the northern air, salty with ocean.  
 Taste  
 Transcends the distances, we blend and ripen.



## Lowku

Chris Newton

When I greet my friends  
 I praise the space that's not them  
 for making the room.



## The rickshaw

MTC Cronin

Nothing can be too exotic.  
 I was lubricated with mango butter  
 - she could smell it,  
 but just the thought of it  
 drove my mother to Peking.

---

# PUBLIANUS FORTUNATUS



THE STATIC TRAVELLER

*Raimondo Cortese*



---

**The sun had cast off early, and Publianus Fortunatus didn't wish to squander any more precious time.** Nor did he wish for anything to appear at all unusual. He wanted to leave everything as it should be, as it had always been, in its proper place. This meticulous regard for order was not undertaken for the benefit of his fussy friend Suetonius, who from this day forth would be taking care of the premises, rather it was to enable Publianus the special gratification of sighing assuredly within himself, when the moment arose to turn and gaze at his farm, and the surrounding village, for the last time.

The goose eggs had been gathered before dawn, and placed in the trough by the stove. Then the old and faithful cow, Nana, had her teats tugged methodically, though not without affection, to which she moaned and dutifully relinquished a half-bucket of milk. Next, the grain had to be pounded. As he walked to the sack, Publianus lowered his head in shame. The rancid odour proclaimed the presence of the Great Malevolence: rats. No variety of polytheistic supplication or burnt feathers could do anything to eradicate them. He warily dug his fingers into the grains and retrieved a handful, which he dropped into the mortar. While he was grinding away, a tune caught upon his lips. It was the Song of Vicarius, anthem for the Seventh Legion, with which Publianus had served in his younger days. He cheerfully mixed a smidgen of milk with the pulverised grains and kneaded for fifteen minutes or so, until he'd produced a fluffy yellow ball.

Flabby Suetonius would be able to bake it this afternoon, if his appetite started bellowing the way it normally did.

A fresh basket of apples sat on the table. Publianus' apples were the pride of the village, or at least Publianus thought so. The rows of trees were certainly majestic. Large solid trunks with healthy dark green leaves, and juicy apples that veritably weighed down the branches. The district consul often called by to partake of his fortifying brew, and left two hours later, barely able to stand. Publianus felt he could take forever to drain a single precious goblet. But not this time. There would be no point in savouring its ephemeral delights, it would only hinder his determination to do what everyone had warned him against; to cross the Attrixiius, and venture into the barbarous lands beyond. He gulped it down with two mouthfuls and placed the goblet back on the hearth.

For most Romans, the civilized world ended at Rome's walls. For most of her subjects however, this specious claim was stretched to include the entire length and breadth of her glorious Empire. "Romanness" or "civilised Latin attributes" were perhaps nowhere more vigorously asserted than in the Northern Provinces, most particularly in the villages that fell just within the northernmost frontier, bordering the River Attrixiius.

What lay beyond the Attrixiius was pure speculation, but if the barbarian tribe that

---

occasionally made its brutal pillaging forays across the border was any indication, it was highly probable that these unknown lands nurtured all the worst the imagination could conjure.

Publianus Fortunatus lived in one of these northern villages (Birrinium), and to his neighbours, his intended trip was nothing short of suicidal. The most favourable prognosis they could offer was that “the pinkheaded ones would decapitate poor Publianus and feed the rest of him to a giant snake”. A fate hardly worth pursuing. Many of the villagers had tried their best to deter him, cousin Infidelius even threatened to tie him to a chair for life, but nothing could sway the iron will of Publianus Fortunatus. His refusal to provide any adequate motivation for such a dreaded undertaking led most to the conclusion that he had quite lost his wits through excessive grief. But Publianus wholeheartedly believed that out there, fortune, so utterly neglectful in the past, would finally visit him.

The fire was beginning to burn the soles of his feet. He stood and sadly looked about at the walls of his comfortable abode. The smoke had turned them grey. He looked at the chair by the stove, and imagined his wife still sitting there, heating the barley soup. She had been taken four years ago by a swelling in the groin. Publianus turned towards the table, half expecting to see his three children chasing each other, creating a mighty din. He had lost them, one by one, to the Blue Plague during the rat epidemic. The house with its

memories brought nothing but sadness, yet for some reason Publianus could barely bring himself to leave it.

The apples were bright red. Suetonius the Fat would probably coat them with honey and bake them brown. A true connoisseur like Publianus ate them fresh. Still, he couldn't afford to concern himself with such matters. The important thing was to collect everything in his mind to carry with him on the journey, because the journey was going to be dangerous, and his only comfort would be these last visions of the house, the path leading to its door, the thatched roof, the table laden with apples, the hot stove, the geese, Nana, the apple trees, the egg trough, the wooden chair he made for his wife's dowry.

He set off on foot. The villagers assembled along the road. Many of the women were sobbing loudly, and from the corners of his eyes, Publianus noticed that the men shook their heads as if to say “Publianus, you are a fool.” He refused to acknowledge them. After all the apples he'd given away, they could at least have turned on a jubilant farewell. He was fuming so much on the inside, he even forgot to turn around and say goodbye to his farm. It couldn't be helped. He was already surrounded by forest and he had no intention of turning back. The trees were much larger than he expected, and the leaves less colourful, and thinner. Naked mountains rose up on both sides, with grey bodies and white heads. Publianus thought they seemed most angry. He was almost



---

too afraid to look in their direction in case they hurtled boulders at him. He kept walking, as he had done all day, with his eyes fixed straight ahead.

The sun was well and truly falling by the time Publianus reached the Attrixius. Before long, he found a raft tethered to the bank. He cut himself a long branch, and hauled his way across the deathly river. Upon stepping ashore, he stood perfectly still, waiting for the whistle and thud, as an arrow plunged into his heart. Naturally, he was quite pleased when no such thing eventuated. He decided to press on, somewhat puzzled that he felt neither fatigued nor hungry. If anything, he felt refreshed, younger in the bones. The ample quantities of cheese, apples, ham, and two flasks, one for ale and one for milk, seemed less weighty across his shoulders. And what was more puzzling still, a stone path, more elegant than any he'd seen, issued forth from the river and disappeared into the forest. Publianus found the path most gentle under the feet.

Sometimes he'd pass small huts billowing tunnels of smoke, but he dared not inquire inside in case their dwarfish inhabitants proved hostile, or remotely cannibalistic. On other occasions, he passed entire villages, larger than his own, where the houses were constructed from materials he couldn't recognize. The yellow-skinned locals completely ignored him and continued about their business; gathering fruit, roasting wild boar on a spit, wrestling or chatting. While the elderly

sat around grinning with pipes drooping from their mouths. The villages slowly melted into the background and Publianus once more found himself enclosed by a forest, full of bright yellow berries and hairy black children swinging from branches. Soon it would be dark, so Publianus found a suitable tree to snuggle under for the night.

Sleep slowly lowered his eyelids, and shut away the foreign stars. Publianus dreamed of his home village.

Morning shattered the clouds and Publianus went to gather his food bundle. It was gone. The hairy little ones must have stolen it. He could hear them laughing at him. Fortunately, his appetite had vanished. Besides, it wouldn't be difficult to find food if he needed it. The ground was bursting with pink mushrooms. He continued on his way. Of course he had no idea where the path was taking him, but he didn't care either. Somewhere in his belly a little egg had hatched, and was spreading its essence through his body. Publianus began to feel consumed by a longing to return home, which would be virtually admitting to defeat. He'd be the village fool forever. That was unthinkable. The feeling would soon subside. He, Publianus Fortunatus, would force it to. He walked on with a gallant stride.

A giant lake swells before him. Publianus smiles when he realises that the path transforms into a bridge, and the bridge sprouts all the way to the

---

other side of the lake. Huge birds with square beaks explode from the depths and circle about his head. Some of them gurgle loudly. Publianus imagines they have human bones stuck in their throats.

He starts to forget about the monstrous birds and remembers instead his apple trees glistening after the morning rain, his hot stove smoking the walls grey, the subtle flavours of home-brewed ale, the shadow of his wife sitting in the wooden chair, the delicious taste of salted pork, the image of Suetonius dipping his mighty paws into a jar of honey, or chasing the geese around the farm for not laying enough eggs.

Still, he presses on. The lake is traversed, and the evil birds have sunk back into the water. He approaches a rocky cave. Ferocious sounds rumble from its mouth. The ground trembles and sharp stones spit through the air. Publianus fears he has awoken a demon from an ageless sleep. The demon will surely devour him to the very last morsel. He breaks into a run. His legs are swift and light. He runs so fast, he can hardly feel his feet touching the path. A beautiful valley blossoms before him, bloated with long grass and yellow flowers. Publianus is blind to all of it. Instead, he sees the vegetation that flourishes upon entering his village, the fields of familiar grass, the apple trees, the huddle of thatched huts, and in the distance, the villagers themselves. He thought they would roll about laughing if he returned. But no, he never really left. How long has he been

away? No more than a few hours surely, perhaps a day or so, nobody seems to remember, nobody even remembers him leaving in the first place.

As he runs down into the valley, his legs begin to weaken, his footsteps become imperceptibly slower. The strange and beautiful sights have blurred into the faces of his neighbours. Suetonius is there bigger than ever, cousin Infidelius, Marcus the butcher, and Nana too. He doesn't notice that the wind, which previously pelted his cheeks with insects, has dropped to stillness, or that leaves remain suspended in the air. He is too absorbed by memories of his childhood, or the great banquet held in celebration of his wedding; everyone said how beautiful the bride was.

Publianus is sad, too sad to throw away tears it would seem, for they gather under his eyes in an invisible sack. His body becomes heavy, or is it that the air has thickened? His feet continue to carry him forwards, but ever so slowly, and then slower still, until he stops completely, still leaning forward, still hoping to go further. Like the birds and insects that have paused mid flight, or the drops of rain that hang like string, Publianus Fortunatus has frozen himself on the landscape, his soul having long ago abandoned his body, and returned to linger in the village of his birth. ✕





## Love and the asylum one morning

tom ball

love is a schizophrenic in an asylum  
without nurses

it deploys ambulances for the unlucky  
and flowers for the not-so-unlucky

it burns light bulbs by the minute  
as arguments rage  
and slows the clock in the waiting room  
where a lover awaits the decision

love is a terror meeting intimacy  
they do not get along at all

grifter who knows everyone's weakness  
makes you feel good  
you forget the other ending  
or endings  
years ago

take a chance on me

love tells you to forget the advice  
about keeping a part of your heart to yourself  
then sells you sad songs  
for when you do

it makes you forget your rules

of impartiality  
you charge  
with flowers in one hand  
and words of conviction in the other  
and a disgustingly total lack of indiscretion  
you drool

and it is all too good

sometimes

love is everything you ever wanted  
with the long mornings  
the laughs  
the share  
conspirators

sometimes

it will not lie down  
it bites  
it curses  
it froths at the mouth  
it reaches for knives  
it cries like a baby  
whimpers in corners

and then  
the nurses return  
the morning shift  
and they cajole it back to bed  
and the days of medication begin again



## Hitch hiking again

Mic Smith

(Tailem's Bend  
to  
Gellibrand). The  
cars ache past.  
Night gets  
further away.  
I tuck myself into  
an abandoned  
car body  
out the back of  
a servo.  
"Sweetdreams  
tonight,"  
I wish myself.  
I will dream  
that it  
is  
raining  
and  
my legs are  
cramped.  
I can feel the  
cold wet vinyl  
and I yearn  
for dawn  
to drive into  
my cold  
discomfort,  
disturb my cruel  
sleep. Distance

lies ahead  
and  
behind the  
headlights that  
approach and  
fade.  
"I wish I was  
driving," I  
declare to  
myself.  
I imagine that  
I am driving.  
My bloodshot  
eyes  
are stinging.  
The air is  
crashing. My  
velocity is  
shattering the  
stillness and  
lifting it over  
the windscreen.  
In my wake the  
violated  
stillness  
is descending  
with an empty  
heart, onto  
the road, while  
the car I am  
driving tears  
along, through  
the rainy night,  
peeling water  
off the highway  
like women's

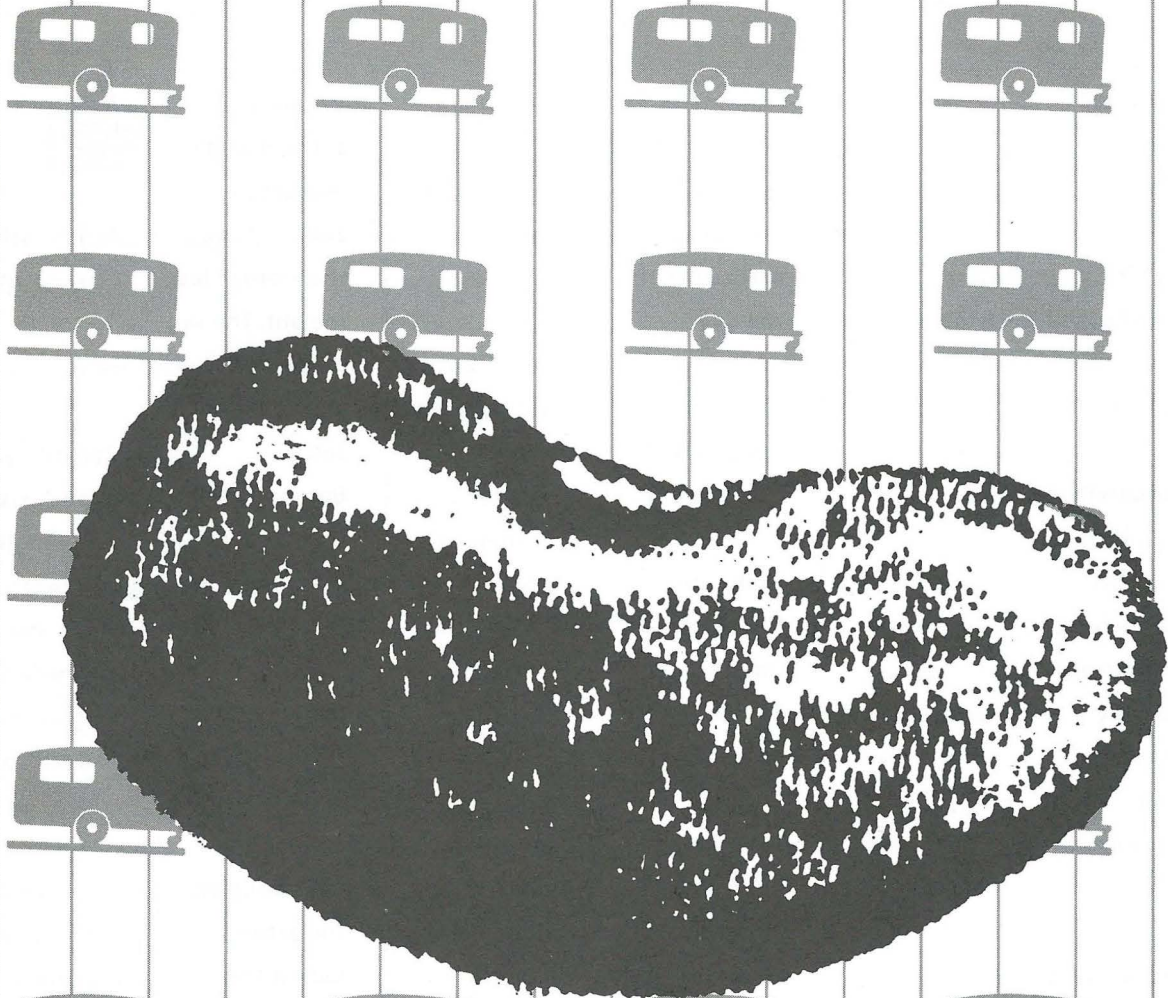
clothing.  
But, I  
try to sleep,  
tossing  
and dreaming  
and celebrating  
the shelter of  
my strange  
roadside bed.  
I make insane mutterings.  
"You know  
I could not give  
a fuck when I  
get to the next  
boring place."  
When I am  
hitching, I do  
not consider the  
distance, until I  
am in the car  
and the  
conversation  
suddenly jolts!  
Standing by the  
road is the  
best part of the  
journey.  
In the morning  
I feel wrecked.  
The servo's got  
a mould  
coloured toilet  
block.  
"You are  
like me,"  
the greasy



mirror says,  
"Asking  
for lifts."  
  
I get a lift,  
eventually; and  
he takes me  
eight kilometres  
onto  
the empty flats;  
drops me off  
at a turnoff.  
There are huge  
rabbit warrens.  
Everything  
seems sick  
or dead.  
The cars drive  
past me.  
I look  
from the rabbit  
warrens to the  
burnouts in the  
road.  
  
The sun is  
setting.  
The waning  
moon  
is  
already  
visible high in  
the sky.  
"Long shadows.  
No cars. Bad  
news."

I say to the  
crows and bones  
while I kick the  
compressed  
earth with the  
toe  
of my boot.  
I don't want to  
sleep here. A  
white van is  
coming out  
of the sun.  
"You only get  
one chance.  
Take it."  
It rescues me.  
Soon  
I am sitting  
between  
the driver and  
his wife. He  
does not talk.  
She does. The  
husband pulls  
over. She buys  
me  
a drink,  
a burger and an  
icecream. I  
begin to feel  
sick.  
My eyes float  
like  
poached yolks.  
She talks  
endlessly.

We arrive  
at my friend's  
property  
and  
the woman lets  
me out. The sky  
is huge  
the moon has  
set.  
But  
the stars give  
everything a  
very subdued  
colour.  
"Bye. Thanks  
for the lift."  
They drive off  
and  
I throw up on  
the gatepost  
look at the  
empty road.  
Then shoulder  
my  
pack and walk  
up the track  
to Collin's place.  
He's not home.  
I let myself in.  
Light a candle.  
Judging from  
the mouldy  
bread on the  
table  
he hasn't been  
here for weeks.



**a very large bean**

*eric dando*



**jack sprat is looking for food for his starving family.** jack sprat has swapped the family cow for a bean but it won't flower till mid summer and they are hungry. very very hungry.

jill is so skinny. she never ate, even when they did have food, she looks like a bird cage, her little heart skips a beat and catches up to her again. squork. squork. squork.

jill thinks her jack is a bloody idiot. jill has begun seeing the butcher on the sly.

---

jack and jill live in a caravan, on the top of the tallest hill around. the crops have failed, the cupboards are bare, they are starving.

jack went to sell the cow at the market.

jack met an old man standing by the side of the road. the old man wanted to buy jack's cow. he wanted to pay him more than gold, he gave jack a magic bean. jack holds it up to the sun, and he says, "jesus that's the biggest bean i have ever seen."

jill wants to know what jack was thinking, she says, "you need your head read mate. we are going to starve" and she goes stomping through the caravan with her steel capped boots and jack's magic bean, "fe fo fi fum, you can stick it in your ear mate, you can stick it up your bum." and she throws the bean out the window.

---

jack follows the bean, he covers it in cowshit, he drowns it with the hose. jack looks at jill through the window of the caravan, he can't hear what she's saying to him, she is speaking very softly, she is saying "jack you are a fucking idiot. a fucking idiot. jack you are a fucking idiot."

jack is dancing on the end of his shovel, he is singing...

it's a magic bean, it's a magic bean, it's a magic bean.

and jack sprat is nowhere near fat, his wife is getting boney, he calls her a bitch and she calls him a phoney.

---

the butcher is putting his apron back on, jill leans over and whispers something to him and the butcher

gives her something: sweet meat, sweet meat, sweet meat.

jill has a piece of liver wrapped up in newspaper. she won't eat it, she was talking about money when she was whispering in his ear. she will bury the butcher's liver under the bean shoot.

---

the bean has been growing again. it always grew the most when jack wasn't looking at it. jack deliberately didn't look at it all day and it was already as big as the caravan.

---

jack is riding on his beanstalk, on the tip of a shooting node and he is smiling a big wide idiot grin. tendrils have lassoed around his wrists and ankles and tightened. jack is part of the bean now, he has no idea when the bean will stop growing.

jill is down below with her watering can and her empty birdcage.

---

look down jack go on look down jesus that's a long way down.

---

the giant's house is on top of a cloud. it is surrounded by blackberry canes. blackberries will grow anywhere. there are rabbits in the blackberries, there are foxes eating rabbits in the blackberries. weeds within weeds within weeds.

jack is riding on a bean shoot, it is taking him right over the blackberries and foxes and rabbits to the giant's house. *weeeee...*

---

the giant is sitting on the end of a huge wooden table with his head in his hands.

the giant has a harp that sings, listen, its tune can turn him into a crying baby. the giant's tears flow out into the blackberries and keep them sour and unpalatable.

the giant has a chicken that lays golden eggs. it's magic. it's magic. it's magic.

---

jill gets hit on the head by the first bean of the season. it knocks her unconscious. the butcher runs away in fright.



jack climbs down from the bean with the harp that sings and the magic chicken, sees jill lying in the dirt bleeding. takes her into the caravan and bathes her head, coos sweet nothing, feeds her honey. and when jill wakes up the first thing she sees is the basket of golden eggs and her face is bathed in gold unnatural light and she says, "i love you jack, i love you jack, i love you jack."

---

stealing the harp and the magic chicken was easy. jack just walked in and took them. the giant didn't even chase him. listening to the harp for so long had made him soft and melancholy. the giant was a pussy. the giant was weak as piss.

---

jack is an idiot. it is true. he only climbed the bean because it was there, he had no idea that it would take him to the giant's castle. and when he stole the harp that sings and the magic chicken, he didn't even see the giant sitting there. the giant was so big that jack did not see him.

---

beans are always a good crop before corn.

---

jill never mentions the butcher. jack is a trustworthy soul and suspects nothing. the butcher is not coming back; he is afraid of falling beans. jill will not go into town, jill has become a vegetarian.

jill just sits in the chicken run and waits for the golden eggs to be laid. when the time comes she wraps the egg in cloth and buries it under the caravan with the other ones.

jack is saving the seeds from the magic bean. he swaps one for a cow and plants the rest in the garden. he is going to find other giants. there are other giants up there.

he climbs up one of the new bean shoots with the harp that sings. he will give it to any giant he meets as a gift. he will come back in the spring and rob him stupid.

---

jill digs up her treasure trove of magic golden eggs but the rain has got to them and they are rotten. they smell like a packet of matches. she crouches in the coop and incantates encouragement to the magic chicken: "lay. lay you fucker. lay." ❌



## Yellow car

Susan Williams

Last night  
when you were drunk  
and you let me drive  
the yellow car  
my arms felt like oars  
  
and suddenly i was with you  
in a leaky canoe  
trying to thread a worm  
  
and trusting you  
  
rowing in the calm dark



## Surrealism & damages (or "did i come?")

MTC Cronin

Counsel: How was the injury  
caused?

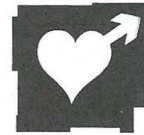
Witness: Well...

I fell off a passionfruit vine

out of the sky  
onto a green ants' nest  
beside a grape-vine  
in the backyard  
of my best-friend's house  
when I was fifteen  
and in the arms of a randy boy  
who had his hand  
down my pants  
with the ants  
which bit me  
and they hurt  
and I sustained  
these injuries  
which are of a serious nature  
of a human nature  
(the judge is thinking:  
*of her putative nature*)  
that is ongoing  
the longer I live  
and I can no longer  
bear the sight  
of passionfruits  
or grapes  
or randy boys  
and have taken  
to squashing ants  
wherever I may  
find them  
The damage is really  
unquantifiable  
and does it really  
matter  
  
that in speech  
women use numerical specificity  
less often whereas

men use it more  
but with less accuracy?

The boy didn't have  
his finger in the right place  
and since then I don't know  
how many men have asked me  
how many times  
did I come...



## The first time

MTC Cronin

She has a small tattoo  
Ordinary - a heart with an arrow  
On her right thigh

I knew her a long time  
Before I knew  
She had that tattoo

And when I saw it  
For the first time  
I tried to scratch it off

She bled  
Her inky blood  
All over the bed

She said  
She was a virgin



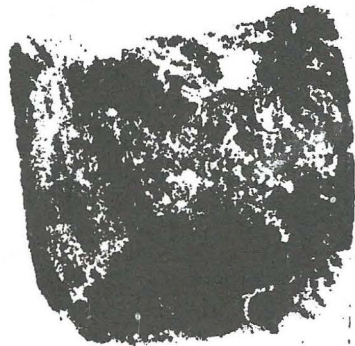
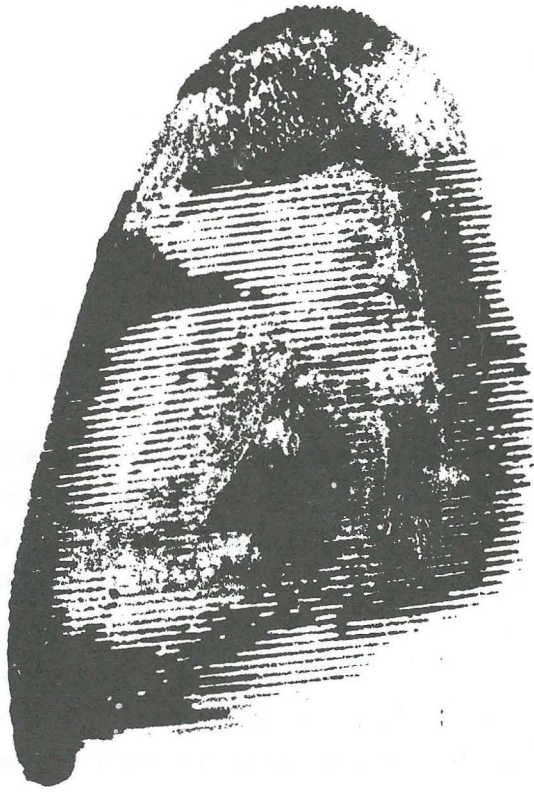


## Old blue car

Natasha Treloar

blue skies blue eyes surfers' coastal roads shocks of sea 'round each corner over each hill each rolling hill up hill down dale trees liquid in my path in my speed their gates I pass their driveways their milk cans used as letter boxes these are tracks roads gateways to wetlands to thick blue water glossy water birds in freshwater long grasses full of waterbirds birds in water they gloss and flap in the sun long fields high and wide I walk among the sharp grass weed thinking of snakes you call to me to you surrounded by butterflies butter fusing in sunlight I lie with you in grass and you tell me it's never been like this before no more you talk of evermore and I don't believe you kiss the butterflies in your hands caress them the sweet lollipops in your gaze your mouth the church bells, we walk back to the old blue car the long blue car you taught me how to park one midnight (sit tight) one night after full wine and music jazz music back on the highway we're late for the gig we're remembering time suddenly a city painted with smog the tiny jazz clubs are solace your stereo the speakers either side of the bed mornings in the front room a vined verandah me dodging sunlight the blinds not fixed yet I shuffle through a kitchen full of dull shined saxophones other brass instruments they lie sadly on the bench this street this street full of small factories and terraced courtyards

A musician's life what a life making people happy emotional cry dance fuck wipe tears of joy they make themselves happy in Fitzroy in cheap streets walking out of gigs tilting away from those who are riding to work they're so early so late what a life what a life (this is) the life your eyes necessarily blue...



# CHARLIE

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

*Bernadette Taylor*



**Charlie talks fast.** He has to talk fast to keep up with the pace of his mind and his footsteps. Charlie walks fast. Ten words per step. He asks me what is my mission. That someone walking as I am, so determined, must have a mission. He falls into step beside me and we fall into conversation.

I'm going to the dole office, I'm late for work.

Where do you work?

Charlie starts to ask his next question before I complete my answer but he listens and he hears. I can tell because his questions have a logical flow.

In a café, part-time. That's why I'm going to the dole office.

That sounds relaxed. I like a relaxed person, lifestyle.

Where are you going?

*Charlie's habit of speed speech makes me talk fast to keep up with him.*

My words fall in step with the rhythm of my feet. Not as fast as Charlie, maybe seven words per step.

I've got a couple of balconies to knock down for some friends. I imagine Charlie knocking down balconies, this makes me smile. I ask Charlie what he does for a living.

I own property, I'm a slum lord. I own a couple of bars in the city. Why don't we just pop around the corner here and blow a joint?

I laugh and look at Charlie for the first time. His hair, grey-black wiry, matches his beard. Mirrored sunglasses, tanned. He doesn't look rich but maybe he spends his money on other things.

No thanks.

What's your name?

I tell him.

What's yours?

Charlie.

He asks me if I have a phone number.

Not that I give to strange men I meet on the street.

That's the problem with women today, you're all so uptight. Charlie makes me laugh, especially now.

He asks me to go on a holiday with him, to the Gold Coast. He arrives at his turn off before I have a chance to answer. He asks me again for my phone number and again I laugh. He asks me for a pen, I don't have one.

Charlie says he will rip his finger off and write his number in blood on the back of my coat.

I tell him he will ruin my coat. Charlie says I don't make it easy for him.

Charlie goes out about twice a week. He puts his dole form in. The next day he goes to the bank.

Some weeks he has to pay his rent.

Charlie goes to the pub sometimes and tries his lines. He tries them on young women, old women, middle-aged women. Charlie doesn't discriminate. Most of the time Charlie sits at home. He lives in a single room with a single window and he sits on his single bed. This is when Charlie rehearses his lines, out loud, to himself. He rocks rhythmically as he does it.

Picture it: bearded, tanned, grey-black wiry haired Charlie, rocking to and fro. Slowly back, slowly forward. Talking. Out loud. To himself. Ten words per rock.

I own a couple of properties, I'm a slum lord. I own a couple of bars in the city. What's your phone number? Let's blow a joint. I'm a relaxed person. I'm looking for someone who has no respect for life, someone to come to the Gold Coast. I've got to knock down some balconies but then I'll be off. Straight to the airport. We'll blow a joint and fly away...

Charlie enjoys his own company. Especially when he is rehearsing his lines. When he thinks they sound smooth, slick, when he believes them himself, that's when Charlie goes for a walk down the main street. He stops rocking, puts on his mirrored sunglasses, checks his reflection and leaves. He falls in step with you, Charlie, and he talks. Talks at you. Does it so you can't escape. Charlie can keep up with you. It's what he does. Ten words per step. ❌



Yell

*eric dando*

spend a lifetime looking  
for some kind of igniter,  
need to buy some cigarettes  
some pot and a lighter

things can change in all sorts of weather  
i've seen a generation that never got it together  
i've seen things change quicker than moons and werewolves  
i've seen hippy kids turn into crusties and ferals  
seen them change their names to avoid themselves

and things sure have changed since  
the early eighties, once you got love  
and now you get scabies.

not much love under the circus tent at st andrews. old  
hairy men sweat out their dreams and nicotine, all sulky  
and grouchy and jaded. one's got a sore throat, one's got  
the shakes, one says his chai is cold

and i for one am sick of all  
you beardy-weirdys, you crustys, you trippys  
with your squirlygigs and hashpipes, you fucking hippys  
gotta grind you down  
bag you up  
run you out of town.

Ephemerian

SJRR



**Today they want watches.**

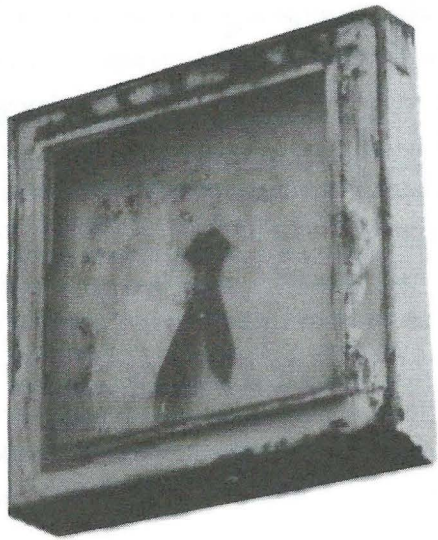
**The abolition of time has begun.**

**They want all the watches that you own,  
old or new, good or bad.**

**I wonder whether they want clocks as well?**

They make no mention of clocks, only watches, wrist or otherwise. Maybe they will ask for clocks tomorrow, I mean the day after tomorrow, as this is not today's paper, it is yesterday's paper. I get yesterday's paper today so I'm always a day behind in the news, but you know I don't find that it makes any difference. I'm sure I could read a newspaper from 1954 and still find it the same. News is news. You would be far far out in the desert if you came upon the mountain. It is unclear where exactly the desert is, or indeed how long it would take you to get there, but at its heart lies the mountain. There is no obvious pathway to the mountain. The blender made me vomit. The first television made my eyes bleed. My toes rawed on the carpet. The skin on my hands de-gloved as I removed the rubber used for washing dishes. The stereo gave me otorrhoea and the canals of my inner ears were so swollen that I couldn't hear. The bed sheets made me itch so that I scratched until I bled and the other made me wear boxing gloves to bed. The boxing gloves brought up blisters around my wrists that wept when they broke. The boxing gloves were child size replicas of real gloves from the toy shop. The hair dryer eventually made my hair fall out.

Everything seemed to make my throat close over. I could feel it sometimes squeezing itself shut like the arse end of a rocket ship jettisoning the afterburner as it heads out into space, alone and unburdened. I had to come here. Those people from the government said that it would be taken care of. They said that my other could come too but my other decided against it. I suppose I can't blame my other really, living out here on the plains with a few trees and a bore doesn't offer much stimulation. I can't blame my other for not wanting to come, not really. When I first came here they offered me things to make the duration easier. They said that they could have things specially treated, like a telephone and a radio. But I said no to everything, except the day old treated newspaper, which is dropped from the sky, and the bare essentials. I figured that my body had made a demand and I should fulfil that demand. Somewhere in secret places inside me I made a decision to be anomic and that was that. Any perverse idea that I had, to ignore this new democratic decision, was going to kill me. I have four uninsulated walls of corrugated iron, a treated futon mattress, a stack of newspapers and nothing.







You would be days and days out into the desert if you came upon the woman's house, which is made of the mountain and which squats in its shadow.

An allergen is any substance or thing that can cause a hypersensitivity within the body, but is not necessarily harmful. Once exposed to an allergen the human body produces antibodies which on subsequent exposure to the same allergen cause the release of histamine and a myriad of symptoms. Some of these symptoms include eczema, bronchospasm, diarrhoea, sinusitis, nosebleeds when applying your favourite perfume, choking when you get in your car, blindness from using your computer, dry flaking skin underneath your watch and wedding band that hurt so much you stop wearing them. In my paper today is a letter from those people from the government. They say that despite the fact that they said they would take care of it they now feel that it is necessary for me to do something in return for my tin house and clear throat. They say that seeing as they are now in possession of a few million wrist watches, and that they possess no real way to get rid of them, they have decided to treat all the watches in the same way that they have treated my newspapers over the years and give them to me. Actually they

*All those tiny springs and cogs winding and finding time,  
explaining and dividing lives.*

won't really be mine, they will still be the property of the government, but they shall be mine to destroy. The letter goes on,

in addition to the millions of watches that shall be transported to you three days from now you will receive a shovel and a steel hammer, both of which shall be treated appropriately. We suggest that in the interest of your health you should perhaps go off for a bit on the day that the watches arrive so as not to be affected by the fumes from the truck.

I have an oxygen mask and oxygen cylinder for such occasions. On reading the letter I lose interest in the paper and instead I go out into the garden. The garden is now grown from seeds gathered off the previous year's crops, all that I have is necessary. I go down on my knees and absently tug at the weeds but I can't stop thinking about all those watches being motored to my barrenness. All those tiny springs and cogs winding and finding time, explaining and dividing lives. I think about digital watches and digital alarms on digital watches and of small racing car games on watches. I think about diamonds and rubies on faces and in works of watches. I think of bands of leather and bands of steel and bands of ribbon and the sun sinks lower and I stop thinking about watches and return to the shed to eat and to sleep. I think about reading the paper, I think about reading the paper and reading the headline 'Today they want clocks.'

You would be far far out in the desert, but not quite to the mountain, if you heard the ticking.

The mayfly is a short lived insect of the class Insecta of the order Ephemeroptera. These flies are very delicate, have very long tails, are easily seen as aquatic larvae and live briefly in the spring in the adult stage. In extremely rare cases these flies have been known to cause severe anaphylaxis. By fanning the beautiful tracery of their wings in close proximity to an 'ephemeraphobe's' face these tiny creatures can cause the acute onset of wheezing and respiratory distress. The 'ephemeraphobe' will also manifest cyanosis as oxygen levels in the circulating blood decrease. Death is almost certain without the intervention of intravenous adrenalin or similar hormones.

I took the advice of the letter. This morning, around mid morning, I saw the trucks coming in from the city. I could see them from miles off on account of the dust and made sure, as they put it in the letter, I went off for a bit. I walked about two hundred metres away from the shed to a big river red gum and after a struggle gaining the first branch climbed into its clean rough arms. I had never done this before, not once since my auto-exile had I climbed a tree. From here I could see the savanna stretching in all directions, its obliterating vastness broken only by the desert pea, an occasional tree and, for the moment at least, the approach of time.

*They looked straight at me, at the bare skin of my body  
that melted into the bark of the tree*

There were nine of them in the end. The first semi-trailer loomed out of its dust cloud like an insect and was followed by seven more in close succession. The ninth arrived about half an hour later. I have no idea why. The drivers all stood around for a while and talked in a circle. They smoked a few cigarettes and pulled thermoses out of the cabins of their trucks. I watched as one of them went up to the door of the shed and knocked. He waited momentarily then went in. I lurched around on my perch for a moment imagining the driver lumbering, like a bushfire, through my shed and its newspapers. There was nothing in there worth stealing and the driver re-emerged within seconds and rejoined the circle. From time to time one of the drivers would look up from his coffee and peer around uneasily at the shed and the garden and the trees and my tree. They looked straight at me, at the bare skin of my body that melted into the bark of the tree, and I was very still. They stayed that night in their cabins. I guess that it was quite a long journey for them. They lit a fire and I could see the gold discs, that were their faces, reflecting its light. In the morning they unloaded the trucks. Down behind the bore, which is behind the garden, which is on the side of the shed which I think faces north, sits the mountain. I have not taken to my new task very well. In the paper that came the day after the trucks left which is really the paper from the day they left was another note. The note said that as wind up watches would wind down and most of the battery operated ones would soon cease also I need only feel obligated to seek out and demolish, with the hammer, those watches that still



alarmed with any regularity. This category only includes the digital watches, as the mechanical ones do not alarm as far as I know. I am looking out over the mountain. I can hear it breathe.

You would have gone much too far out into the desert to turn back if you reached the woman – if you saw her at the base of the mountain digging up something that screamed.

Histamine is a compound which is derived from the breakdown of histadine, an amino acid found in many proteins. On its release during inflammatory or allergic reactions histamine causes the dilation of capillaries, hypotension or low blood pressure, increased secretion of gastric juices, and constriction of the smooth muscle of the bronchi and uterus.

Just now I dug up a watch from the far side of the mountain. It wasn't the only one that was alarming but it was the one that I could hear most clearly, it called to me. I have it in my hand and it is heavy. The silver metal of the case is very thick and the number display is red analogue not liquid crystal. There is a make

### *On its release during from the inflammatory or allergic reactions histamine causes the cilation of capillaries*

name above the face. On the back of the watch is an inscription. I raise the hammer in my other hand.

Using the sand from the desert and the water from the bore I have made a thick cement-like substance that dries fast and has a nice ochre shade. I haven't bothered to collect the paper from out the front. I must have the biggest 'out the front' of anyone in the whole world so if I want to leave the paper there then I guess it's my business. I use the cement to affix the watch with the inscription on the back to the front door of the shed. The brown oozes out from behind the silver face but the watch is firmly stuck. This first one is important but I think that I will be less concerned about the rest of the watches that I will need. ✕



MELINDA MUSCAT



# Mock Chicken

Chris Gregory

**I grew up in a town called Mount Gambier in the southeast corner of South Australia.**

Mount Gambier's main industries involved the production of cheese and trees and the subsequent processing of these materials into more useful forms, such as chipboard and extruded cheddar cheese sticks sealed in transparent plastic tubes. There was also a tourist industry based around the Blue Lake, a large body of water that had collected inside the crater of an extinct volcano. The water from the Blue Lake was particularly blue, but not as blue as the water put in little bottles with labels that read 'genuine Blue Lake water' and then sold to tourists.

My father was a builder, and sometimes he was asked to build fallout shelters under people's houses. The family that lived across the road from us had their own fallout shelter. I was very jealous of their fallout shelter.

The father of the family was in cheese. As I remember, the father was in a position of some authority; I don't think that he was a cheese executive, but he may have been the leader of a small group of cheese workers.

They did not eat as well as my family ate. My childhood diet was like an orgy of meat and chocolate and fairy bread and ice cream sandwiches. After dinner (which we called tea) my parents would drink Irish coffees: instant coffee with a measure of whisky, a scoop of non-dairy whipped cream substitute which came in a tub and would separate into two oleaginous layers on the surface of the hot liquid, and then a sprinkling of cinnamon from a MasterFoods jar. I would prepare myself a similar drink, but made with Milo and without whisky.

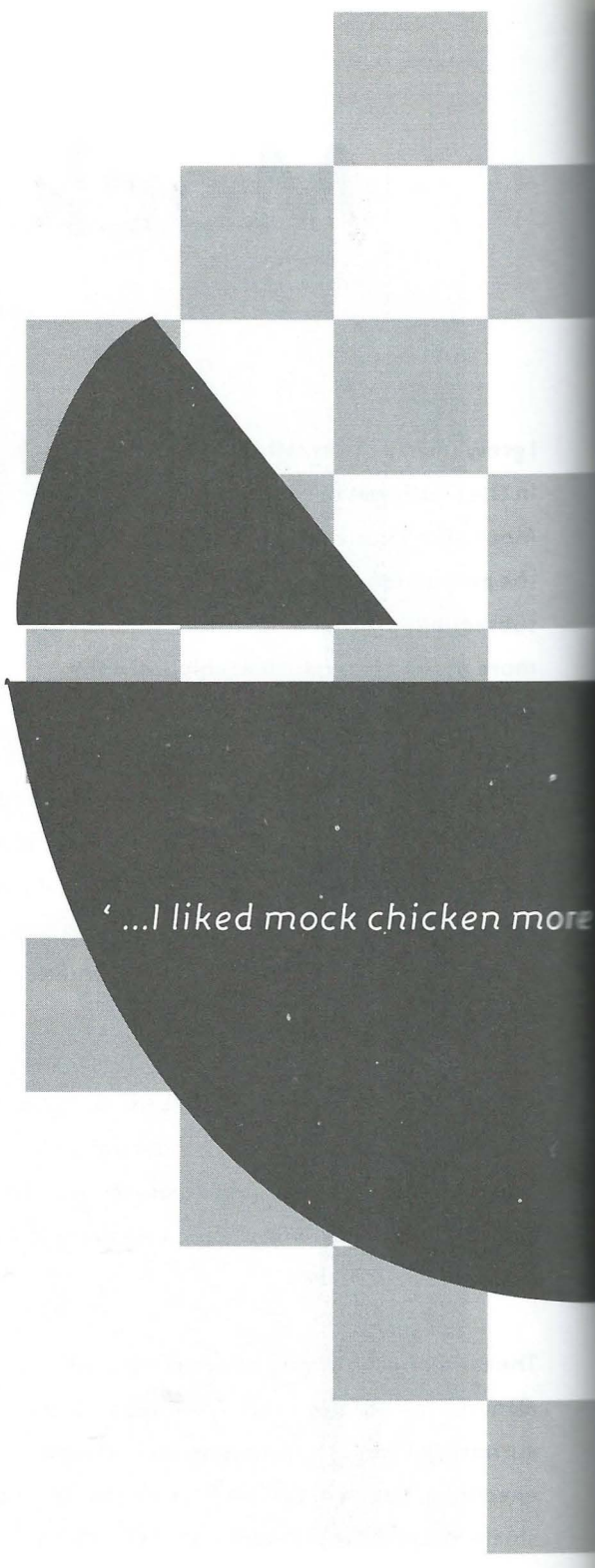
Occasionally one of our families would eat tea at the other family's house. If our neighbours came around on a Friday night, which was fish and chips night, their children would eat all our dim sims. I think they considered dim sims to be too expensive to buy for themselves. To them, eating dim sims at my family's house was an exotic treat.

If we ate at their house, we would invariably be served mock chicken or mock fish or some other processed protein product, along with frozen peas and frozen chips. Perhaps their family had to budget so that they could afford to maintain the fallout shelter. In my family, we had no similar concerns.

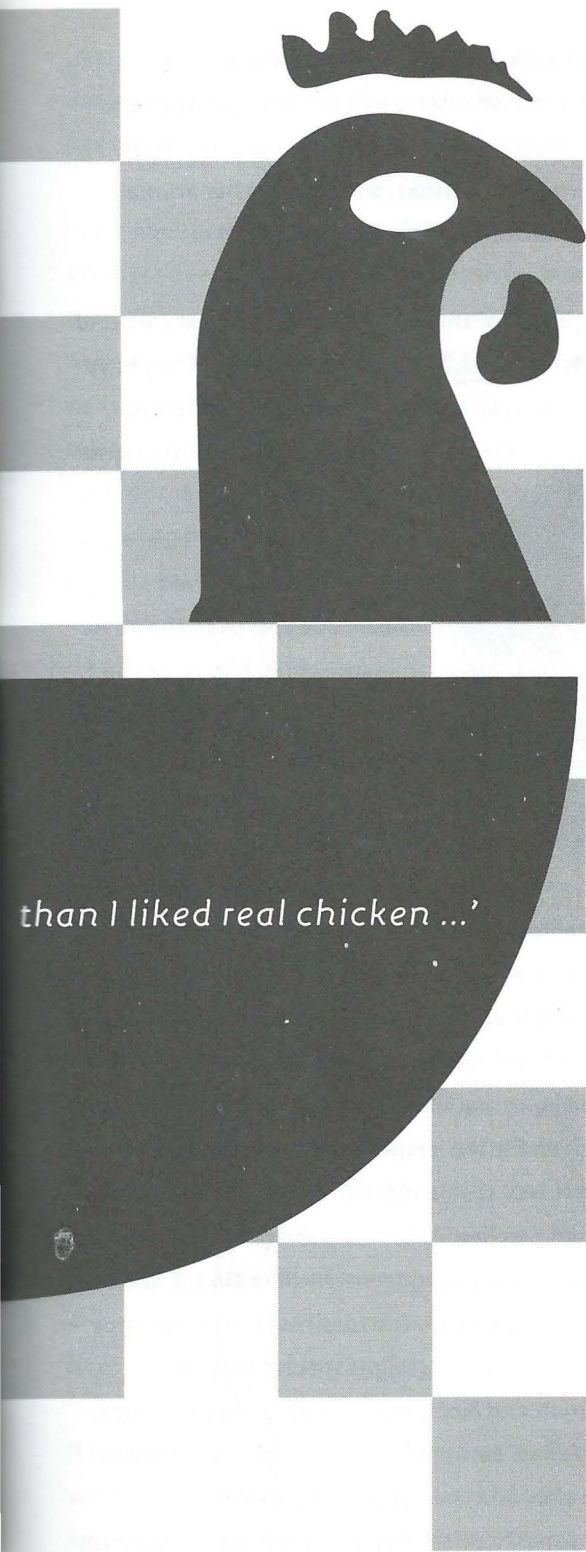
Mock chicken could be bought ready-made from the butcher or prepared at home. The main ingredient was sausage mince, to which a packet of chicken noodle soup was added for flavour. This mixture was then shaped into drumsticks. A thick wooden skewer was inserted along the axis of each drumstick, like a surrogate leg bone, then the drumsticks would be coated in breadcrumbs and deep fried. The mock chicken was eaten with the fingers, held by the protruding end of the wooden skewer.

I liked eating mock chicken. At the time I liked mock chicken more than I liked real chicken. The texture was more consistent, and the skewer was much more convenient and less disturbing than real chicken bones. Eating mock chicken was like eating a cartoon chicken.

People no longer make mock chicken, because real chicken has become inexpensive. In the past thirty years, chicken technology has advanced to the point where chicken is one of the cheapest meats available. In the past most chicken meat came from egg-laying flocks. Now special genetic strains of meat broilers have been developed that are rapid growing, disease resistant and have a desirable texture and flavour. A chicken used to take six months to bring to an edible maturity; now the process only takes six weeks. The modern chicken has a high feed conversion ratio: only two kilograms of feed are needed to produce one kilogram of meat. There have also been cosmetic changes made to the birds: meat broilers have white feathers, so that the pinfeathers are less noticeable to the consumer, and a lighter skin



*'...I liked mock chicken more*



than I liked real chicken ...?

colour, to make the final product look more appealing. The spread of supermarket chains, and the distribution networks designed to service them, has also contributed to the easy availability of chicken.

These days I eat a lot of chicken. The chicken is an elegant and highly sophisticated piece of modern technology. In adspeak, chicken has become an affordable luxury: it has maintained an upmarket image while being available for a low cost. The price of food is very important for people on low incomes, and the easy availability of a good meat, like chicken, contributes greatly to their quality of life. I feel the same way about chicken as I imagine more politically conscious people feel about the democratic system or universal suffrage.

At the same time, I feel a certain nostalgia for mock chicken. Mock chicken was the product of more optimistic times, when people believed that human beings could improve on nature, when the artificial was valued more highly than the real and before the words natural and artificial became synonyms for good and evil respectively.

However, the mock chicken is not the first animal to become extinct as a result of Australian eating habits. The first Australians arrived from the Asian continent around thirty-five thousand years ago. In primary school I was taught that the first Australians were forced here by an approaching Ice Age: as the weather grew colder the people who lived near the poles began migrating toward the tropics and displacing those who lived in their

path. Much of the world's water turned into ice, leaving the level of the world's oceans much lower than usual. This made it easy for the first Australians, driven by increased population pressures and food shortages, to come across from the Asian continent in little canoes and rafts. Later, when the Ice Age was over, the water levels returned to their former height and the first Australians were stuck here.

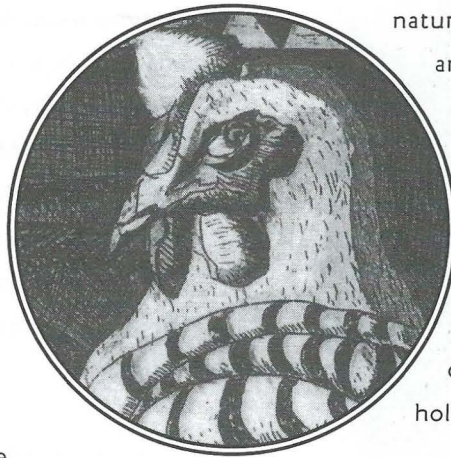
When I think of these first Australians I imagine people much like myself, with similar preferences and tastes. But when the first Australians arrived the landscape was very different. The temperature was on average about eight degrees cooler than it is today. In the southern half of the continent the weather would have been cool to cold, but in the northern half, where the first Australians landed, the weather would have been pleasantly mild.

When I try to imagine how the landscape looked, I picture an endless grassy plain, like a giant paddock, with only the occasional tree and small lake and low hill to break up the monotony. I have to say that this description owes more to my memories of the landscape of cartoons than to anything I have read on the subject of Australia during the Pleistocene epoch.

Inhabiting this landscape I imagine all of the animals that have become extinct since the first Australians arrived: rhinoceros-sized wombats,

giant koalas, strange pig-like and tapir-like creatures, two-metre-tall browsing kangaroos, three-metre-tall emus called mihirungs, huge possums and goannas, and many other animals whose existence can only be guessed at.

I imagine all of these animals just standing around and eating grass, like prehistoric cows. They have never seen humans before and, with few natural predators, they are quite tame and unafraid of these first Australians. Perhaps they are even curious about their visitors and approach them. At the same time, I imagine the first Australians standing at the edge of this scene, after weeks of sea travel and no fresh food, still holding oars in their hands.



Archaeologists are in disagreement about what happened when the first Australians arrived. For a long time it was believed that the extinction of most of the large animal species in Australia was caused by climatic changes. A similar explanation was given for the extinctions that occurred when the first New Zealanders arrived in New Zealand, or when the first Americans arrived in America. The first New Zealanders arrived in New Zealand a thousand years ago. The fossil evidence indicates that at least twenty-eight species of large mammals and birds, most notably the giant moa, disappeared between the arrival of the first New Zealanders and the subsequent arrival of Europeans. The first Americans arrived in America eleven thousand years ago. Within a thousand





years of their arrival, between seventy and eighty percent of the continent's large mammal species had disappeared.

In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee*, Jared Diamond argues that these extinctions were caused by the arrival of human beings. In the case of New Zealand the evidence is conclusive, given that the event was relatively recent. In America the evidence is convincing although subject to doubt, given that the arrival of the first Americans was around eleven thousand years ago. What happened in Australia, more than thirty five thousand years ago, is unclear.



Many people imagine the time of the first Australians as a Golden Age, when life was lived in harmony with nature, untouched by the evils of civilization and industrial society and mass marketing techniques and artificial food flavourings. I also imagine this time as a Golden Age, but my vision of the time is a little different. I am not an archaeologist and, as I mentioned earlier, most of my knowledge of this period of Australian history comes from what I was taught in primary school. But I have one advantage over an archaeologist: I am allowed to say what I would have done in the same situation.

If I was one of the first Australians, standing there with an oar in my hand and surrounded by tame and exotic creatures, my course of action would be clear. I would approach the largest and tastiest-

looking creature I could see, probably one of the rhinoceros-sized wombats that I have seen drawn in children's dinosaur books, and hit it on the head. Then I would build a fire and cook the rhinoceros-sized wombat and eat as much of it as I could. Then I would lie down on my back and happily rub my stomach.

The next day I would pick up my oar, walk the short distance south to another tasty-looking animal and repeat the process. At this moment I would know that I had found my calling: for the rest of my foreseeable lifetime, and the lifetime of any children that I might get around to producing, things would be good.

The geoscientist Paul Martin estimated that it took the first Americans a thousand years to travel from the northern edge of the North American continent to the southern tip of the South American continent. He described their progress as a blitzkrieg. Australia is roughly half the size of the North American continent; I think it is fair to guess that the Australian Golden Age lasted for half that time, about five hundred years. To travel that far in five hundred years, the first Australians would have only had to travel eight kilometres south each year. Even I walk further than eight kilometres a year.

Human beings are omnivores: when one food supply dries up they can easily switch to another. There are none of the usual constraints on their



numbers as there are for animals with specialized diets. As the first Australians moved south, they left only those animals that were too small or too fast to bother catching, or which reproduced rapidly enough to compensate for the appetites of their hunters. Five hundred years is very little time for a species to evolve a fear of human beings. I imagine that, over time, the first Australians would forget a lot of the hunting and gathering skills that they had arrived with, because they no longer needed them. After a couple of generations, I imagine the first Australians as a race of sedate, overweight, and very content people. Again, this is probably just my fantasy.

The further south they travelled, the colder the weather would have been. Food would have become a little harder to find, and I imagine that the first Australians may have occasionally felt anxious about this, if only once or twice in a lifetime.

I can imagine the ancestors of the first Australians, some five hundred years later, as they approach the southern coast of Australia. I imagine a young man, more restless than his fellow Australians, being the first to arrive at the place where, many thousands of years in the future, Mount Gambier would be built. I imagine this young man to be about the same age as I was when I left Mount Gambier, to provide a convenient reference.

The Blue Lake did not form until ten thousand years ago; when the first of the first Australians arrived it was still an active volcano. Occasionally I imagine the volcano would flare up. When this young man arrives I imagine the skies are dark with ash and smoke and the animals have all left. At least the animals are smart enough to avoid this natural disaster.

For the first time in his life the young man starts to feel hungry. He probably mistakes the hunger pains for the first symptoms of some illness. He hurries south as fast as he can, never imagining that one day this seeming vision of Hell would turn into the kind of place that city people would imagine would be a good place to bring up kids.

Out of breath and in a state of near panic he travels the remaining fifteen kilometres south. About him graze the surviving members of a variety of species: a rhinoceros-sized wombat, a giant koala, a strange pig-like creature and a tapir-like creature, a two-metre-tall browsing kangaroo, a three-metre-tall emu called a mihirung, a huge possum and a goanna, and a few other animals whose existence can only be guessed at.

But for now the young man is not interested in food, at least not directly. He is standing on a beach, staring at a sea which he would have had no reason to expect would be there, and his mind is concentrated solely on the terrible sinking feeling that is growing in his stomach. ❄



# REVIEWS

## Review



### Snail

Eric Dando

Reviewed by James Buck

Penguin \$14.95

Snail Malone's world is instantly recognisable and terrifyingly funny. *Snail* is Eric Dando's first novel. It deals with family breakdowns, unemployment, rancid food, hedge burning, mental illness, death, gardening and drugs. Surprisingly it is not a depressing book. This is due mainly to two of Eric's great strengths: the first is humour; his lateral thinking and eye for quirky detail allow us to register traumatic events whilst laughing ourselves silly. The second is the structure of the novel; it is broken up into short snippets, almost like a series of anecdotes. As I was reading the novel I had the feeling that I was 'hanging around' with Snail Malone and

he was telling me his story the way stories are usually told between people – in fragments. This allows the story to move backwards and forwards through time thus giving the novel an extra dimension – a tragic incident is related, you laugh at a funny line and before you know it you're involved in a completely different anecdote – the tragedy is told but not lingered over. If the reader wishes to return to the section, they may or they can just as easily allow the narrative to drag them along.

This is also a damn good toilet book. User-friendly read as much or as little as you like – the anecdotes are self contained; individual building blocks that, at first glance, seem to be almost randomly thrown together. Make no mistake, the author knows what he's doing, there is as much of the story that is unsaid-like a good piece of music, the silences are as necessary as the notes.

The story opens with Snail house hunting with Mary and James who are vegans and

mention it at every opportunity. They are not fruitarians. 'Newton was a fruitarian'. They find a house in what seems to be North Fitzroy. It has a garden (this is essential for Snail) and their kitchen is like 'a third world country'.

We learn how Snail grew up in Daylesford until age fourteen when he moved to Brunswick with his mother. He still visits his father and grandfather who advises, "the only thing you'll need in life is gaffa tape".

Howie is Snail's friend and is a major presence in the story. He is an insane kleptomaniac eco-warrior. Howie's mum is as mad as a snake, has a house full of weevils and Japanese exchange students. The list of characters reads like pure comic fiction – but what is so funny and sad is that they are instantly recognisable. There is a strong sense of individual voices, the conversations are so absurd that they ooze authenticity.

I found this sense of familiarity drawing me in. In

my favourite 'anecdote' they are having a contest about who knows the most dead people. Kate wins; she knows ten and her father is very sick. Whilst I was reading this I found myself joining in the contest and making my own list, but before I knew it I was convulsing with laughter at the theory that roads would be much safer if they were made of wood and polished by council workers. Everyone could slide to work in their socks. This snippet entitled 'wood' is just over a hundred words and for me perfectly illustrates the author's method.

It is a world infested with weevils. Weevils in the food. Weevils in Snail's father's head. "a weevil shot jfk."

Nearly everyone in the novel is deluded in one way or another. Mary is involved in learning witchcraft by correspondence. Snail doesn't allow himself any favours, he cops it along with the rest, "we were all dickheads in the eighties" he states at the opening of one section.

In one wonderful misadventure he and Howie chop down an 'alien' cypress tree to make way for a native red gum for the possums to nest in - in the process they accidentally kill a baby possum.

Greenies, confests and new agers all come in for a bit of stick - but it isn't just fodder for jokes or idle cynicism. Snail's observations are disarmingly simple and mostly hit the mark. This is not a flawless novel, there are sections that drag a little but they are quickly replaced and consequently don't hinder the narrative flow.

*Snail* also contains moments of poetry, dreams and short rhyming paragraphs that playfully complete an anecdote. There are also enough jokes and one liners to make a decent stand up comedian positively green (and I don't mean ecologically sound). Essentially *Snail* is a damn good read, with much more thrown in if you want it. Unlike many recent Australian novels that a apparently bare all but show us nothing, *Snail*

uses humour and very sharp eye to reveal the necessary details. It shows us the dark side of life but does not wallow in it. It explores the past without getting lost in nostalgia. You get the feeling that there is something going on outside the page that we haven't been shown but it can only be shown as shadows or perhaps ... weevils.

## Review



### Blur : Stories by Young Australian Writers

(ed) James Bradley

Reviewed by Thuy On

Vintage \$17.95

Any assortment of creative material written by a group of authors modified by the word 'young' is certain to give rise to the inevitable comparative treatment with the hope of finding some under-lying

similarities between them all. James Bradley, perhaps foreseeing the critic's desire for glib categorizations, is quick to warn against hasty generalizations. His introduction serves as a cautionary note; he wearily dismisses those pigeonholing labels oh so carelessly bandied about like decorative confetti – words like Generation X and Slacker that have lost all potency through sheer over-exposure. Instead, he warily admits that “at first blush, it would be tempting to declare that their only unity is their disunity, their only uniformity their plurality”. However, *Blur* does have a loosely run skein of thought that ties all the writers together: the tangible thread between the disparate demography of the contributors is youth, or relative youth. All the authors in this anthology were born after 1960; growing up amidst but not experiencing life, in a post-Whitlam, post-moon landing era. Consequently, as Bradley explains, “Our world is not the one that our parents grew up in ...” This truism is, of course, so self-evident that it

elicits no disagreement but Bradley is emphatic about wanting to *explore our point of view* in whatever glorious homogenous mixture of gender, race, class, culture or sexuality it canvasses. *Blur* is thus a rather apt title for the anthology, because although each individual work and narrative voice is a discrete entity in its own right, by the time you finish reading the whole collection, the lines of distinction that separate one story from the other become blurry and there is a vague sense that the young and restless are indeed “articulating a shared language.”

*Blur* contains thirty one stories; some by prominent writers who have already waded waist deep into the great Australian literary scene – others by those yet to make much of a splash. There are the big names, used perhaps as a drawing card; the disingenuous pretty boys Matthew Condon and Christos Tsiolkas; past and present Vogel winners, Mandy Sayer and Darren Williams; short-listed authors Nick Earls, Luke

Davies and James Bradley; and Elliot Perlman, winner of the 1995 Age short story competition. But the remaining stories by those lesser known are arguably just as good as those penned by their more famous peers. It is impossible to do justice to them all and comment on every worthy entry. Nonetheless, there are a couple of pieces that are breathlessly well-crafted, original or brazen that beg specific accolades. But because the well-established writers have already secured a reputation for producing superlative work, I think it's only fair to try to redress the balance and concentrate on those who haven't as yet achieved, but deserve, such success.

Chloe Hooper's 'Sensitive Dependence', for instance, cleverly punctuates the narrative of a grandfather's funeral with ironic images of death. The black gothic T-shirt at a seedy pub reads, “For me, a corpse has a beauty and dignity which a living body could never hold.” The reality

of death and the pretensions of worshipping it are delicately teased out. And in what must be one of the most quotable quotes in the whole anthology, a world-weary character confesses “I decided that I really must be Generation X after all, because I didn’t give a shit when Kurt Cobain died.”

Darren Williams’ ‘Birthday Blues’ has a clipped, spare, economical style that matches the mood of the narrator who is experiencing a souring relationship and who has just “woken up to smell the fucking roses”. By contrast, Mireille Juchau’s ‘Passage’ is suffocatingly sensuous and sublime in detail and mood. David Snell’s ‘The Facts About Meat’ manages to weave the motif of beef into the violence and desire of sadomasochistic fantasy. ‘Things are different here’ by Chi Thi-My Vu is a brilliant example in poignant, understated narrative; the whole geographical dislocation between Vietnam and Australia is underscored by a haircut.

Without exploiting that

restrictive term ‘grunge literature’, there are the almost mandatory casual mentions of pot, ‘ecky’ and explicit descriptions of sex, both heterosexual and homosexual. A quirky humour is also prevalent in some of the works in *Blur*. Nino, in Elliot Perlman’s ‘The Inequality of Fear’, rationalizes unsatisfying sex, “I’m sorry I couldn’t keep on ... but you can’t call it premature. I’ve been waiting all my life.” Meanwhile, Stephen Dunne’s character in ‘Dogboy’ mutters facetiously, “Poofters always dump their boyfriends on Thursday so they’ve got the weekend free to find a new one.” Mandy Sayer’s ‘The Story of X’ with its end-twist is wryly observed with humour intact, but Luke Davies’ ‘Crabs’, exploring a unique way of eliminating genital parasites, is downright wickedly amusing. *Blur* offers a dazzling kaleidoscope of choices in narrative voices and themes; it is a superb collection, documented proof that young Australian writers have a voice and an eloquent one at that.

Cautioned by James Bradley

against pinpointing the anthology with some vacuous generalization, perhaps it’s just wise to conclude with a few words from Bernard Cohen’s definition of youth in ‘Nostalgia’s Glossary’ - “This is agony. Don’t believe otherwise.”

## Review



### Zines

Review by Steve Grimwade

The definition of zine is as fluid as cultural identity. Although zines exist, and that is a fact made concrete by millions of illegally photocopied pages, their identity is constantly wavering. It’s constantly altered by those who choose to independently publish their versions of the truth, their perspectives on life and their desire-nay need to make these desires public. It’s identity is *Eddie*, it’s also *The Burning Times*, oh, and don’t forget *Seven* or *Woozy*

or *Loser Magazine* or *Substance D* or *SPUNK* or *geekgirl* or on and on and on.

Such is the nature of zines that the only way to grasp them is physically in your hand, rather than with a broad sweep of generalizations.

Recently the word 'zine' has been bandied about misleadingly by journalists and zinners alike, almost to the same extent as that other 90's misnomer - Generation X. It seems that there's a heightened perception that both arrived together (and most probably hand in hand with grunge), although this is probably the result of slack analysts creating easy solutions.

Self-publishing of such a fringe nature has been popular since the 60s, and probably has its birthdate closer to Gutenberg's invention of the printing press.

In the most recent past fanzines have been known as glorified rags celebrating a band and written by someone who was either in the band or

wanted to be. They were a means of broadcasting someone's passion and love, and were also a broad swipe at the mainstream press's refusal to get its hands dirty with bands on the edge. And they still are. The only difference is that now the umbrella has been opened further, and zines aren't restricted to the world of music, rather they now seem to cover every obsession from Prisoner to TISM, and Christians to serial killers (not necessarily in the same zine).

One of the fundamental reasons for the existence of zines seems to stem from the term 'self-empowerment'. With regard to the word 'zine', 'self-empowerment' is another term that's been bandied about, but this time I believe rightfully so. For although both words are as multifaceted and open-ended as each other, their relevance to each other is keen indeed.

Firstly, as Elizabeth Rogers from the zine directory *Megazeen* says, "I think it's important to note that a lot of [younger] people don't get the

chance to get their work out and to be taken seriously. [Zines] totally debunk the myth that kids should be seen and not heard."

Take self-empowerment to another level and you get *Woozy* - in all respects. *Woozy* is the anarchists' guide to survival in the modern world, and is a zine that seems to carry self-empowerment as one of its themes. In *Woozy's* case it's about the dissemination of information to help others take control of their lives. In their 6th issue they talked about self-sufficiency and self-help, making your own wine, organic gardening and Local Energy Transfer Schemes. In a very functional way *Woozy* displays self-empowerment as a lifestyle, yet zines can be empowering in more ways still.

One of the modern-day fanzines to surface has been *Seven*, the zine for and by lovers of the artist formerly known as Prince. Asked how and why the zine came together, *Seven's* editor Vicki Shuttleworth simply replied,



"It's just that I'm a fan."  
Elucidating, she continued,  
"It's something that just  
evolved ... He [the artist  
formerly known as ...] doesn't  
have a mass following in  
Australia, and there was  
nothing before, so I just felt  
I've got no-one to express this  
interest with. By the time we  
had a group together I then  
thought 'Why not do a  
magazine?' It just sort of  
evolved from that. There was  
no deliberate plan from the  
beginning - I want to do a zine,  
therefore this is going to  
happen. It was more I just  
wanted to meet people that  
share my interest."

Richard Watts, editor of *The  
Burning Times*, a queer punk-  
alternative fanzine, amplifies  
this with his own perspective,  
"The first issue was almost a  
scream. This was heard by a  
few people who are now find-  
ing their own voice." And thus  
the zine goes from the  
personal cry of 'Hey! I'm  
here!' to 'Is anyone out there?'  
In this way the personal  
becomes public, and if pitching  
to an unvoiced minority, the  
zine can take on a life of its

own. Richard continues,  
"[Zines] grow and mutate in  
directions you don't really  
expect. When I started off it  
was specifically going to be a  
zine for queer punk music ...  
but it's now grown to be a  
more general alternative queer  
zine instead of *Outrage* or  
*Campaign* which are glossy  
lifestyle mags. I'm now  
putting in political articles and  
articles on, say, bisexual issues  
or transgender issues, which  
are part of the queer  
community that don't crop up  
in the mainstream gay rags.  
It's a direction the zine's kind  
of taking for itself and it's  
interesting to sit back and see  
what happens. Almost  
anything I'm interested in  
ends up there. ... I basically  
seem to have tapped into a  
voice in the queer community  
that wasn't being heard, and  
wasn't being represented  
elsewhere. That's what the  
zine is becoming, the forum  
for, I suppose, alienated queers."  
And that's another of the  
reasons zines exist: for the  
disaffected among us who  
have no other means of  
sharing their concerns and  
obsessions; items from the

fringe that're not usually  
taken up by the mainstream  
media.

Much is said in a denigrating  
way about the 'standard' of  
zines. Most people are  
concerned with the surface  
value of zines and put-off by  
their predominantly  
cut'n'paste nature. With  
regards to the politics of  
representation Richard Watts  
says, "I have friends who are  
designers and are kind of  
harassing me saying 'let me  
help you lay-out your zine and  
it'll look much nicer', but I kind  
of find that slick mainstream  
look ... I don't like it, it's just  
not me. This sort of visual  
imagery [cut'n'paste] is more  
confrontational, it's more  
provocative. It's a visual way  
of setting the zine apart.  
We're not so concerned about  
image here, we're concerned  
about issues."

Not only is there a question of  
production values being raised  
but also one of immediacy.  
When you see bright covers,  
blonde hair and the words 'sex  
survey' you immediately  
know what you're getting.

The same can be said about black and white photocopies with cut'n'paste lettering.

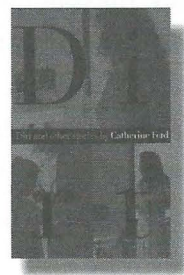
Not all zines come from the cut'n'paste school. Vicki from *Seven* thinks 'there's an inverted snobbery operating in the zine world – that it has to be – low-grade, even trashy-looking, otherwise it doesn't qualify.' Whether this is true or not there is no doubt that some zine editors know how to operate their desktop programs. Some successful and high-end production zines include *geekgirl* and *Spunk*, neither of which trade-off the quality of their material for design and production concerns.

Lastly I'd like to address the concern of whether or not you can critically analyse zines. Zines are usually made by someone who almost has to do it. They are essentially made for their maker's benefit, while you, the reader, come a close second. That's not to say that criticism doesn't hurt, indeed it hurts even more because of the personal nature of the publication. Many zinners not

only write and edit their own zines, but design and distribute it themselves, and most usually end up paying for the privilege of doing so. Thus I believe you have to nurture and forgive bad work in the hope that roses will grow. I think you should mirror Elizabeth Rogers when she says she approaches "zines with wide naive cow eyes, hoping for the best", remaining open to whatever reality unfolds on the paper.

No matter what zines are and what people say about them, none of this really matters. Whatever happens zines will continue to exist and continue to provide information that the mainstream media won't and can't, because of market pressures and economic censorship. Zines will continue to be personal statements about the state of our obsessions and how these aren't placated anywhere else; and they will continue to function as a worldwide link of underground news and views. But mostly, they'll allow their makers to create their own agenda and exclaim once done, "Gee man, look what I made!"

## Review



### Dirt

Catherine Ford

Reviewed by Mike Shuttleworth

Text \$14.95

In *Dirt*, Catherine Ford's impressive short story collection, she records this chance remark: "I'd rather live ten years as a fox terrier than a hundred as a snail". The statement reads like shorthand for the bitter ironies, unapologetic excess and kind of surprise readers will find in the ten stories.

*Dirt* is an astringent document of isolated people and couples in new and strange territory, border-crossers caught on the web of old attachments, memories and unexamined histories. 'Three Miles Wide' opens the collection with a gloriously gossipy monologue about a woman painter's rise

above imposed mediocrity, spiking moments of social pretension.

“He wore high-tops to Christies! At that moment I felt sorrier for him than for her...He’d brought his mobile phone with him...The sad thing was it didn’t ring once the entire three hours we were together. Loserish, the whole thing.”

One thing I immediately like here is the writer’s willingness to trust the reader in actively participating in the story-telling. The casual vernacular voice welcomes the reader, rather than imposes a position. The story works as an off-beat overture and plunges us straight into the sway of language and event. The stories which follow are altogether more sober yet even more impressive.

‘Empty’ tells of a couple living in Singapore foundering beneath grief and isolation, uncertain of the fragments of meaning which pass through their lives. Jack is a musician who has turned his talent toward writing jingles for

advertising. Numbed and depressed in grief for the death of his father, he is also fighting off bankruptcy. His life is a grinding vortex and where will it level out? Jack and Peggy’s faltering conversation is punctuated with images of Asian religion and everyday life. Peggy is woken one morning by the sounds of Muslim prayer, a moment in which hope buds.

“...It was calming to hear the sound. She thought of people kneeling on their mats in their houses and apartment blocks. She thought of them with their foreheads to the floor. What was it they were worshipping exactly? Some large, great thing?”

‘The Last Vice-Consul’ builds like a tropical storm, depicting the charged and frustrated relationship between two Australian couples on diplomatic service in the Pacific. The uneasy meeting between neighbours has a Carver-like edge to it, full of detail and unexpressed desire. The emotional centre of the story tilts between the quartet and ends in a beautifully

poised unforced moment, as perfect as geometry. The eponymous vice-consul, flying above the island in a plane with a junior colleague whose wife he has flirted with earlier in a nightclub, looks below.

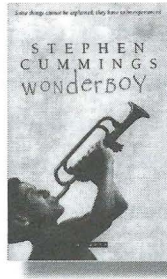
“He could see the whole island, the shaky line of its periphery, with only the smallest angling of his head. It didn’t seem so big after all. In fact it was as though they were inching almost painfully across the sight of bright green eye. Even the palms...waved like thick black trembling eyelashes.”

It is that “shaky line of the periphery”, the thin borders, which accentuate the human folly and frailty of this book. The stories show an acute sense of people living beyond the boundaries of familiar culture and class expectation, struggling to articulate the fears and knowledge of their condition. Catherine Ford’s work has at least two qualities which in my view mark her out as a writer of distinction. The collection offers timeliness and a firm feeling in

capturing contemporary beliefs, anxieties and lifestyles that works beyond the fashionable. Secondly, she avoids the formulaic and she makes stories of beautiful shape and originality.

Reading *Dirt I* was reminded of another Melbourne writer who works at the borders of expatriate experience and that is Beverley Farmer in her early volume, *Milk*. Both books reveal moments of tenderness and betrayal and locate them within a larger perspective. These stories are punchy, urgent and tender. Ford is a tough-minded writer and readers who enjoy their pleasure with a minimum of compromise and a measure of technical polish will be rewarded here.

## Review



### Wonderboy

Stephen Cummings

Reviewed by Thuy On

Minerva \$14.95

Stephen Cummings; that soulful croonster, that Brunswick Street-flavoured-hepcat whose musical career includes four albums with *The Sports* as well as seven solo efforts, has just veered off on another tangent and momentarily exchanged his trusty microphone for the novelty of the pen. *Wonderboy* is his first bookish creation and the emphasis should be on the word 'wonder' for the novel is essentially an escapist fairytale, a gentle world where guardian angels and fortunated deities are as much a part of the action as mere earthly good Samaritans.

At first *Wonderboy* seems to

be yet another detailed illustration of the modern dysfunctional family. Charles Mann is the epitome of the 80's SNAG, a divorced single dad trying to raise his precocious nine-year old son, Max. Whereas Max is imbued with the vitality of a typical pre-pubescent enchanted by dinosaurs and baseball caps. Charles is enervated and listless; still choking on the residue of an unsuccessful marriage. He is also burdened with unresolved memories of his own father, Fletcher, who had abandoned him during the crucial formative years of his youth. After suffering from such violently painful episodes, Charles' defence mechanism is to isolate himself from the blood and drama of life, preferring to stand meekly in the wings watching. He is a veritable "lost soul, who dragged his shadow around behind him, covering his tracks as he went."

But he is unable or unwilling to bury the past. Struggling with an equivocal mixture of love and resentment for his



father, Charles begins to dream about the irresponsible deserter, but because *Wonderboy* values the ethereal and the intangible over the real, his dreams come to mean much more than just subconscious subliminal images. They serve as a sympathetic, telepathic connection; for his father, we are told, also dreams of Charles.

To help bridge the yawning chasm of betrayal and forgiveness is a spirited godmother/guardian angel found in the disembodied voice of Charles' nanna.

Her voice, positively crackling with good will, is separated from the rest of the text with the use of italics. There is nothing unusual about a second narrative presence except for the fact that Charles' nanna is dead. Her voice takes on the role of the omniscient all-seeing pulling-the-strings manipulator from some benevolent celestial plane. "Poor Charles," she intones conspiratorially, "is about to undergo a change."

Indeed, through a surreal train ride, populated by quirky oddball characters, Charles and Max are magically transported to Vietnam to effect a reconciliation with the now bed-ridden and cancer-riddled Fletcher; Charles is given a chance to conquer his own emotional cancer and exorcize the ghosts of his past.

Before the reader has had time to acclimatize to suburban Melbourne monotones where petty neighbourly disputes provide the colour of an otherwise grey existence, the teeming, madding crowds of Vietnam burst on the scene and envelope the two travellers in a babble of foreign noise and smells.

Yet the reader who approaches *Wonderboy* with expectations of action-packed adventure will duly be disappointed, for the novel is very much a slow-moving affair. The narrative pace moves languidly; from the minutely observed details of domestic parental life, Cummings takes us to the meandering, labyrinthine backstreets of Vietnam where

romance intrudes and resolutions and destinations are continually postponed. Cummings can perhaps be accused of pandering to the stereotypical portrayal of Asia-as-romantic-and-exotic Other; a welcomed haven of warm spirituality to the cold comfort rationality of Western thought. There is a Yin and Yang dialectic operating all throughout *Wonderboy*.

However, the meeting of East and West is relatively frictionless, the generation gap between fathers and sons is reconciled. And though Caitlin, the inevitable love interest, provides a strong-headed contrast to wishy-washy Charles, their union is glowingly assured because ultimately *Wonderboy* is an optimistic novel; a celebration of the indestructibility of family ties and the soothing balm of romantic love - not to mention the reparable effects of a good holiday!

## Overland PO Box 14146, MCMC, Melbourne, Vic. 8001, Australia.

*Overland* is a quarterly literary magazine founded in 1954 by Stephen Murray-Smith.

**Subscriptions:** \$32 a year posted to addresses within Australia; pensioners and students \$25; life subscription \$500; overseas \$60. Payment may be made by Mastercard, Visa or Bankcard.

**All correspondence:** PO Box 14146, MCMC, Melbourne, Vic. 8001, Australia. Phone 03 9380 1152. Fax 03 9380 2586.

Manuscripts are welcome, but will be returned only if stamped and addressed envelopes are provided. Material accepted for publication must also be submitted on disk (IBM-compatible, Word 6 preferred). All care will be taken, but no responsibility can be accepted for lost manuscripts. Minimum rates of payment: stories and features: \$90; poems: \$40; reviews: \$60. The Copyright Agency Limited is authorised to collect charges for photo and electronic copying of published material. *Overland* distributes money received for copying in the proportion of 80% to authors and 20% to the publisher. Copyright remains the property of the authors. Scholarly articles will be refereed, and must be submitted on disk and in triplicate hard copy.

**Editor:** John McLaren / **Guest Editors:** Michelle Ainley, Thuy On, Jo-Anne Printz, Natasha Treloar, Susan Williams / **Associate Editors:** Ian Syson, Karin Moses / **Editorial Assistance:** Louise Craig, Michael Dugan, Phil McCluskey / **Editorial Co-ordinator:** Alexandra Skutenko / **Design:** Stephen Banham, THE LETTERBOX / **Pre-press:** Kristie Stewart, THE LETTERBOX / **Publisher:** The OL Society Ltd., 361 Pigdon Street, North Carlton 3054, incorporated in Victoria, ACN 007 402 673 / **Printing:** Australian Print Group, Maryborough / **Board:** Geoffrey Serle (*Chair*), Nita Murray-Smith, David Murray-Smith (*Secretary*), Michael Dugan, Rick Amor, Shirley McLaren (*Treasurer*), Judith Rodriguez, Richard Llewellyn, John McLaren, Vane Lindesay, Stuart Macintyre.

**Correspondents:** Dorothy Hewett (*Sydney*), Donald Grant (*Perth*), Katherine Gallagher (*London*), Tim Thorne (*Launceston*), David Headon (*Canberra*). *Overland* is assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. *Overland* acknowledges the financial support of Arts Victoria, a division of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. *Overland* index is published with the magazine every two years. *Overland* is indexed in APAIS, AUSLIT, *Australian Literary Studies* bibliography, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* bibliography. *Overland* is available in microfilm and microfiche from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, USA.

ISSN 0030 7416. © Copyright by the editors and authors.

## Overland Floating Fund

*John McLaren writes:* At the time of writing, the Literature Fund still has not announced its policy for magazines after the end of 1996, and the change of government does not suggest that the arts are about to enter a period of lavish support, so the assistance of our readers through the Floating Fund is more important than ever. This issue of *Young Writing* has been published in conjunction with the Next Wave Festival, and provides a sample of the writers who will open our eyes to the future. Your donations will ensure that *Overland* continues to flourish as a forum where old and new, readers and writers, can share their views.

Our particular thanks to the following:

\$750 V.E.; \$120 M.H.; \$68 Z.N.; \$32 G.B.; \$30 J.B., P.A.; \$28 J.C., J.S., K. & A. I.; \$18 B.N-S., J.P., A.B., E.W., M.L.; \$10 S.H-M.; \$8 J.B., L.C., D.M., A.S., A.G., P.S., M.S., J.S., F.S.; \$5 R.I., N.A.; \$3 R.H., G.S., E.W. Total = \$1305.

## Overland Subscription

- Australia's leading radical literary and cultural journal.
- Subscribe today and join the other readers committed to maintaining the strength and diversity of Australian literary culture.
- Get involved in the Take Three campaign and help broaden the opportunities for Australian writers and readers.

### Overland Subscription form

Please enter a subscription for:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> One year \$32     | <input type="checkbox"/> Pensioners/Students \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overseas \$60     | <input type="checkbox"/> Life/Subscription \$500  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donation \$ ..... |   |

Please debit my Bankcard, Visa, Mastercard

Expiry

Signature ..... Name on card .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....



**Tom Ball** is a writer and spoken word performer, has performed at Montsalvat, Lounge, La Mama, Speakeasy, Slaughterhouse, and is published in the 1995 Visible Ink anthology

**Justine Black**'s essay 'The Internet Relationship' is part of a talk given at the 1995 National Book Council 2nd National Book Summit; she is a Melbourne based writer

**Neil Boyack**, co-author of *See Through* (UQP 1996) to be launched at the 1996 Next Wave Festival, has performed spoken word with Jello Biafra and Lydia Lunch, has self-published *Black and Snakeskin / Vanilla*, and spoken word cassette *Golden Greats*

**James Buck** is a Melbourne writer, and one of the Howlings in the Head trio who present spoken word for radio on 3RRR FM and ABC Radio National, and produce and feature in spoken word events

**Raimondo Cortese** is a Melbourne writer and playwright

**MTC Cronin** is a NSW writer who has published a collection of poetry, *Zoetrope - we see us moving* (Five Island Press 1995) and is currently a post-graduate student at University of Sydney

**Eric Dando** is the author of *Snail* (Penguin 1996) and performs spoken

word with band The Bald Men in Sleeping Bags

**Tracy A Forbes** is a Melbourne Writer

**Chris Gregory** is currently working on a pseudo - hagiography, has published *Mabel Ambrose's Head* (Drome True Crime 1993) and has been anthologised in *AEdon and Picador New Writing 2*

**Michelle Griffin** is a writer and freelance journalist

**Steve Grimwade** is a Melbourne writer, and edits spoken word events broad-sheet *Write Out Loud*

**Annamarie Jagose** is the author of the novel *In Translation* (Allen & Unwin 1995)

**Tony McGowan** is a journalist and novelist, and the author of *Crew* (Allen & Unwin 1995) which was highly commended for the 1994 Vogel Award

**Ben Maas** is a Melbourne writer, and has performed his work at La Mama as part of the 1994 Next Wave Festival

**Chris Newton** is a Singapore born writer who spent his childhood in Australia, has lived in Switzerland for the past five years, and is currently based in Melbourne

**Edwina Preston** was runner-up for *The Age Short Story Competition* in 1995, and

has performed spoken word at Monsalvat, Slaughterhouse, Tongue' n'Groove, Lounge and the 1996 Big Day Out

**Thuy On**, currently studying Professional Writing at Holmesglen TAFE, is on the Next Wave Overland Editorial Committee. She does not want to write the great Australian novel (though she wouldn't mind editing it)

**SJRR** is a Melbourne writer

**Peter Salmon** is a writer who having realized that the novel is a bourgeois artform feels relieved of the responsibility of ever having to write one

**Mike Shuttleworth** is a Freemantle bookseller

**Luke Icarus Simon** is a NSW writer who is working on a novel

**Mic Smith** is a writer currently residing in Melbourne

**Bernadette Taylor** is a Melbourne writer

**Natasha Treloar** is a Melbourne writer currently studying Publishing and Writing at RMIT, and is on the Next Wave Overland Editorial Committee

**Susan Williams** is currently studying professional writing at RMIT and is on the Next Wave Editorial Committee







## NEXT WAVE WRITERS WEEKEND



### How many writers does it take to change a light bulb?

Next Wave is Australia's contemporary arts festival dedicated to the work of young and emerging artists.

Next Wave Writers Weekend is two days of forums, performance, launches, conference, between young and emerging and established writers.

Saturday June 1, Sunday June 2

Storey Hall, RMIT, 360 Swanston Street, Melbourne

#### Forums

Featuring Christos Tsiolkas, Justine Ettler, Raimondo Cortese, Claire Mendes, Clinton Walker, Michelle Griffin, Peter Salmon and more...

#### Writers in performance

Edward Berridge, Barbara Wels, Chris Gregory, Leonie Stevens, Tom Ball, Anna Kay, Mark Panozzo, Bernadette Taylor, and many more...

**SHOW N TELL**, speak now or forever hold your piece, Saturday 8pm

Spoken word performance, live bands, live crosses to New York celebrity performers, with Neil Boyack, Jay Kranz, Edwina Preston, Eric Dando and The Bald Men in Sleeping Bags, Howlings in the Head, & more...

Next Wave Overland launch with guest speakers & performances by contributors

Enquiries 03 9417 7632

email: [nextwave@peg.apc.org](mailto:nextwave@peg.apc.org)



# MEGAZEEN

## AUSTRALIAN FANZINE DIRECTORY

### NEXT EDITION

LAUNCH MONDAY JUNE 17TH

STOP 22 GALLERY — 60 FITZROY ST, ST KILDA

THREE WEEK EXHIBITION FANZINES AND COMIC BOOKS

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~megazeen>

contact us — Melbourne Fringe on

phone 9534 0722 fax 9534 0733

email [megazeen@vicnet.net.au](mailto:megazeen@vicnet.net.au)



If you drink, then drive,  
you're a bloody idiot.



**TIVOLI  
PROFESSIONAL  
BOOKS**

Tivoli Arcade  
235 Bourke Street  
Melbourne  
Tel (03) 9650 9300

**BOOKSHOP ON  
LATROBE STREET**

204 La Trobe Street  
Melbourne  
Tel (03) 9663 8217



*Melbourne  
Co-operative*

BOOKSHOP LIMITED

**DEAKIN BOOKSHOP**

Deakin University  
Geelong  
Tel (052) 271 272

**WOOLSTORE  
BOOKSHOP**

1 Gheringhap Street  
Geelong  
Tel (052) 27 8122

**RMIT BOOKSHOP**

330 Swanston Street  
Melbourne  
Tel (03) 9663 5855

**Fiction**

Art

Philosophy

Biographies

Poetry

Plays

Politics



**Film**

Classics

Art Theory

Non- Fiction

Mythology

Theatre

History

Gender Studies

Literary criticism

Australian fiction

Media

NEW EMERGING WRITERS - CATCH THEM ON THE NEXT WAVE.

**MORE THAN A BOOKSHOP**