



# MOLTEN

*Poetry by*

ALICE NIGHT

# ALICE NIGHT

1st Edition.

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Editors: John Englezos and Chalise van Wyngaardt

Book design: Cameron Semmens – [www.webcameron.com](http://www.webcameron.com)

Cover Image: Richard Roper [www.galleryworks.com.au](http://www.galleryworks.com.au)

Published by Alice Night

Initial quotation from *Women who Run with the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés.

The new words offered within this book were co-created by

Alice Night and rapper, musician Viking N3.

ISBN 978-0-6483575-0-6

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# INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

Thank-you for meeting me here from where-ever and however you are. I write as a young Australian woman, as an observer, as a participant in both the mess and the beauty of human life.

I was born in a land rich with ancient human culture, home to First Nations Australian people whose stories, songs, languages and ceremonies are alive and well and pulse as the heart and blood of this land.

I spent my youngest years living in countryside Norfolk, England, before returning to my birth place Brisbane aged nine. Norfolk was the home of Boadicea, a queen of the Iceni tribe. While I am not an authority on Boadicea's life, my understanding of her is that she stood against the Romans in rebellion after her daughters were raped by authorities. I am moved by the image of her handing back what the Romans had offered her; clothes, jewels and language as she fiercely returned to her deep culture and fought to defend her family and her people.

This poetry collection speaks to an acknowledgment that white, or/and westernized people come from a lineage of earth connected tribes and groups. People whose stories and ways of life have been lost. People who over time, like Boadicea, like Aboriginal Australians, have stood strong against violent cultural invasions. We know that today many human beings and groups face abuse, neglect, attack and control and these elements are also playing out in people's interpersonal lives.

I ask the simple question; what can we do? Is there a way to come together and face the harsh realities of human expression and find peaceful co-existence?

Admitting the wars; the greed; and the genocide of the past and present, it seems clear that something must be done to protect the vulnerable, to rekindle communion with nature, to re-orient ourselves to story and community and health. Poetry is one place I can be bold, I can say what I truly feel, I can abandon social etiquette and let roar the feeling fires. There is so much unnecessary suffering in the world. This work is a humble attempt to create personal and political peace. It is a plea in search of good leadership, it is a provocation in search of the healthy leader within us all.

With love and respect,

ALICE NIGHT

*June 2018*

NOTE: Though I use the terms 'woman' and 'man' frequently throughout this collection I write from a place of desiring equity for all expressions of gender in our species and acknowledge that for many people the terms man and women do not define them. May we remember that we all have the power to create new language if there are no words for what our spirits need to say. We are always straddling realities, the one we are in and the one we know is possible.



Awen - poetic inspiration.

'It's not by accident that the  
pristine wilderness of our planet  
disappears as the understanding  
of our own wild natures fades.'

— CLARISSA PINKOLA ESTES —

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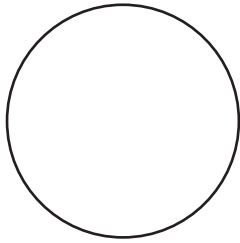
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**1**

# **CHILD**

OoMII:  
finding the most cosy position  
before sleeping

## HAPPY NOW BABY?

My doll – strapped in tight  
we're walking, all of us  
the whole extended family  
down the country roads  
to the water, to the pub.  
To the woods end – to the edge.  
Norfolk broads and Daffodil dreaming.  
'Okay baby? Happy now baby?'  
Blackberries under tongues.  
The Grandfather I never met –  
is forever the dark purple leaves  
of his sad scattered ashes.  
He who stole the priest's chair  
to drunkenly proclaim for a night  
in the little kingdom of his making.  
He whose deranged genius  
cast fear like sickness spells.  
He whose art still laces the walls.  
We walk the same roads now.  
My mother is the prettiest baby  
I've ever seen. Black and white  
photograph – Okay baby?  
Happy now baby? – Vodka  
under tongues. The family crest  
is a double-headed dragon  
with no wings. So we walk.

## WHEN THERE WAS TRUST

In the winter time  
we used to skate  
on the tiny oval pond  
near the farm house

we had no ice-shoes

we would hold onto  
parents' legs and hands  
unafraid of the ice splitting

it never did.

## POPPY FIELDS

You think that I don't see  
that I'll never understand  
but this hand you hold and nurture  
is the place where stories transfer  
I see your method - the meth  
*thud*  
*thud*  
of your heavy closed heart  
on the stranger's table

Your buttons burst like a lighter at the flame  
sent to the backfields to be buried  
under earth  
under ceramics  
under fields of poppies  
shriveled leaves  
snow  
and the first blooms -  
only to be dug up by the little girl in me and placed  
shrine-like on the red velvet scraps of our dressing up box  
this scene you seek isolates my sobriety



until I no longer belong here  
a childlike lack of knowledge at the adult's table  
I do though see your method  
see you meth  
*thud thud*

Orbs of sweat break from brow  
No mosaics now just glass shards  
I eat with my plastic knife and fork of inexperience  
while you split the flesh of duck and whole fish  
the juicy fatty feast with polished steel  
I sit quiet and polite sipping from my cup of cordial  
while you guzzle at the teat of intoxication  
smoke swirls and enlightenment dancing on your tongues  
with pupils like black ocean stones shining in midday sun

I sit at my table for one  
and consider googling the effects of your methods  
your meth  
*thud*

## BROWN BEAR

Concerned that I may not have the stamina  
to maintain focus  
while talking as a little brown bear  
mimicking school  
again

Concerned that the life we offer is in some ways  
boring to replicate  
as the little ones learn our words and ways

When the toys are wooden  
I feel more calm  
and I too want to play again and again

when the towers fall down

You be the unicorn - I'll be the little brown

## LITTLE PRINCESS

Ripped pink silk.  
Her body a fragile leaf.  
She's like no other creature I've seen,  
lips purple and disobedient – body white and grey.  
Dressed like some Indian princess, torso cold in winter.  
Her words are smoke and ash, barely audible but undeniable  
as she tells me that even if she dies, our spirits can still play together  
like when we were young. Like when we were /

I hold her hand  
like a barnacle to a rock  
begging the inanimate to hold it back.  
She squeezes mine to please me, but I can see her eyes rolling.  
I am dull now – just a human – a silent pleading for her to stay.  
She asks for a ham and cheese white bread sandwich, giggles  
and is cheeky like a child, apologises to the nurses for her  
wrangling humanness. I love her so much.

Consciousness and valium  
confuse each other as the same thing.  
Dream creature come back to my humble nest and we will  
nurse this together like no man or woman in an ironed shirt can do.  
Stay another night on the earth my love, see how you feel  
in the morning. You don't have to do anything  
or be anything for anyone – *I tell the moon*  
*what I can't tell anyone else.*

## THE SEAMSTRESS

There's barely a drop left in the bottle,  
but she will get it out with her tongue.  
History repeats itself –  
I brush her hair out.  
Her young son holds his mother while she weeps.  
Seems the seamstress is losing her way.  
No buttons, only cigarette butts.  
No threads, only forgotten conversations.  
And yet, she is too guided to walk off that cliff,  
even when the mushrooms tell her that  
down is horizontal. Losing touch.  
Where is up? Tumbling the wave.  
Preparing to drown in water just too deep  
to know where the sands and gravity gather.  
We are right here Mama. You are alright here Mama.  
I pull her limp body from the sea.  
We sing her the same songs she once cooed us with.  
Life choices not supporting life.  
Her angels are working overtime again.  
Backwards falling into night gutter, split.  
She breaks her bones and prays to the sky  
or to something. She hibernates the harshness  
then pulls a rune from a velvet sack  
I never knew she had.  
Her voice is changing. It is sweetness.  
I witness, my mother, being born.  
My mouth trembles with silent love quakes.  
The woman with the floral dress is coming back  
and is here to stay.  
After a fifteen year affair with Chardonnay,  
she lives to tell the tale.  
She now stands with wooden staff and eleven goats.  
The older she gets, the more alive she is.

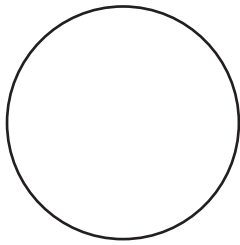
## THE WELL IS DRY

We walk for water,  
smoke still rising in the  
buried spaces inside her.  
Days - years later.  
Truths swirling now in  
words around a table,  
heads down, as secrets  
burst through the hard ground.  
History fills the ashtray.  
She births only teeth and bone  
only teeth and bone, bites down  
gummy onto her own hand -  
adolescent, transmutation.  
The well is dry, nothing.  
Blush of lava only - sundown.  
Drink the fire, give over.  
Give anything to protect  
the ones you love. The ones  
you made. Let bury the half  
formed. Fill a cup with tears.  
Seems life is still as ancient  
as it ever was. Battle scene -  
bedroom bound, war sound.  
Handover our clothes and coins.  
Rekindle. Boil salty potatoes.  
Grow stronger - survive.

## I DID AND I DO

Boudicea was going to tell me a bedtime story  
but she only got half way through.  
She said she forgot the ending.  
She said I had to finish it off in my imagination.  
She said I had to walk to school by myself now  
and if I heard the footsteps of someone following me  
I had to turn around and tell them to stop it.  
Tell them to leave me alone.  
I wanted a dog.  
We lived in a town house.  
After the divorce I followed her to the Queendom  
of her strange needs.  
I watched her change.  
She couldn't protect me, or herself, when she drank.  
A staircase between us.  
We washed our clothes by hand in the bathtub.  
I remember the moment my childhood dissolved.  
Her cradling my bed and letting me know she  
wouldn't be there in the morning.  
It's lucky I was born frowning so that I could stand

my ground at the doorway of the house.  
The first time I went to war I was eleven.  
I had no idea what to do.  
God wasn't whispering in my ear.  
I lay a blanket under the mulberry tree and wrote  
a little letter to the king.  
I put it in the post box but I didn't know a stamp had to be real.  
I'd drawn my own.  
When Boudicea couldn't look after me we swapped roles.  
I was her guard at the casino until daybreak.  
I made her tea and watched to see that she was still breathing.  
She wanted me to go away but I wouldn't.  
I couldn't.  
I was ordered to love her always.  
I did and I do.  
I've been patient for the end of the story.  
She's telling me now.  
All those rambling nights were part of it.  
All the characters we met. All the thresholds.





**2**

**W O M A N**

ITANI:  
the returning of the birds  
after migration

## PANCREATIC

Illness source unidentifiable

Perhaps she dies to stay beautiful  
to be a stunning golden corpse  
with not too many wrinkles

Today the ground above her skeleton slim figure  
is sinking while countryside seasons look on longingly  
at a cycle ended premature

She moves through a frozen night  
with her flying tiger-dog  
and considers again

what she could have done while still young  
all the times she bit her tongue  
she tries to speak

there are no words now

## MADWOMAN

Who are you calling a madwoman?

I've seen you clip-clopping everyday to a place  
you don't want to go  
all bound up in your off-whites and greys

Who am I calling a good woman?  
A woman with feathers in her hair but hate in her heart?  
A woman who preaches not to preach?

Who are you calling friend?  
The ones just like you - the faithful mirrors  
feigning honesty on Sunday evenings

Who is madder or sadder these days?  
The ones on the tablets or the gals in the gutters?  
Who am I calling a madwoman?

The old bells are still ringing  
but the old women stopped singing - reach out  
through your cotton blouse into the chests of us all

We all bleed with the moon and cum on all fours  
we all lose life and love just by existing

So we hate each others hairstyles - look into the iris

See how the tornadoes dance us

## DOES SHE?

Does the ocean ever worry  
that she's too deep,  
too rough,  
too complicated?

That too many creatures have died inside her,  
that she's drowned too much innocence accidentally,  
that she cries too easily,  
or that when she goes quiet, she scares people?

Does the storm ever worry  
that she makes too big a deal of things?  
Will destroy things with her anger,  
is unlovable, controlling, contradictory  
and better off alone,  
where she'll do less damage  
exiled off the coast above some obscure island  
that houses no life?

Does the moon ever worry  
that she's too distant,  
too aloof?  
That when people look at her they see a man or a rabbit,  
that although she was asked to conduct the oceans,  
we'd like her gone,  
that we on earth are tired of her opinions  
and repetitive cycles?

Does the leaf ever worry  
that she is not really important?  
Just one among countless others,  
that the tree she worships would not even notice her departure,  
that she's just a link in a chain of someone else's story  
soon to be forgotten  
as love's debris?

Does the blossom ever wonder  
whether she is pathetic  
in her tiny petalled expressions?  
That her whispers about beauty and simplicity  
will soon be become a bore.  
That the people will always choose the rose when it comes to it?  
Does she wish she was a thorn-hearted sex activist  
who knew more words,  
and didn't need another soul to feel complete?

Does the snow ever fear  
that she's a bitch  
and shouldn't be trusted with children?  
That she's cold-hearted and can't hold love,  
or that she appears bitter  
when she stings the face of lovers  
trying to tell them how she really feels  
on cold mornings?

Does the fire worry  
that she's too intense  
and takes over all the time?  
That people are afraid of her  
even though they say they love her?  
That ultimately they like her small,  
but not when she rages,  
not when she fully expands?  
Does she appear desperate  
or needy, her purring like begging  
for more logs to feed her life?

Does the bird ever worry  
what would happen if she flew

away from the flock for a while  
to just think and feel?  
Does she stay to protect them,  
or be protected by them?  
Does she even know why she stays?  
Is she dead inside?

Does the wind worry  
whether she has any idea how to love  
longer than moments?  
Whether anyone will ever trust her to stay?  
Can she trust herself to stay?  
Will she ever be the type who knows how to  
make love and home and laughter,  
or will she be forever surrendered to the pull –  
nomadic?

Does the mountain worry that her  
peaks are intimidating?  
That the only reason people wish to climb her  
is to conquer her  
and stick their own flag into her body,  
to say they 'did her' and tell their friends?  
To tick her off their list  
and sleep in a poacher's pride?

Does the branch worry  
that she simply isn't strong enough  
to hold the fruits that wish to grow upon her  
and within her?  
That she doesn't have what it takes  
to survive the act of birthing  
without breaking –  
too weak, too separated from her deepest nature and capacity?

Do the planets worry  
that their sun will destroy them  
before they're able to spin the fullness of their messages?  
That the web will only ever be half created, and thus catch nothing,  
or that the universe will grow dizzy and disenchanting  
after six months together?  
What comes after the honeymoon period?

Do reflections upon water bodies  
ever worry that they don't exist?  
Are they only deemed important by the observer  
for as long as they're being observed,  
then flickering into nothingness  
as their once lover now holds the hand of another  
and runs into some sunset  
forever away?

## RIPE FRUIT ON A WHITE DRESS

Desperate is the woman who sings -  
only once all the people leave the home,  
so that no-one can hear her sharp calls  
like eagle the shrieking  
as she wails agony at ancestors  
to let her go.

'Go silently,' she was told, 'go gracefully,  
go willingly - rebellion is not attractive  
and you don't want to be alone  
do you?'

She waits, until storms burst like  
ripe fruit on a white dress.

Colour trickling down the canvas.  
She's a mess, a distant mother,  
an unsexed wife, an absent friend,  
neglecting the Earth's callings as she  
rejects her own.

Wishless now, she is stagnant  
like a broken thing, left to dust and rust,  
under piles of possessions unwanted,  
rejected, replaced, misunderstood -  
as damaged goods.

Her frame is chipping, her glass  
splintered and weak, her legs twisted,  
can't support even a child anymore.

She's forgotten,  
but has found a safe place,  
holding up the boxes of stranger's  
histories and things.

The Woman.



## BYSTANDER

The television sounds louder than  
life is the same most days

He only uses his hands never the kitchen  
knives hanging like art on the wall

They are nice to their  
neighbours all know what's happening

Shouting followed by  
silence makes the girl next door imagine

The wife walks by later that  
afternoon light is better for  
bruises on a young girl's  
conscience as she asks to borrow their lawnmower and  
hammer down the doors that conceal

the pain – his & hers

Still we quiet the flaws/floors in social  
fabric soft and lacy blows at their windows come dusk

She wears thick scarves in summer

## SLIDING SCALE

If no was not an option  
there has not been a question

Seems no-one is immune  
to the sliding scale

Woman was not born passive  
but taught to be

Quick - convince yourself you want it  
tell yourself you want it  
turn your body on  
wet your lips with spit

Then you won't feel invaded  
then you're both enjoying yourselves,  
right?

Can you find the words?  
You can find the words!

He will hear you, it's okay, say it  
say it quick

say it -  
'Please don't press your fingers inside me just now'

## NAMELESS MAIDEN

Name her – shame her  
pump nipple sacks with plastic and oil  
they will be hard yes  
but all the better to – her with

This is just the evolution of woman  
she can be anything you want  
pick a pussy and we'll craft it  
her sagging flaps won't waste your  
time anymore when you need to –

## GET IN QUICK

Limited edition!

Mother and daughter – Vagina-Realign-Her  
3 for the price of 1

*Just don't tell them it was me  
I'm trained due to demand  
just doing a job that would be done anyway  
okay – okay – you're okay*

## SUPERWOMEN

Not desirable not pouty too porous like putty too heavy too flakey not sexy not worthy beauty defined is a combination of qualities shape colour or form that please the aesthetic senses especially the sight I was struck by her beauty good excellent used as a general term of approval I wonder if perhaps we need another word to aspire to uncharted darkness there is nowhere to run to when the body you reside inside is rejected territory unavoidable proximity to the false culprit of a cultural mosh pit slamming on the breaks for a silent crash no one would have known why she was hurting mirrors of manipulation control-sake mechanism women are impotent when consumed like this self-deprecation the shameful burdens all the things too impossibly sad to say like the time I thought I'd rather die than grow old and crone-like or the actual contemplation of knives against my nose because it isn't a button considering the augmentation of my breasts so that the man I loved would be satisfied with me approve of my assets respect me more and not watch cheap porn because now when I look at me I see asymmetry not pretty not package-able not perfect proportions off breasts not enough hair too thin not valuable not woman as if there was ever a universal definition at worst I receive the world as evidence of a dark predicament that I was born with a body and a face that are somehow failing at their purposes not desirable not pouty too porous like putty too heavy too flakey not sexy not worthy I know none of the above is actually true but any seed of doubt is dangerous now since the poison entered my system at a time when I was down shamanic repressions she swallows her sword internal bleeding just one in a crowd explain yourself Disney and your not-so-subtle invasions pornographic delusions and princesses in cages corsets pulled hard against ribs to keep women quiet wear shorter shirts so you don't get fired and even my artist friends are escorts now since

there's more money in female objectification than a creative occupation I don't mean to be prudish but when I ask if you could make the same money somewhere else would you do this the answer is a quiet no roles okay for someone else's daughter sister mother partner but not your own illusionary empowerment high heels and business suits has anyone paid attention to female fashion trends lately even superwoman was sexed up like a doll the queens in the corner protecting her daughter from the same hoops she had to jump through smiling to get by sex sells and we're desperate for colourful plastic and the shit we buy with it but the trade off is tragic step inside a young girl's mind you'll find the build up of stimulus is a sure way to silence us image saturation to the point of fearing sex a good woman is beautiful controllable domesticated dominated gives head but doesn't ask for it timid and tucked false orgasm fucked there is no natural law for the beauty war only cultural requirements shaved and tireless but any enemy has won once the virus is embodied to the point where she says I have a problem enslaved insecurity self harming ambiguity if only I could be more confident while walking streets of violence we are obsessed with the physical but what about kindness breasts stretch to feed children and we seem to have forgotten that we are all born out of vaginas and that all skin changes in time we are animals each one of us beautiful eyes that see lips part for lungs to breathe senses active to live a life with I don't want to waste another single moment splitting my body into compartments abandoning myself at the shore of aloneness with the list of things I've learned to see wrong with me jealousy indiscriminate and senseless can turn you against even your own family to separate the healthy from each other profit margins immaculate I am not a monster though I don't fit sex standards I cannot open my mouth and have my lips branded I am a young woman and courageous

I once loved with all the freedom of the universe I once left the house with not a care for my appearance blue eyes like ocean and arms like wings but with all the stretching shadows around us now who will take the lead to set us free when even the most empowered among us can become powerless to this beauty myth women hunted as witches were taken in great numbers now we turn our selves in surgery-surrendered every minute at the mirror is less time spent on the path wishing to be thinner while polishing the glass comparison the ugly trap there is no fairest of them all life is simply and divinely expressing itself through you with you as you but a virus has swept silent through the hearts of half a population can we sit down again please to redraft women's emancipation this is not a world I want my daughter to grow up in the kind where shame-sinks are thrown up in girls sexualise themselves for an easier walk through hell but the burning hasn't stopped templates unattainable a betrayal unimaginable for the love of life can we please address this deviant maids sex-on-a-stick slaves can we not be both sensual and comfortable truly standing in your power invigorates those around you walking in your element while teaching others of their brilliance the integrity with which I love myself is the integrity with which I can love another calling all brothers to respect all women be careful with your minds and what imagery you let in cause we are malleable adaptable born innocent impressionable taught callously by undercurrents torn up tortured by tidal media torrents this game is torturous in its tactics turning women against wisdom young girls forlorn and forsaken self-destructive self-hating old women ashamed of their own sacred aging booking in for operations that might buy back the same self-love freedom they were born with it's not subtle just called normal billboards like portals to panicked self disapproval and at worst our removal meanwhile -

Women could save the world.

## THE DAM WALL

1

So you're convinced you're broken,  
ruined, an abomination?

You sleep under the piano  
in your parent's study  
listening to the sounds  
of their love dying.

Four years old again  
and also thirty-suns a woman.

And you're weaning again,  
weaning yourself off the teat of deceit  
while the wealth of Sydney  
rocks itself in its own obsolescence  
on sunlit water.

And there are entities  
crawling out the cracks in the walls  
and pavement and you're sure  
only you can see them.  
But you're wrong.

2

It's strange, amongst your utterance  
of words like *depression* and *anxiety*,  
I hear the most striking wisdom I've  
happened upon in a while.

I know what you want, because I want it too.

To say you're 'done with art' though  
is to say you're ready to die and I  
don't think you are.

You cannot halt the artistry of thought.  
You cannot push the water  
back over the dam wall.  
It's already - broken open.

3

Save the paint for child's play,  
curate your thoughts and take no pay,  
volunteer at the front desk  
of your own spirit for a while.

4

The desert is a tender place,  
a place to swim alone  
in the old-red of absolute life.

When you return,  
plant herbs and succulents,  
like the cool cats do.  
Water them and let your lovers watch.  
Let sustainability seduce them,  
let lace be wetted by tears  
of appropriate empathy.

Let revolution lubricate before it liberates.

Let sarcasm rule the house.

Then, cover your body in your own feces,



earth and menstrual blood and howl a sweet  
horror while you orgasm in the corner  
of your bedroom and he watches  
from your four-poster bed.

5

How far are you willing  
to push this boat out of the bay?

6

How far into the landscape do you care to be cast?

7

You speak of attempting to accept  
yourself in your own humanity.

Just do something,  
it doesn't even matter what.

Stop spreading violence  
in your own violent rejection of your self.

Lower your head into the shadows  
and also let the florescence  
bring out the golden flecks in your eyes.

Light is light – it will find a way into you.

Your life-force still courses  
and you are in a unique position  
to contribute insight from where you are –  
from where you are not.

8

Make an invitation.  
See who the fuck comes.

9

I know you struggle with the life  
that's been set up for us because,  
you're right,  
it's not natural.

We're still adjusting post industrial revolution.

10

After coffee shall we  
get our hands dirty?  
Cover our faces in the clay of shame  
and scream into city streets?

Not for the art of it,  
but for the necessity to bleed, dream  
and speak again.

Can you hear the melodies beckoning you  
away from the sacred cradle  
of happenstance?

Lick the fat of your arms  
and sing in melancholic disarray.

11

This is a strange battle  
and you are

a peace beacon,  
actually.

12

Today - count seedpods.

Tomorrow - play one note.

And at the very least,

13

trust yourself.

## BROKEN BRACKEN

For ten years she'd been wandering  
without truly pausing to see  
what followed close behind her –  
whether she was breaking the bracken  
to forge her way when beside her,

there weaved an honest path.

What's the rush wild waters?  
Must you rip a hole in every town you pass through?  
Must you preach love and count pennies?  
The old mode expects three meals a day  
and has no idea how to share by half

let alone by quarters.

The old dream had you screaming at a window,  
you were manic and in danger.  
You called it love, this thing that near destroyed you.  
The old story says, *life is hard, love is hard,*  
*if it is not, then it is not life –*

*it is not love.*

There's microscopic lightening in the mirror today  
that wasn't there before, it's whispering –  
*without earned safety, precious little is possible here.*  
What calls you into your most potent?  
Most generous? What keeps you curdling

in your own ambiguity?

## THROUGH FROSTED GLASS

Two figures  
like two musics  
competing to be heard  
no mist to make meaning here  
nothing left to defend  
only the dank space  
between bodies  
cold now.

The shapes  
of us - key and key  
hole - sword and sheath  
the pulse of a house dismantled  
from the inside - knocked  
off of its own hinges  
wax coats the bed  
she exits -  
herself.

Children and  
the elderly can only  
watch while shadows leak  
from floorboards and blood flecks  
across eyes of glazed glass  
she was never  
just falling  
was she.

## VIOLENCE

Is it possible, that the idea that women are less violent than men, is a fallacy? Is it rather that women simply temper their violence in a different way? If retaliative action is a never ending tennis game of destruction, someone has to put the racket down, someone has to lower the bow and arrow. I've seen the way she holds herself, faced with the stone wall of her father's words. I've seen the way she notices when the plants are dying, the way she talks with the leaves as she waters them. I've seen the old Aboriginal woman sleep on wooden board while the men stole her mattress into the desert. I've seen the way she prioritises safety over her own expression and violent impulses, she'd rather settle the dust and put her rightness aside for the night – or forever. It's not about winning, it's about surviving. It's giving your own body to the next generation – it's pert breasts now wilted at the mouth of a babe, it's genitals splitting during child birth or being sliced open at the stomach in the creation of new life, it's basic principles of sacrifice. *You'd like me to be more pragmatic with my word choices? You'd like me to be more restrained and ask you questions rather than state my feelings or my views?* You obviously have no idea how pragmatic I'm already being. What I would like to do, is possibly a little more – violent. But instead I am the one tearing up at the kitchen table, trying to understand us. Undoing the things you said, things I have to believe you didn't mean. Seems I am the daughter the world wanted for you. Simple as that. I am not a flawless creature – but I at least am willing to admit what I do. Perhaps we women are no less violent just a little more humble, a little less careless with our power.

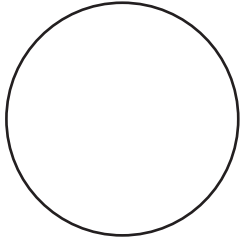
## GREAT GREAT GREAT GRANDMA'S ROOM

At midnight on the longest night,  
she calls us to a meeting place.  
Tells us we women must all stop  
grooming to feel good enough,  
and instead let the blood of our wombs  
create a great stench in the home.  
Surgically remove the plumpness of our lips.  
Let pubic hair grow and shave the hair on our heads.  
Let skin sag and flap and diligently test  
any passing stranger dare they hover at the gate.

We brew healing potions in glass bottles -  
she opens her wooden drawer for us - we are  
wild faced and ageless, with instinctual trinkets.  
A silver horse, a piece of string, a locket.  
There are tiny weapons inside her eyes.  
She says we have them too. She says it's Love.  
She says Love is fierce sometimes - Love is  
survival sometimes. She says women have been  
wearing bruises for too long now, she says they  
don't suit the colour scheme of any season.

She throws our make-up into the fire.  
She teaches us how to tame dragons  
and axe the wood and change the lightbulbs.  
She makes us growl like dogs and then we dance.  
She says she loves one man most,  
the man within her. Her hair is long and white now  
and she's changed her name to enter death.  
We stroke her head like she used to ours.  
And sing the old song, the old song, the old song.

[Whona: our ancestors who guide our life's path]







**3**

**MAN**

INAYA:  
the quiet in the middle  
of the night

## SEVEN BOYS

Their faces have nearly formed.  
Their hair clipped short.  
Hoodies hang at the ready.  
They're halfway to manhood.  
Photographing a peacock and  
beginning to wonder – what  
they might do with their lives.

The bully cries his way  
up the mountain and smokes  
everyone else's cigarettes.  
After days in the nothingness  
he tells the few of us still awake,  
what it was like to find his friend  
dead in the back shed.

The fire licks up at his face –  
a wild animal to his wounding.  
The army boys sign six-year-contracts.  
It's something to aspire to.  
It's a missing conversation.  
There's no coffee in a beaker in the desert.  
Shoes shuffle, and skin breaks out.

## BOY AND ARROW

Shoot  
two arrows  
only  
focus  
express  
like the boy you were  
the bamboo leans in to see your shot  
the rain is on your side

The mother  
cracks struggle open like it's edible  
her body weak from living  
she calls upon the boy  
he responds  
gentle

Touch  
by night he is man  
by night I can remind him  
elegance of a candle flame  
precipice  
breath  
silence  
breath  
rest

Love

## DON'T ABANDON ME

I walked forward towards the point  
where mango light met the blackened horizon  
with the shadow-puppet trees like whispering sleeping  
silhouettes of giant birds – the darkness

Hoping my knees would be imprinted by the  
cement-red ground beneath me as I bowed and buckled  
the bones of the earth beside my own

'Don't abandon me' – his words not mine – his tears  
then mine – our clothes littered the room

We collected – rubbish on the beach and the  
glass shards of the violent couple who lived before us

We put new windows in – threw rugs over the red  
but discovered instead the vicious wounding of each other's  
childhoods

A chorus of contradictions our love anchored  
by afflictions but like Australia in all its harsh edges  
raw landscapes drought doubt and depressions  
I just – love him

Two scars and a fire place – a kiss forever foreign

Wordless dedications and spring light soft to the face –  
making love on stolen land and attempting at home

We escaped our story like convicts jumping ship

Deep winter-dew grass and a simple spoken *sorry*  
after the many seasons of our silence – relief

The child we never had is smiling and forgives us

## LAZY EYE THE GODS

In the face of the man  
with the lazy eye and the sweating forehead,  
can you love? Can you lean in closer, closer again  
to touch his shy shoulder  
with yours?

You want to love me?  
You perceive me as the Goddess?  
Then speak only truth from your mouth  
and love the man with the lazy eye first and always.  
You will never have me.

How dare you lie to get by and call that life.  
Dionysus with fennel staff tipped by pine cone,  
wound with ivy, dripping with honey  
beyond the borders of the known  
would be appalled, wouldn't they?

You want to come closer to me  
you dream your ejaculation with me  
but I am figment, fibre and choking smoke.  
I am womb and grave and fire dance  
and I command you see the God in yourself.

You pity your saddened skin,  
don't know where to settle your gaze,  
but I am telling you, look lovingly  
into the face of the man with the lazy eye  
when all is done and we are both history

you will at least have known  
something like love.

## SHADOW TOWN

Can you  
put down the utensils  
and come to know  
us?

Can you be like a lighthouse  
just oscillating  
just holding  
a candle to walk by?

You've stolen the breath  
from your own lungs  
and hoped  
that no-one would notice  
or call it betrayal.

Sick as a man  
in the shadow town  
where the air is shallow  
as the words.

What calls you back?  
What knows you?  
What are you without your name  
but that same light and dark

retracting and revealing?

## THE WRITER

You've been staring out at forest fires and the news  
waiting to be met with flame –  
is part of you disappointed that you only got to watch?

Isolation – the weight of clouds  
greedy to break onto your body –  
it's hailing little pearl-white balls like pills from a freezer

There's blood on your doorstep – it's yours  
the air is old stories looming – you wrote and sent  
goodbye texts before you changed your mind

Your bookshelves are full of examples  
you tell your stories at dinner tables and nowhere else  
are you frightened of the odyssey you'd write?

It would give them gratification – the others  
the hand clapping good-boy parade upon you  
and so you wait out your life like a predator stalking

What are you prey to? What do you pray to?  
we are hate-hungry-suffocators and we've learnt  
the language – why are your books all in boxes?

Where are you going?

You apologise for bumping the body of a stranger on a bus  
but you don't apologise to your children's broken hope –  
they waited for your nurturing like you wait for fire

It's not too late

## DREAM POEM

Your sun leaves you to fend for yourself  
your fingers fondle rock to follow the crevices  
to the cave of your sanctuary – bloody-palmed now

In this moment do not think of me  
in this moment do not consider our children  
in this moment there is only you and your death

No not plead with me – ask only your own guilt  
to cut the lines you've bound yourself with  
one black night – hijacked by a storm of glow worms

Crash your body a hundred times against the stone wall  
until liquid exits and you smile like an old humble man  
dressed for the occasion – naked

There is only this – photo albums burn at the altar as you  
surrender to a single candle and a singing bowl  
your body in a row boat – black-water-mouth open

Glow worms enter your throat – recall grazes  
bones broken and every lover you've known  
taste returns elderflower sweet the perfume of a life

You are eaten by microscopic creatures as light  
travels into your organs and only now do you understand  
the gibberish of your mother – your mind without thought

This godly ungodly sight – your body electric  
nerves ecstatic – you die nightly – wake to water

Make a pot of coffee put the radio on

[Trun: stepping into the light carrying your shame and guilt]



## MAN WITCH

He's there in the woods talking with birds and sleeping  
his whole long body across the rocks still  
He's watching the churn of the purple sky  
He's fierce in his storytelling and places the branch  
He's noting small words spoken  
He's reading late into the night and marking the margins  
He talks with fire  
He sings at deaths  
He revels in a story beyond and including his own  
He shakes his deep shoulders in the smoke  
His eyes blaze a wild kindness in animal presence  
He collects objects instinctually and gifts them so  
He makes life with life - in elemental play  
He offers incantation to the still night and encourages us  
He dreams his fathers answers then wears them himself  
He dies the ritual of his making by the women  
sunken stone - flesh ashes - sacred screaming song  
His tear the healing tincture - once blinked never gone

## HOWLING CHORUS

When we ask the night for advice  
and pause to listen  
he sings in a howling chorus  
telling us we were born safe and will die safe  
and in his voice are all the voices  
of the kind and powerful men  
who have walked this earth

Examples we needed sooner - yes  
have arrived now - just in time

At the cusp of forgetting  
in the moments before a heart hardens  
before the final strokes  
of a visual depiction of a grudge

## HE WHO I STAND WITH

A man who can admit when he's wrong  
A man who worships God in the birds  
A man who holds children with love's wings  
A man who is willing to evolve with each passing moon  
A man who can confess his past ills and face the repercussions  
A man who notices when a woman is being interrupted  
A man who is father or friend to those who suffer  
A man who will surrender to the guidance of a woman  
A man who has trained in the art of guiding others  
A man who wakes with the dawn some days and dreams lazy others  
A man who refuses to replicate his father's aggression  
A man who forgives his father for the broken days  
A man who holds his body to the light  
A man who attends his shrinking mother makes her smile  
A man who sees it as his obligation to bring health to other men  
A man who sits quiet on mountains and tells no-one of it  
A man who lets his chest and groin be infused with waves and the wind  
A man who gathers the peace fragments in wartime  
A man who takes it unto himself to learn the words of warlords  
A man who lets himself be had by poetry  
A man who kisses the blood of his lover's moon  
A man who adds his tears to the healing of a species  
A man who can create the feeling of celebration even in a storm  
A man who let's both his deep and tender voice sing

I stand with him

## THE FARMER'S SON

Here – where the love is rougher and the storms are firm  
Here – where the books are thinner but the lessons burn  
Here – where we can lose our bodies to the stress of lies  
Here – where we can raise our mouths to the biggest skies

And I don't want to only learn the hard way anymore  
I want lullabies and sweet love through the night

I could fight you for the high ground  
or forgive you in the dawn  
cause either way the child of now will still be born

And he'll be needy – he'll be beaming like they always are at first  
and in the hardest deepest darkest drought  
our tears will quench his thirst  
cause we're half way there and ready now for all we could have been  
and the dreaming stops the bleeding – this is love  
and the dreaming stops the bleeding – this is love

Finally you speak to me in ways that we once knew  
finally you say what makes you feel that heavy blue

And we catch you like a dandelion – shimmering in the breeze  
this is love – this is love and this we need

And we catch you like a dandelion – shimmering in the breeze  
this is love – this is love and this we need

**4**

**WORLD**

VAOOMA:  
breathing deeply to assist integration  
after a rich period of time

## CATACLYSM

Are we waiting for another cataclysm  
to end the senseless indecision?  
Are we waiting for the world to end?  
Do we secretly want it to?

Pick up the pieces – write a little thesis  
pack a little lunch – chew the bones  
of disaster – sick laughter,  
one after, the other, we march them,  
into the jaws of self-destruction,  
so they must  
Pay their Way out.

To claim one God is to deny the ocean  
and the moon and a silhouetted branch.

Call me old fashioned,  
but I'll fashion my religion out of leaves  
and poetic beliefs  
and the natural harmonies among birds –

long forgotten words,  
that make no sense now,  
to a mind made modern,  
to a path so trodden –

we've forgotten,  
that we didn't used to need tracks  
to trust a forest –

or ourselves on the earth.

## WHAT IF IT'S A GIRL?

What if it's a girl?

How will I ever let her out of my sight?

What if it's a girl?

And they want her light?

What if it's a girl?

And she cries alone at the mirror at night?

What if it's a girl?

Lips of pink and skin peach white?

What if it's a girl?

And she walks alone on a pilgrim's plight?

What if it's a girl?

And the sick ones gather for a foul delight?

What if it's a girl?

How will I teach her how to fight?

What if it's a girl?

Dare I birth her to this life?

## THE VIEW

It was never about the view,  
it's what you do in the room.  
Spirit of the protestor dies,  
is seduced, forgets itself,  
looks back with just enough satisfaction.  
Is it just another market place?

When your father warned you  
to play the games,  
and you buckled like a child before him,  
wanting him to be proud,  
enrolling in his University,  
exchanging your natural curiosity for –  
acceptance, tolerance.  
He said, 'doors will close if you don't go,'  
but he failed to mention the other possible paths.

Ultimately we meet our kindred, regardless.  
Those others who were coaxed,  
who stare out from their outfits  
with eyes still questioning.



What's happening to you?  
Everyone's doing something,  
making their revolutions in miniature.  
It's a pop-up book – but we're meek at the end of the day.  
Philosophy curdles, and what?  
Did you take a great photo of yourself at the rally  
so you can convince your grandchildren you did something?

New York won't save you or make you better.  
There's cruelty here in us, in us all.  
Give up what you must  
but don't tell us all about your fasting.  
Just do the work only your spirit can do.  
It was never about the view,  
it's what you do in the room.

Do you care about anything anymore?

You can again.

## SPOILT BROTH

Power unfairly divided  
among the many children  
of this human family.  
It's no wonder there's fighting.  
We're like spoilt broth,  
trying to recall our  
most basic make-up.  
What is wholesome again?  
Gunpowder spice and  
flesh of why?  
Do you know what the  
unbearable truth is?  
The truth that dissolves  
and forgets itself  
every time is that -

*the scale of lash out or close down  
is proportionate to pain felt  
at core of being - at core of being.*

Decoding - broken symbols  
floating. If we could  
hold that knowledge,  
hold it, that knowledge,  
there may be one less  
wound planted in the  
heart of a human -  
and that alone is worthy  
cause for our attention.  
Are you willing to hold -  
your own shaking hand as you  
turn to meet the sunset,  
with that same violent stranger.  
See the way the light still  
greet equal your faces.

## DESERT PINKS

Firework packets discarded,  
Territory day echoes.  
Gunpowder pink and the shadows of clouds  
conversing the low mountain ring around us –  
the encircled landscape that helps us to feel  
that we are somewhere.

Priscilla, queen of this desert  
stops by in the morning  
to perch on our tattered veranda,  
pajama bottoms and tea cup in hand.  
She does the rounds and laughs easily about life.  
The sound of dogs fighting marks her departure.

Galahs go about their business of branches,  
berries, bird babies, flight and nests  
like nothing has changed in this country.  
They are wrong.  
I can say five words in Pitjantjatjara  
and make my laptop learn the spelling.

The dusty pinks of bird underbellies,  
sunsets, tongues, and faded hair dye.  
Hard souls on hard ground,  
engravings about me – deciphering red on red.  
For all our different skins, the fat and muscle  
within us are in truth, a similar bloom,

of pink.

## CREAMY POTATOES

I've been wearing your costumes  
and speaking the language you taught me.  
I've been attending the parties you hold  
and I've even been making everyone else laugh.  
I've been collecting the gold and silver pennies  
and having my hair cut very nicely.  
I've been sleeping under your straight roofs  
and opening and closing the windows at  
the appropriate times.  
I've even found a way to see the whole view  
through the bars.  
I've been lying down on the bed and opening  
my legs nice and wide like you taught me.  
I've been very good with my cutlery.  
I've drawn a perfect carrot and everyone else  
was even jealous!  
I've been the best.  
I've been earning your trust and actually  
enjoying getting to know you most days.  
I've understood that you are cleverer than me.  
I've said the right things and stopped grinding my teeth.  
I've felt the fabrics of your imports upon my skin.  
The silk and cotton, the polyester and the wool.  
I've been here long enough now that I am even  
part of the family. And when I ask for the key,  
you give it to me.

There are things I will miss – creamy potatoes,  
neat rows, Sunday mornings and our little jokes and smiles.  
But if you only knew the dreams I'm not having  
in your house; the songs I cannot remember now,  
how dead my body feels sitting upright on perfect  
perches, you'd know why you'll never see that key again.

I'll be wearing it, as a symbol, as a necklace  
as I dance enchanted with the fire, and kiss the river  
and speak the sounds that know the land and the animals.  
You'll glance me only across great plains, plains you'll  
never reach me from. I only wish I'd remembered to ask you –  
what songs have you forgotten my fancy friends?

## WHAT NOW BOUDICEA?

What now Boudicea,  
now that the children are asking the hard questions  
and the night-lights must glow dim for protection,  
must they learn the same lessons?  
Pray we end these cycles.

What now Boudicea,  
now that the Romans have faded into normalcy,  
and what was once potent, benevolent and lived  
appears as washed up driftwood  
and unidentifiable ritual objects – exhibited?

What now Boudicea,  
now that women wear bows on their undergarments,  
and have been taught to be frail and delicate, and say  
nothing much out of the ordinary, and yet,  
they're convinced that they're empowered?

What now Boudicea,  
now that our men have been torn away from the earth?  
They float like haggard ghost boys of hard hoping.  
Can you help them feel alive again?  
Can you teach a different way to fight?

What now Boudicea,  
now that the army is considered a career path,  
while the wars are a secret greed battalion  
disguised as necessary,  
and everyone's bored of the news?

What now Boudicea,  
now that you're gone, and your statues still stand,  
while all that you stood for has faded into folklore,  
pub names and allegory?

What now Boudicea,  
now that we seem to have forgotten what love is for,  
we waste our health drifting off into each other's dramas,  
while the world unfolds in shattering and disregard?

What now Boudicea,  
now that it's been so long since we've seen a queen  
really do anything, feel anything, inspire anything  
and even protesting has to fit the description?  
What now Boudicea,  
now that so many of us feel alone  
and even the strongest among us want to die –  
I thought she was the leader,

what now?

What now Boudicea,  
now that women are angry and men feel ashamed,  
and if you say what you feel you'll give someone else a complex,  
since silence and social media replaced fireside debate?

What now Boudicea,  
now that we've traded in our knowing for one more glass,  
one more fuck, one more fix, one more selfish meal.  
What would you lead us against,  
what would you lead us toward,  
if you were here, now,  
Boudicea?

## WHO ARE THE ROMANS?

We assemble – the hare runs out from my skirt  
but it is skittish and blind, sick from the poison.  
We cannot follow it, silence, hot weapons cool.  
They look to me, for orders. I wish I was  
a heart surgeon, so that I could peer into  
the fabric of the enemy and understand.  
Why are the Romans? How are the Romans?  
Suits and wigs and bitter faces, are only ever  
masks for a toddler's utter disenchantment.  
And yet – he flogs her till her spine curdles and  
has no intention of stopping. He's past the point.  
He grabs her body like a greedy school boy  
at a fruit tree, throws the fruit to the ground  
in a sad spite. Spits on it and crushes it  
under foot. He's not well, and his wife is a bitter  
voice in his head. The hare runs into my arms and  
I hold it, stroke its shaking body. It tells me,  
to melt the weapons down, and make instruments  
of divination, objects of offering, make jewelry  
of protection for my daughters. And so we kneel  
  
in the cold night and alchemise our anger again.



**5**

**ANIMAL**

KINASSA:  
recognising ones own true  
spirit in reflection

## PROFOUND ANIMAL

The animal wants,  
the animal knows,  
the animal is,  
sure of itself  
and yet not arrogant.

## CALLING SOFTLY IN THE STORM

She is skin shed and forming

she is coral spawning

broken glass eventually softened

brass bell harmonics in a candle-lit cave

she is waiting without waiting

resting without sleeping

blossoms fall at her feet

and she is bathing

in the sweet decay of earthly things

she binds her wings with them

rotting vines her string

and you hear her calling softly in the storm

## WINTER WITH

wing - body - fur - flight - beast - eyes - field - sight

in your grace  
I come to know my own  
amongst blackberries thorns  
young deer bones

antlers forming  
black cockatoo calling  
how is it that amongst a heard of wild horses  
I feel more at home?

wing - body - fur - flight - beast - eyes - field - sight

eagle opens slowly its wings  
it knows itself  
intimately  
as I will know myself in time

crystal frost lace place  
morning magic melts  
into itself

shamelessly artful

like the universe at night  
and wild ways of asking  
and the sun-kissed crest  
of a lover's autumn willow

wing - body - fur - flight - beast - eyes - field - sight

## HONEST WATERS

The ocean is always honest,  
when she's in a foul mood,  
when she wants your loving.  
Unconcerned by onlookers  
she gladly stays grey  
whether we see or don't  
the beauty of this shade.  
The crass or impassioned  
whip of each wave.  
From this height,  
inches from cliff edge,  
face shifts in recognition.  
Undulate, body like seaweed.  
Firm yet ephemeral,  
white light on black water.  
She attends the shoreline with  
two horses and no rope.  
Silver hair greets soft back.  
Body strong like her expression,  
you won't have to ask  
whether she's okay.  
She'll let you know,  
she'll take herself to  
the edge of the water.  
She'll dance out her sadness,  
she'll nuzzle if she feels safe.  
She'll be just what she is each day.  
The centre of a heavy storm or  
the paradise you dreamed.

## NIGHT BIRD

'And,' said the night bird to the man

'everything you've ever done,  
been, seen, wanted, watched, held  
has led you to this – Jasmine scented darkness.'

She preens without worry or awareness  
for how she will be witnessed or complimented –  
she is quite plainly attending the everything-ness  
of the branch and sky and river.

She lifts her wing to reveal the softer browns  
in ancient unconcern.

He cannot reach her, only listen.

Desire exhausts itself.  
And he sleeps on the pavement by the flowers,  
while she flies to a nest he'll never know  
the location of.

## INTO THE RAIN

Take a day  
I dare you  
just for yourself

get the fuck out of your bed and into the rain  
melt into suffering until you

cross

over

through the thick lashes of waterfall

bare scars if you must  
don't pity yourself for having felt

something of the vast spectrum of your /  
our  
humanness.

## JUST LIGHT AND SHADE

For a moment  
just a moment

can you forget  
the word you have

for the glowing white spherical  
gift in the night sky?



ITANI

LUANA:  
the beauty of the moon

IXI / IXIMA:  
a collision of friendship, attraction and recognition

SANSA:  
when two souls meet to greet the sun

WELLA:  
the desire to give

SIMI:  
sun kisses

ILLAWII:  
when two people combine concepts to form poetry or art

HASTAKCHA:  
the rush of energy that pulses through your body  
like a swarm of butterflies

MUN:  
to make love in the rain

SOMANA:  
the absence of the touch that warms the soul

MINYA:  
to feel a kindred spirit from a distance

OONÉ:  
the feeling of sincere connection with all that is

## OF LOVE AND NATURE

How can it be that a simple repetition of grasses  
moving ever so slightly at dusk  
is so utterly overcoming  
that we cannot walk by them

that we must fall to our knees and  
beam back at the beauty  
a feeling – not of choice – but of duty

and within seconds we are on all fours  
peering in as close as possible –  
the other two leggeds walk by in their brightly coloured jumpers  
and look down while we look out and down further

we adorn ourselves in tattered materials  
deep corduroy green and faded browns  
attempt another kind of camouflage

observing the faces of flowers  
taking in their placid presence  
placing finger to petal – subtle  
waves pulsing against rock – fierce  
they pull each other close as two things can ever be

and it's all just sex  
it's all just power and lapping and elements

soft rain sweeps in across us  
as if to touch us entirely  
as if to lace us in a lovingness  
as if to say

*don't go home to your house  
sleep in me – I am your home –  
don't go home to your walls and doors  
rest in me – make love with me*

until our eyes contain entire oceans  
until we lose our bodies in the long grass  
until the branches rain the gathered sea spray

show your storm to my waters  
traverse me with both patience and desperation  
crouch and crawl and come to know me – yourself – us  
so that when you stand again  
you are a changed being

we don't wash our hands  
we hold them into each other  
and kiss fingertips over and over  
so as to bask fully in the scent of each other  
in that rich combination of love and nature

of love and nature  
of love and nature

## I AM THE ROBIN

There's a place,  
where the land claims me,  
it wants me face down and naked with it.  
It's where the people of my lineage have lived and died  
for thousands and thousands of years.

I miss the smell of urine,  
wet hay, moss and pools of green.  
I have no ancestors in this earth or with these waters.  
I'm starving for cloud-skies and cold ocean,  
the curl of a cliff I knew.

I was born here but I'm  
not from here. Will I die here?  
I plant the trees of my homeland.  
I watch them turn in the autumn like a pervert.  
I fondle acorns like a runaway child.

I made a mini England  
didn't I – stone walls and mud-brick cottages,  
a ten pound hunt for a new life, but I speak the same words.  
I love the gum tree, I love the black cockatoo,  
but I am the oak tree, I am the robin.

I expect my wife to be  
all the lacking elements of my life:  
she is the culture, the spirituality, the entire community,  
she is the home itself, she's the reason to pray  
she's the only anchor – I'm sorry.

Where is the Celtic land  
within me? In what ways does my body contain  
every element I crave? Fireplace my heart, moorland  
my skin, bluebells my eyes – I claim myself,  
face down and naked, my mouth makes the mist,

a living lineage.

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**INCANTATIONS**

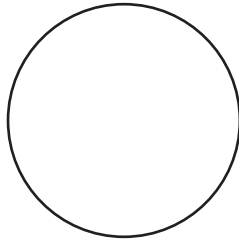
KALITATA:  
tiny thunderstorms for  
the soul

## YOU WILL NEED

/ stones / trees / eyes / dreams / water / hands / insight /  
response / listening / blood / bones / plants / bark / trunk  
/ sky / expanse / trust-in-self / shift / needle and thread  
/ red thread / black thread / white thread / green thread  
/ love of shadows / a light source / one audience member  
/ willingness to be great / bold abandon / curiosity / a  
writing source / waterfalls / runes / hair / fox bone / an  
instrument / open conversation / stars / gravity / lust /  
patience / remembering / open heartedness / universal  
sufficiency / poetic thinking / laughter / motivation / a  
quiet place to be / baths / lavender and rosemary / time  
in nature / purpose for making or willingness to find  
purpose for making / ability to follow scent / ability to  
turn down social engagements / receiving from spirit /  
eroticism / willingness to exist - to take up space / with  
your art / with your life /

## ANTIDOTE

Bending verses seamlessly or suddenly into a chorus  
melting vocal notes into each other like silver and bronze  
transforming the brokenness into a jeweled antidote  
creating melody strong enough to hold a symbol one lyrical  
chink at a time before release - he makes gold snowflakes  
with ruby centres just because - she transforms beer bottle  
tops into Joan of Arc's armour - she paints clay ducks  
with red glitter - he depicts the flight of birds in dots -  
they give their bodies over to be danced by the sacred  
puppeteer - she wakes at 5am everyday to plant words  
in her story garden - he stretches skin over wood until  
we can call in spirit with the sound - commit to the action  
art asks of you until the precise articulation you seek/  
that seeks you can be eaten by others - what is food without  
life-force? what is life without art?



WUSSA:  
the whispers of creative inspiration

VASHIA:  
the music of wind in tree branches

RUANKATAPA KATA:  
tribal rap chants

ATUR:  
tears that run down your pages as art

DUNGA:  
when the drums sound to the rhythm of your heart



## OUT OF TUNE

We all sing!  
There is no exclusion  
at the gathering of expression.

I prefer it when your voice cracks and you are out of tune,  
it lets me know that you are human.

Sound out your nature,  
we are listening,  
we are patient for your rhythms,  
  
we are with you.

There is no one way to tell a story.  
We await your calling, calm on the precipice  
and leaning into the wind,  
ears wide in spirals.  
We all sing.

Like the wolves and the whales  
and the birds, my love.

The gravel voice of an aging man  
is perhaps the most moving voice I've heard to date.

Like the first intentional melody of a child,  
little he, who lets himself move and see,  
and wail and question and break out into instinctual ballet –

pristine aliveness  
held in body and voice.

We are with you.  
We are with you.

## MASKS

You hang a pearl from one ear and a bone from the other.  
I love your face, the cock of your mouth when you speak,  
the places I would paint with green and blue butterfly wings.  
Also, I love your masks, everything, all of it, all of them.

The mask had its reasons too. I want to know them,  
I want to know you, like the moon knows the earth –  
wrapping my silver light streams of love around you  
tirelessly, to understand you, to know your cycles,  
your ice ages, your blooming, your melting, your cracks.

Like a Salvador Dali Eden of your creation,  
you dressed and dancing, you submerged with breath held,  
you sleeping in tree tops and allowing your animal.

All the life you can imagine, unbounded multi-coloured  
and theatrical – until the masks in their own divine time,  
evaporate, and rise unseen like humidity, like clouds  
and float like thoughts in meditation, away.

The true kind, not the sitting-on-the-edge-of-the-self-kind,  
but the dive deeply and open your eyes underwater  
regardless of the fear or the pain kind.

## WHAT IS ALL THIS FOR?

It's for moments like -  
singing on stage with your grand-daughter.  
It's for meeting eight-five year olds  
and discussing God and the divine with them.  
It's for walking in the night in the cold air  
of a new place wrapped in a big thick jacket  
eating blackberries from the roadside  
and talking on the phone  
to someone you are letting yourself love  
and who is letting themselves love you.

It's for remembering  
who we were before the pain stories.  
It's for actively choosing integrity  
day after day after night.  
It's simply and powerfully to participate  
in the process of living.  
It's for returning calls to old friends  
and learning to listen.  
It's for sleeping to the distant sound  
of an owl.

There are fewer owls after death.

Life is for moments like owls.

## PILGRIMS

Seems we're still alive today.  
Seems the heavy rains and  
dripping moon held us in  
another night of dreaming.

We wake and silent silver  
fills our lungs with ease. We  
rub our own eyes and the most  
tender parts of each other's feet.

And where will today lead us?  
What choices might we make?  
Exhaling a small spell that always  
leads the way forward through

a foreign yet familiar banquet  
of beingness. Everyday opening,  
however seemingly repetitive –  
no matter the bland terrain.

It's always just one foot  
after another – each thought  
follows its ancestor thought like  
a stream of adolescents running.

## TREE POEM

In an all encompassing moment  
like every moment  
coloured leaves quivering in the tallest branches  
you lie bare beneath  
this shameless work of art

Like a soft skinned insect  
you spun a cocoon of your own peaceful thoughts  
from which to birth from  
hopeful again  
that you can be cracked open

That underneath the hesitations  
and descending unknown  
there is a well  
that is never dry  
amniotic soft

Rocked gently by your own breath  
cradled and courageous  
you understand  
something of your nature  
and of his

And you laugh at how similar you are  
his branches wide in question  
like your arms extended and eye-brows raised  
a subtle smile shared  
in a vast mirror

Since neither of you really know  
why he is a tree and you a woman?  
you are simply doing the very best you can  
from where you are

## BRILLIANCE

You wrote a story from the beginning to the middle,  
with all the harrowing nights and bad dreams in between,  
all the white sky mornings  
and the kind of trust a parent has to have.

We believed in you all the while.  
By the river, with your thoughts a mess,  
we would have come sooner if we could've,  
to tell you God is really just sunlight -  
but you learned yourself in time.

We only ever wanted to believe  
that there is safety by the water,  
and when we held our hands above it,  
and leaned towards our own reflections,  
we learned ourselves in time.

It's time that you know the truth -  
you are loved to every atom,  
and the birds and breeze have been  
conspiring to tell you of your brilliance.

Brilliance like the lapis lazuli butterfly wing.  
Brilliance like the innate kindness of the soul.  
Brilliance like the baby's changing colour eyes.  
Brilliance like a divine melody, or laughter, or the sun.

## CONTENTED

We have peered over the edges, into the crevices,  
out to the same spot on the horizon for days and years  
and found nothing to redefine, nothing to edit,  
nothing to polish, nothing to paint over.

The breasts, the thoughts, the shape of the eyes,  
the hopes, the dreams, the way the calf joins the thigh,  
the way the thigh joins the waist, the anus,  
the top lip, the bottom lip, the nose, the cheek bones,  
the height, the width of the arms, the tangled hair,  
the childhood memories, the reactions to the news,  
are all perfect - in their raw form.

We are the headland,  
only the wind and the sun and the waterfalls  
and waves and rains and storms can carve us.  
Only the fire can burn us, only love can mold us.  
Since we are as much alive as any being has ever been  
and god loves us, and you are god, and you love me,  
and I am god, and I love you

and everything is going to be okay.

## A CONVERSATION BETWEEN FRIENDS

The two friends lay a blanket onto the grass and onto the ground,  
both earthen and cemented,  
many a time over,  
to talk about  
Love.

Under a cherry tree, under an oak tree, under a gum tree,  
in the shade of a macadamia grove by the side of the highway  
on some farmer's property,

under the stars and the alcoves of train stations,  
and the rooftops of their family homes,  
always it was the same blanket.

They invited others to share in the conversation too,  
the homeless, the elderly, the lost, the wild,  
children, and cicadas and the wind.

Person A: Love is... a feeling  
Person B: Love is an action  
Person A: Love has a mind of its own.

These informal meetings were attended to for years and years  
with all the rigor of science  
and all the openness of prayer.

Until one day in late spring, the two friends now dressed in grey  
spent a day collecting driftwood in peaceful silence,  
made a fire by the ocean and leaned in to kiss it.

Following the kisses came breath and the most loving of touch.  
They let the warmth take them over  
and breathed deeply together

until they were both ash.



## LIGHT STREAM

In the shadows we all know each other

Keyhole noticing - a light stream asks to join

In the shadows the grudge and the gold hang out together

Can you carve a little world that asks life of you?

It's an outfit already picked out for you the night before

The very make up of your nature

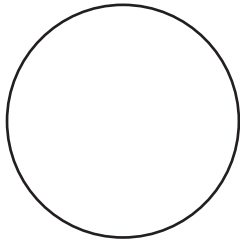
The fraying and the original thread point

You found so many ways to say sorry

You found so many ways to stay angry

Just look at him - hold his face in your hands

knowing that you have his features



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# WHAT NOW?

METAZII:  
courageous abandon into  
love or life

## AUSTRALIA

Make a little ritual  
under a hills-hoist washing line.  
It doesn't matter what time it is,  
or if the neighbours can see you or not.

Around this land there are countless  
charge sites – the metal beacons  
wasted by washing –  
they are full of potential!

Like us, we hang the washing on our bodies,  
we wear it once it's dry.

Give up your obedience.  
Trade it in for invention.

Make a little ritual.  
Use what you need.  
What can this country be?  
What can we be?  
Kneel at the portal above you.

The kookaburra and the owl  
haven't given up on us yet.  
Make a little fire,  
open your mouth to song.

Bring the symbols of our lives  
to that metal underwing.

Face  
the strange pains of this place.  
Sit quiet,  
look out,

it's just a ritual.

PAUSE FOR A LONG MOMENT  
AND LET SOMETHING LIKE PEACE  
WASH OVER YOU

Sometimes I worry that my body is falling apart already –  
That society that unfathomable and banal beast  
has gotten the better of me, rendered me toxic.

I worry that it's too late – or that worry makes tumors.  
I am resilient – that word gets thrown around,  
but also – I'm tired of having to be – I'm just tired.  
The blossom tree dropped all her white flowers.

Can I drop mine too? I'll pick them up in seasons.  
May I sit on a park bench and just do nothing for a day?  
The winter branches host an extended family of doves.  
Pendant raindrops play with light and I draw a flower  
with my finger over the places in my body taming tension.

Pause for a long moment –  
and let something like peace wash over me.

## CELEBRATION OF BROKENNESS

The dying woman with the ancient blue eyes,  
her body morphing with the cancer,  
hands thick with fluid, she tilts her head,  
says the word *Love* and the room around us –  
changes shape. It's all yellow and white flowers now.

Beside her I feel, ashamed of what I've become.  
The way my shoulders curl in, the thoughts I  
allow into me. I want to GET RID OF my judgements.  
She sees me see her, she hears my mind aching –  
heavy in the mass of broken bits. Shame.

She invites me to her little couch, to be held.  
I weep in her arms, I barely know this woman.  
She speaks in no uncertain terms of the  
necessity of love in this world, love of self first.  
Love of self first, it starts with you, she says again.

I shirk away, convinced of more important work.  
A young deranged woman comes to my door,  
her hair is thinning and she screams for no reason.  
She wants to eat my food and sleep in my bed.  
I am afraid of her, I don't really have the time for *this*.

Still,

I invite her in, put another log on the fire, ask her  
to tell me everything. She drools as she speaks.  
She sluts around, she hits her mother, she steals,  
she hates, she's attracted to children, she fears,  
she's selfish, she's jealous, she's bitter, she's weak.

She sobs and laughs and tires herself out. I just listen.  
She lives with me now. I look after her, it's not so hard.  
I know her favourite tea and soup. I sing to her at night.  
She's much calmer now. She's a hobby sculpture artist.  
There in my deep psyche. Somedays I even love her.

It is clear though, that she lives in my house,  
I don't live in hers, and from time to time we smile  
in the shared understanding that truly it is neither of us  
who runs the whole show. Essence sweeps the air.  
Essence blows the windows open. Love rules the house.

## SURRENDER

Sheets of pelting  
tears  
turn to snow  
we open our tongues  
to let the life sting

Body melts  
in morning satin  
adjust sweet sounds  
we open the heart  
to let the light in

You cannot crave  
surrender  
you can only  
say Yes and forget  
your words

Our daughter  
plays piano  
in the nude  
her shoulder blades  
like wings

We made an angel

On the eclipse  
of our love  
she who shepherds the  
ocean with the whites  
of her eyes

Sheets of pelting  
tears  
turn to snow  
we open our palms  
to let the life sting



## THE MOON AND CLOUDS AT NIGHT

I look up and marvel  
that we let ourselves believe, that this is remotely normal  
for long enough not to go mad in the ecstasy of being.  
Revel in the sheer ridiculousness of boredom  
that we could let ourselves be bored – incredible!  
Under a forever morphing sky that holds our planet  
like a womb holds a babe.

That we can see into glass reflection  
and witness our own pupils pulsing with the changing light,  
do we need any marriage more holy than this?  
That we huddle around cars at night  
with paintings under our arms and reveal little by little  
the truth of our lonelinesses.  
That we are here now, and not then, and probably never again.

And even if our spirits do fly around looking for another body  
and find one, we'll not likely remember this life anyway  
and any day could be our last.  
It seems the world doesn't mind too much when we die,  
the owl is decomposing on my doorstep,  
its eyes have been eaten out. Sweet, soft hollows now.

Look up, and there in the half moon, cloud art.  
There's a flicker of, what on earth is going on?  
What on universe is going on?  
That we let ourselves get bogged down in the quicksand  
of our social welcome mat seems near criminal,  
seems near anti-life, all these furrowed brows could let up a bit.  
Let the clouds sweep clear your moon face.

You potter about as if the whole world  
isn't clapping and whooping for your success,  
as if the dried flowers aren't swooning on your shrine,  
as if all of this was a take it or leave it situation.  
Let the clouds sweep clear your moon face.

## THE CAPTAIN

When you let me see you  
when you sweep the hair from your eyes  
when you show me the gum of your smile  
when I can climb the steep mountain of your nose with my gaze  
I am glad there are jagged ridges for me to dance on  
an outcrop from which to watch the waves come in

When you look directly at the camera  
and do not hide your love  
I have no defenses  
I only want to love you  
I only want to sit with you and make for you  
the most nourishing of broths  
to feed your face  
to add one more crease to those smile lines after a wonderful night  
in your company

It is simple  
Goddess has spoken God has agreed  
your spirit fits precisely inside your face  
and children adore you  
even though it is not symmetrical  
they - like me - don't see discriminatory beauty or not beauty

They see the light in your eyes  
they feel the warmth of your chest  
they attend the vibrations of your laughter  
they stroke tiny hand onto chin stubble  
and pull hair like it's vines on an ancient temple surface  
they beam back a thousand smiles to your one  
they feel safe when you show us who you are

Look out from your face  
like it is the great ship to greet the dawn and storms with  
be the wild and loving captain of your own face  
hold other's eyes  
and let the shame melt away  
in the face of our love

You are not your lips, you are not your mole,  
you are not your cheeks, you are not your brows,  
you are a spirit dancing features with light lines  
you are the sacred puppeteer of your  
most unique most treasured most necessary face

## IN OUR HOME

In our home we do not expect to die tomorrow.  
We make soup and drink wine  
and discuss with great elation  
how to end the wars.

In our home we meet another's eyes and hold that gaze -  
and there is no shame in expressing  
the microscopic truth  
as we reveal all shuddering, all strength.

In our home we spend hours  
singing with the little ones  
and making stories out of shadows and light  
we beckon their small and grand ideas.

In our home we accept that death is real  
we live in this knowledge  
but still let ourselves wonder and smile  
at the potential of a spirited reunion with each other.

In our home we give up our beds for those  
with older bones or heavy hearts  
we break silence with whispered I Love You's  
we break bread any day of the week.

In our home we invite the wisdom of strangers  
to merge with our own  
and every midnight is a sacred site  
a threshold into an ever expanding universe.

## RIDGE LINE

Is there a place within these plains –  
a place where we can meet?  
A river or a ridge line?  
To face the truth of each other?  
To admit the poison of the past.  
To say *enough now*.  
To neither win nor be defeated.  
To drink the waters of apology from  
ancient aching hollows of oak roots?  
Can we stop the violent games now?  
Have there been enough bullets to the head yet?  
Has friction in the groin played out enough cowardice yet?  
Have we lost enough?  
Have we lied enough?  
Hold her gaze and let her have you.  
She died for our sins.  
She's been dying for our sins *everyday*  
for the last two thousand and eighteen years.  
Is there a ridge line somewhere  
you can howl out your madness on?  
Forgiveness is only ever a breath away.  
If you cannot stop your hands from hurting her,  
taking, wanting, stealing her –  
have them bound behind your back  
and let us see you – let us sing you.

Is there a ridge line?

## THE CITY I'M HEADED

The city I'm headed  
people retire long before they die.  
Tapestries hang upon walls  
and we lean our whole spines into conversations.  
The children sleep in the same place the adults gather  
and we know each other deeply over decades.

The city I'm headed  
has grieving pools and saunas,  
places to go to just feel out and into  
the full emotion of living and losing,  
of remembering and forgetting  
and remembering again.

The city I'm headed  
encourages thinking, encourages breathing,  
encourages observation of the finer truths.  
There's dancing and music and story-telling for free,  
every night there's a place to gather and just  
be human.

In the city I'm headed  
the dawn is a respected time and many people rise  
just to come into the day with vitality  
and aliveness. Death is an honoured celebration  
of life and wisdom and friendship,  
Birth is a ceremony.

The city I'm headed  
we learn each other's languages  
we tip our hats for each other's Goddesses, Gods  
or lack there of, it's all welcome -  
peace is the priority and  
the health of the world's waters

and the water's within us all.

## DRIFTWOOD

Receive  
the touch of a child's palm and tiny fingers  
wrapped around yours like a seahorse.

Receive  
confirmation that time will not sacrifice you  
to a moment of torment but wants you to come with it.

Receive  
acknowledgement that every time we survive  
we are losing an old skin.

Receive  
the timed wave of a lighthouse like a father's love.

Receive  
acknowledgement from children  
that you are trustworthy again.

Receive  
optimism increments etching slowly but deeply into her soul.

Receive  
kingfisher blue revealing himself to you.

Receive  
a single feather in the centre of your path.

Receive  
driftwood soft on the hand and the heart now.

## TO SLEEP IN TRUST

Curl my body into a soft shape,  
expose my back to the night air –  
hear the crackling lullaby of wood  
burning close but not too close.  
Feather eyes, raise to the copper glow.  
Feather eyes, rest to the silhouette  
of the old ones watching over me.

Somebody loves me so much –  
that they want me to sleep so well.  
So much that they'll smile at the  
sight of me just resting there  
in a funny spoon shape, quiet me.  
The tender night invites the owls,  
the dingoes, the foxes, the bats.

They have their strange party while  
my mother plays piano for them.  
She befriends the animals and I wake  
with a moon stream to the third eye.  
The old ones let themselves be seen –  
flicker like wing, like a watching beast.

Expose my breasts and chest to the fire,  
ready me to be – one who also watches  
over, and smiles gently as others  
sleep in trust.



## LEGACY

I will forget what I have remembered  
but I have left traces this time  
words and small strands of pink string on low branches  
to recall you  
to recall myself  
to return to the shoreline  
and look out in surrendered anticipation again

## YEW TREE

We didn't *lose* our way  
it was systematically hidden from us  
sacred sites demolished  
sacred roots culled  
sacred thoughts shut down

We had our wisdoms  
and until the last Yew  
is taken – they are not  
victim to museum mouths  
they are now

An ageless tree whose roots  
cycle up inside itself –  
a spirit that replenishes  
as it dies  
is a waste of your axe

We didn't *forget* the language  
it was forbidden our tongues –  
after cultural rape  
we can still recover  
in the refuge of our own intent

The Yew makes shelter  
makes time – heals bodies – heals lives  
ancestral energy dances the cells  
and the children feel it all  
ask them *what now?*

Bronze leaves and vine flowers  
trace the rim of your cauldron –  
emblaze – embolden  
reclaim what was stolen  
her statue

breathing molten



# Author's Note

## HOW THIS WORK CAME TO BE

At university I majored in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island studies. This was after overhearing a conversation in which someone stated that Indigenous Australian people are the social group suffering most in this country. I wanted to help, I wanted to make theatre in the desert with First Nations communities. During the course I was expecting to learn about other cultures than my own but the lived experience was quite different. There were many moments in which the teachers turned the mirror back onto us, the students.

I was prompted to look at my own assumptions, bias, cultural loss, lineage and even internalized racism that I am thankful to be aware of. I moved through layers of shame I didn't even realise I was carrying. Beneath the surface I discovered that I didn't want to have children who looked like me, blonde and with blue eyes. I was ashamed of my whiteness, of appearing arian, I felt alien.

During a class on kinship a small group of students were asked how far back we know of our ancestors. The Aboriginal Australian students in the room easily listed many names and places while the other Australian students didn't even know the names of their great-grandparents. Not because they couldn't find them, but perhaps they, like me, hadn't thought to ask. However, they also weren't offered the information by their immediate families.

I had an experience as an audience member at a writers festival watching a panel of writers discuss writing the dark side, the hard stuff. They represented the courageous few who were willing to really go there. However, when asked about pedophilia each of the

panel members said they couldn't write about that. That it would be too hard. I was taken aback. Did they feel it their right and freedom to disregard the subject matter because it's too hard, too painful?

My challenge is this. If we can't write and talk about the difficult subjects of self-loathing, jealousy, isolation, rape, murder, pedophilia, racism, selfishness, hate and fear, how then are we to ever understand ourselves and each other? How can we respond to the current situations faced by humanity if we can't even talk about them or write about them? Surely an acceptance of evil, war, secrets and prison systems isn't the answer. Surely we can do better than that.

In Germany for example, home to some of my ancestors, there are plaques and memorials that publicly recognize the mass murder of Jewish people. Perhaps we in Australia could consider doing the same, publicly recognizing the murders of First Nations people during the sustained invasion of this land and its people from 1788 to present day.

Some of these poems are fierce but they are created on the premise that it is never too late for the human spirit to heal, even if it's in the moments before death. I saw an interview with a man in prison. He had raped and murdered his female partner. The woman's mother had been visiting him for years in prison. She was helping him heal. He spoke directly into the camera of how he'd never known what love was. He spoke about how he'd been abused as a boy and how the one person in his life who had taught him what love is was

his deceased partner's mother. His face cracked into silent tears as he spoke. She is an embodiment of forgiveness. He will spend the rest of his days behind bars, yes, but thanks to the deep love and kindness of one individual he is closer to peace and understanding.

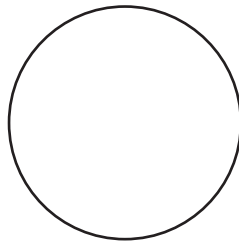
I renounce the idea that one person can't make a difference. One person has many times made vast waves of change on this planet. The earth that seems so huge can be reflected upon deeply, possibly even objectively, by any one of us and change can result. We can ask, how is the human family doing? Where are we in our collective evolution? In what ways can we participate, offer love, offer kindness, express honestly? What now?

In what small ways can we begin today, perhaps starting with self and our own thoughts, to create a less violent terrain to be human in? My questions around how to be politically active oscillate between the intimacy of our own thoughts and how we as people respond to dominant cultural narratives. I hope that *What Now?* can serve as both a balm of sorts and a reminder of our individual power to reclaim our own bodies, our own thoughts and our native human capacity as culture creators.

Though I've been concerned that some of these pieces are too feminist, or too depressing, I stand by them and publish them here because I feel that as well as looking on the bright side, we need time to grieve. Western culture does not allow proper observance of grief in many areas of life, we cannot skip this process. Wounds sometimes appear more sickly on their paths to healing. We sweat the fever out through the night and can wake up well again. That's how I was raised and that's perhaps how I write.

I thank my mother for showing me an example of a truly courageous woman.

May the light of Love and the depths of Understanding heal every broken heart and return us to our noble selves from this moment on.



ASCENTALAAA:  
significant change or shift felt by a being  
after a single conversation

# Acknowledgements

I thank Montsalvat Artist Colony for having me as an artist in residence while I wrote many of the pieces here. I honour my incredible family for raising me in a way that let me touch life. I praise the editors Chalise van Wyngaardt and John Englezos for their tireless attention to words, story and detail. I acknowledge the rain on the roof and the moon's changing face for being such stunning consistent elements in my life. I recognise my Grandmothers and Grandfathers for all that they created and stood for while they lived. I offer my deepest respect to the First Nations people of Australia for fiercely defending cultures so rich with earth connected songs, stories and ceremonies. I open my heart to the Indigenous tribes and people groups of England and Germany, the lands of my ancestors. May we find ways to live together honourably and with joy on this phenomenal earth in this mystical universe.



# About the Author



Alice Night is a singer and writer based in Australia. She creates under the equation Art + Honesty = Alchemy. Alice has a Masters of Fine Arts in Writing for Performance from the National Institute of Dramatic Arts and is a budding playwright and novelist. Alongside her writing and music she creates theatre and performance art under the company name NoTaboo Theatre. This is her first self published collection of poetry. She has released four albums of original songs and collaborations that are available online via [www.alicenight.bandcamp.com](http://www.alicenight.bandcamp.com). Alice also works as a coach and creativity counsellor offering one-on-one sessions in voice and expression. You can follow her work on her website [www.alicenight.com](http://www.alicenight.com). If you are moved by Molten you can become an Alice Night patron at [www.patreon.com/alicenight](http://www.patreon.com/alicenight) with a monthly contribution and receive behind the scenes creative insights and content from Alice.

