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AELA acknowledges that the sovereignty of the First Nations Peoples of the continent now known as Australia was never ceded by treaty nor in any other way. AELA acknowledges and respects First Nations Peoples' laws and ecologically sustainable custodianship of Australia over tens of thousands of years through land and sea management practices that continue today.

The creators of the *Earthwords and Artlings Anthology* would additionally like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the traditional storytellers of the lands on which this anthology was developed and would like to pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

*Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.*



# EARTHWORDS AND ARTLINGS ANTHOLOGY

Volume 1: Voices of Nature 2020

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Editors: Ally Moulis, Claudia Pilon-Summons

Managing Editors: Dr Michelle Maloney, James K. Lee

Cover Design: Mark Taylor

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Australian Earth Laws Alliance  
PO Box 405  
BANYO Queensland 4014  
AUSTRALIA

[www.earthlaws.org.au](http://www.earthlaws.org.au)

[www.eartharts.org.au](http://www.eartharts.org.au)



Ally Moulis, Claudia Pilon-Summons,  
Dr Michelle Maloney, James K. Lee  
*Editors*

# **EARTHWORDS AND ARTLINGS ANTHOLOGY**

## **Volume 1: Voices of Nature**

## EDITOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Ally Moulis** is an award-winning creative, editor and educator with a Bachelor of Communications (Creative Writing & Journalism), a Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation (First Class Honours) and a Diploma of Languages (French) from the University of Technology Sydney. Having recently completed an Honours thesis analysing the role of storytelling in motivating action on climate change, Ally is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the role of creativity in generating meaningful systemic change and cultivating loving and genuine human/nature relationships. Ally is an experienced writer, having worked as an editor, copywriter and content creator throughout her career, with her key projects focusing on implementing positive social change across diverse industries. Her poetry and short stories have been published in digital and print magazines, independent zines and online blogs. Currently, Ally spends her time co-editing *Earthwords and Artlings*, teaching English and reading and writing about the intricate complexities of the natural world.

**Claudia Pilon-Summons** has a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Sciences and a Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation (First Class Honours) from the University of Technology Sydney. She is passionate about social and environmental justice, as reflected by the eclectic range of projects she has worked on, including a social media campaign on medical gaslighting, a 'toolkit' for impactful storytelling, and an Honours thesis investigating the key barriers to the implementation of Rights of Nature in Australia, which saw her engage with a variety of stakeholders in the Rights of Nature sphere both nationally and abroad. Recently, Claudia has been working at both the University of Technology Sydney and the University of Sydney, researching resilience in ecovillages, the use of innovative technology in the Murray-Darling Basin, and future-focused learning and complex problem solving in secondary education. She has also coordinated a transdisciplinary subject in complex systems thinking at the University of Technology Sydney. Currently, Claudia is one of the co-editors of *Earthwords and Artlings* and in her spare time can be found outdoors: camping in the outback, hiking in the arctic circle, or rock climbing and taking photographs in the Blue Mountains.



## MANAGING EDITOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Dr. Michelle Maloney** is a lawyer, governance expert and systems change/social change maker. Michelle is the Co-Founder & National Convenor of the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA), an organisation that works across disciplines to promote the understanding and practical implementation of Earth centred governance with a focus on law, economics, ethics, education, spirituality and the arts. Michelle manages AELA's Earth Arts Program, and regularly collaborates with visual, sound and performance artists. Michelle is also Co-Founder and Director of the New Economy Network Australia and Co-Founder and Director of Future Dreaming Australia, a not-for-profit organisation created in partnership with First Nations Elders, aimed at building cross-cultural ecological knowledge and creating an Earth centred society.

**James Lee** has a background in art, music and film studies (BMus, WAAPA; GDScreenComp, AFTRS) and holds a Master of Environmental Management (MEM) from the University of New South Wales (UNSW). James is a Project Manager with the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) and works on ecological governance and Earth Arts projects. He has a strong interest in interdisciplinary approaches to addressing ecological challenges and exploring the role that cultural practices can play in informing and supporting Earth-centred governance.

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# A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Today in the garden, I opened my page  
And in walked the whole earth.  
From a Bracken Fern to a eucalypt tree,  
From a star-gazing flounder to an unwanted weed.

A seagull, a starfish, a girl by a river,  
An island, a beach and a sweet quarter moon.  
A bonfire blazing, a window through time,  
A tree-sister singing, a plant reaching skyward.

All are a gentle and joyful reminder,  
That Earth with her plenty, her diversity of life,  
Is more intricate – more divine – than we will ever truly know.  
And nature,  
    Peace,  
        Joy,  
            Connection,  
Are always there, just waiting to be listened to,  
And witnessed.

Welcome to the debut volume of *Earthwords and Artlings*: an annual anthology of creative works by the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA). Our names are Ally and Claudia, and we are delighted to invite you inside the pages of ‘Voices of Nature’.

When we first spoke with Michelle and James (our wonderful managing editors) about the possibility of creating an anthology with AELA in November last year, we had no inkling of the apocalyptic summer that was to follow. We had not yet walked through tear-soaked ash nor choked on thick, smoke-filled air. Further, we knew of RONA only as an acronym for Rights of Nature Australia, not Aussie slang for the deadly coronavirus. We did not yet understand the longing one could feel for the more-than-human as we sat isolated in our homes dreaming of shady parks, meandering streams and rocky gorges.

The series of unprecedented events that have taken place over the last twelve months has revealed a lot about the way in which human society relates to the natural world. In the face of isolation, our interactions with nature have become more considered experiences - we have become more attentive to the sublimity of our planet in ways we haven’t been afforded the time and space to be before.

We have been provided with a new vocabulary to explore and interrogate our interactions with the more-than-human - one that is kind, sacred, emotive and poetic - a language of respect that presents nature as something greater than a resource, asset or ecosystem service and allows us to know nature in an intimate and intricate way. As such, we feel that now more than ever it is necessary to provide a space to celebrate and reflect on our relationship with the natural world in a way that is creative and imaginative.

Creativity has the ability to engage our sense of humanity, and instigate meaningful behaviour change. Not only this, but narratives are inseparable to human experience – they act as a vital sense-making tool for us and allow us to comprehend complex phenomena. They also facilitate the sharing of wisdom, experiences and inspiration, all of which are incredibly important when it comes to celebrating our bond with the natural world and imagining a sustainable future.

Research has also shown that engaging with literature and art allows human beings to understand the thoughts, feelings and psychological states of other individuals. Something that's been beautiful to see through the theme of our debut anthology 'Voices of Nature', is that our contributors have propelled our minds and hearts beyond just being able to understand the lives of other people, but to also empathise with and imagine the experiences of the more-than-human.

We have pieces written from the perspective of the ocean and the sky - written by flowers growing wild and water running towards the sea. We have contemplative pieces, nostalgic pieces, reflective pieces, and pieces that call us to action. Each has challenged us to expand our thinking beyond the anthropocentric to better understand the value and meaning of life on earth.

The sense of community that we felt when we first came across AELA last year has only continued to grow with the creation of the anthology. Reading every single submission to *Earthwords and Artlings* was such a loving reminder that out there, somewhere, are like-minded people as in love with the earth as we are. Thank you again to everyone who submitted their work to the anthology. We are so grateful.

So, without further ado, we invite you to witness, observe and listen to the 'Voices of Nature'.

With love,  
Ally and Claudia.



*Chidrenii Faery Flies*  
**By Pingala Walsh**



# BEYOND THE COMMON HOUR

By Gerard Traub

The forest is attentive to your presence  
Alive upon each breath of wind  
One vast collective of small  
And towering awakenings  
All with their own senses.

Trees standing ever watchful  
Waiting to feel you deeper  
Come lose yourself  
In the song of branches  
A language spoken  
Between every leaf  
To lead you into their world  
And inner sanctum  
Where a communion  
Of silent hearts convene.

From a light  
That bears no flame  
Whispers that call upon you  
From inside yourself  
To share even a brief moment  
Under a fading sky  
Beyond the common hour.



# SKY PAINTING

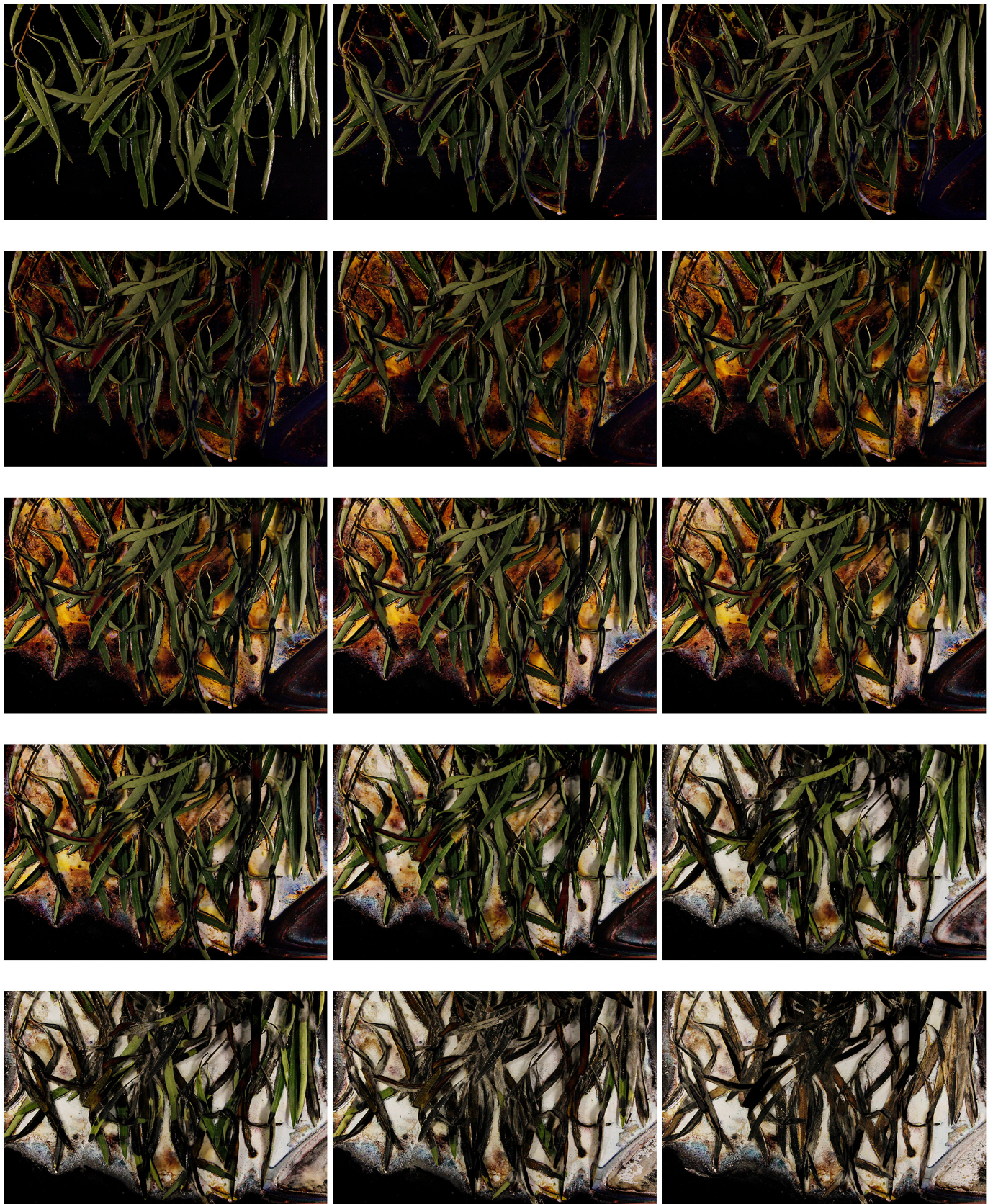
By Anonymous

If I could paint the skies  
I would paint it with the links of my mind  
I would paint it with cyans and magentas and limes  
Reds and oranges and yellows  
Blacks and greys and white  
All sorts of colours  
I would paint it with sorrow and happiness alike  
I would paint it with the voice of my soul alight  
I would paint the sky with my emptiness...

And the result  
Would be the same night sky I see.  
Stars shining bright  
No hint of any other colour but  
The midnight painted with white spots.  
Galaxies invisible  
Shooting stars veiled  
The moon irrepressible  
The stars afield  
Their lights not powerful  
But gentle on the eyes  
Caressing the soul  
Of the weary and tired.

If I could paint the skies...  
And if only I could,  
I would paint it all colours alike  
With a thick paintbrush  
Soaked in a water airy as can be...  
But, that is,  
If only.





**By Renata Buziak**

*Umby Umby (Gumby Gumby)*, 2020, Biochrome Stills From *Yimbali, Listening Is a Form of Healing*

A Collaboration by Leah Barclay, Tanja Brüggemann, Renata Buziak and Vicki Kelleher,

Created for *Voices of Nature* AELA's National Exhibition 2020;

With Appreciation and Acknowledgements to Aunty Lynette Nixon and Saraeva Mitchell, Gunggari Country.



# THE MEDICINE IS DISAPPEARING

By Vicki Kelleher

Eyes close  
As breath settles into  
A new timeline  
Rhythm

Everything slows

Eagle circling  
Looking down  
I am welcomed  
My breath has  
Been heard

I reach out my hand  
Skin touches  
Smooth slim cellulose  
Senses open and  
Time deepens its vision  
Before the medicine is  
Disappearing

Dusty breezes rustling  
Across slender surfaces  
Reaching roots reaching  
Out onto  
Other roots  
Undergrowth

Tall thin bush branches  
Dancing, resting, leaning  
Willow-like foliage

Slow growing  
Slender leaves  
Steeped  
In hot water  
Breathing in

I pause a moment  
In the gentle wake  
Of its steam

Breathing out  
I listen as  
Softness  
Settles  
And the shimmer  
Begins all over.

# LEAF LITTER

By Nina Woodrow

There are some things I'm sure  
That can only be learnt by walking your patch  
An ambling kind of knowing where you tune in  
Start to notice the details without even trying senses engage  
Breath and brain waves sync with the footfall  
And the terrain becomes viscerally familiar  
Comforting even when it is uncomfortable  
In the way of a good friend  
Worth caring for.

There are some days I'm sure  
That have been saved by this newly formed  
Pandemic walking habit leaving the house for a last light foray  
Which incidentally affords a litany of sensory observations  
Seasons of light and foliage dog walkers and park frolickers  
Glimpses of a tiny wild heart beating in the free form fragments  
Alive amidst the oversights the accidents  
The urban concessions to  
Wild green mess.





There are some places I know  
That remain for me intimate territories remembered  
In this way even while they are the sites of an era gone by  
Places I dream of still and miss like lost friends imprinted geographies  
The backyards of my grandparent's houses old neighbourhoods and rat routes  
A road trip through the desert via patchwork hills and over the border  
To a winding green valley road and a stony creek bed  
My father's resting place  
Bones under ground.

Maybe it's the leafy symphony  
I greet each afternoon these days  
In the wide green space at the end of my street that reminds me  
Of this walking way to know a place like where the path  
Through the stand of trees takes a gentle swing to the right  
And there is something so tender in the arc of that curve  
Like a caress and if I were to lie down and snow angel my arms  
I could breathe in the leaf litter and this place too  
I could know.

And it is only this way I'm sure  
This willingness to trek a path over and over  
To risk loving a new place and let it be what it is something tangled  
Something unregulated let it be known let it be important it is only this way  
That we become better caretakers who find fracking and cable logging  
And roundup intolerable because part of my heart belongs here  
This place is a friend of mine because  
I walk it.

# HOLD FAST TO DREAMS

By Anne Casey

How you *astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness*  
Repurposing our wreckage, to swallow an oil rig or a bicycle,  
A ship, a sunken chest your indiscriminate accretion  
Of abundant goodness over manufactured ruin,  
Inching forward to harbour a waterlogged rainforest:  
Lustrous treasure unfolding so close to the sun-slick surface.

Born at the dawn of Ordovician  
Time, how you embrace intricate multiplicities  
Tiny lavish-hearted conservationist, tireless labourer,  
Magnanimous host: from such small quarter  
To house, to home one quarter  
Of Neptune's herds.

Each delicate tendril pressed  
To service to sculpt your hardy battlements  
That bear the brunt of Poseidon's rage, warding off waves,  
How you shelter and sustain imperiled island domains.  
Embattled, unsung, nocturnal bloomer how you  
Take your cue from the moon

To launch upon our *sea of troubles*  
A glimmering burst, a pulsing universe of glittering stars,  
To whisper: *shut your eyes and see* each one a freely-given gift,  
Embryo of hope: if we dare  
To dream.\*



## \*NOTES

1. One of nature's great conservationists, coral occupies less than 0.1% of the world's ocean area while providing a home for at least 25% of all the earth's marine species. Under threat from human activities facilitated by the erosion of environmental protection statutes, coral reefs provide essential wave protection to island communities, and harbour vital fish stocks. Coral colonies are known as 'rainforests of the ocean'.

2. The title and italicised words are quotes: “Hold Fast to Dreams” (Langston Hughes), “astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness” (Maya Angelou), “sea of troubles” (William Shakespeare) and “shut your eyes and see” (James Joyce).



# FAVOURITE PLANTS AND REASONS

By Joe Pascoe

Sweet Williams

Small curving mounds with many white flowers

Arranged in rows

In formal gardens of childhood

Perhaps near a monument

Guiding my steps with joy

Bracken fern, seen in green gullies

A strong pattern

Making my legs cool

Brushing us, protecting us

As we hiked through

On course

Hedges I like too

More than I'll admit

Their solid patinas

Controlling space

Making the footpaths pleasant

Moss I'm fond of

It can be accidental or deliberate

Found in private contemplation

An enjoyable scale

Moist

Let's hear it for the colossal Bunya Bunya

Tough tall ancient

Very small very regular

Sharp leaves in their thousands

Forming a canopy that defies mostly everything

Jonquil flowers

Yellow, white and orange

A pleasant, easy bunch

Perched in a vase

Or growing in nice soil

In grandma's Seaford garden



There are the amazing ones as well  
Gynea Lily sending its red crown  
Metres in the air  
Proudly

Popular are the native grasses  
Best seen in secret groups in Gippsland  
Enjoying the rains  
Incredibly healthy  
Special but not inviting attention

I like particular trees  
It might be a river gum  
Full of character  
So thick it predates white fella  
Watching the Darebin Parklands

We have it all in Australia  
Bush land, botanical gardens  
Flower pots with red geraniums  
Windy paddocks  
Holding on to bent melaleucas  
Forming furrows in the sky

We all like wattles  
Giving hope in winter  
We plant sprays of brown and olive  
Picked with some colour  
In our gardens  
To mark our place  
In the wide landscape  
Of our lives.







*Tarkine Huon Dreaming*  
**By Pingala Walsh**

# UNFOLDING THE STORY OF US

By Samuel Wearne

## *Modernity*

Here I sit, in the mainframe of Mother Nature. I'm pulling at plugs and wires, testing and guessing at random like a panicked, crazed zealot.

The critical errors back up, and whole wings of connected storage are obliterated. Lost in my delusion, I cannot pull away. I'm convinced one day I'll crack it - the mysteries of the system, the power to be God.

Now the cooling system is breaking down. I can feel the sweat rolling down my brow, soaking my fingers, stinging my eyes. New connections in the mainframe begin forging under the growing intensity of change being forced through its airways, oceans, roots and rivers. The changes reach out to me, and into me, in ways that hurt and tear.

And still, I persist. Hopeful to find some small insight to celebrate; a last ditch effort to justify an adolescent imagination that consequences don't apply to me.

## *Dreams and Neoliberalism*

As the heat continues rising, my consciousness slips away. For decades, my reality is a hypothetical, imaginary landscape. The dream has the comfort of repetition. It is what gets me through each day, delaying the inevitable realisation of my folly and misdemeanour.

Each dream-day starts with imagining the first thing to touch my skin: a cheap, rough-spun product from an autonomous social machine that's fed by many smiling faces. The first food I eat is made from the essence of places that I'll never see and dissected cultures now lost to my understanding. I comfort myself in a breakfast of manufactured simplicity of something once more complex.

For hours upon hours, I simply wander through this dream world, dazed by the fog of lost connections - I can't see where I am, who I am, or what my hands are doing...What is my work exactly?

Still, I know my hands are busy. Pulling wires, twisting knobs, smashing systems. I'm locked within my head while my body continues pulling apart the mainframe.

### ***Awakening to Reality***

A young girl. Millions of people marching. A beach. A bird. A story. A song. Pain.

It's hard to say what woke me, but the rush of new perspective was visceral. Old connections fused together, ways of thinking long neglected kicked into gear, and a dance of familiarity and clarity emerged in multiple dimensions simultaneously. Molecules through to cultures repositioned themselves within the world around me.

As colour poured into my perspective, the connections that were always there became as visible as my meddling. I was, I'd rediscovered, an inseparable part of Mother Nature.

With remarkable clarity and detail, I glimpsed my full entangled context. It was clear that the mainframe that I was dismantling were the organs of my chest; the biota of my body. I, mere human, was just one connected branch of Earth's complex, dependent network. Life was one and many, and millions of years in the making. This new full world was beckoning, with work to be revised.

### ***A Biophilic Repositioning***

As more of us awoke, the social reality that emerged was no utopian cliché. Humans still argued, fought and hated. We still had different views and theories. But we'd learnt the need for a baseline of respect, a deeper concept of what it meant to be alive and share a rejuvenated commitment to govern with concern for time, space and species. There was no turning back on the knowledge that the first Enlightenment had brought us through Modernity. Instead, we learned and we moved forward. The first Enlightenment spawned separation, the second, reconnection.

Slowly, fundamental principles formed and changed our way of thinking: patterns, scales and complexity were no longer seen as threats and problems to be solved, but questions to be lived, and systems to be creatively, physically and intellectually explored. Change was seen as normal. We had to learn to appreciate the small things, to love the questions, and to accept what we cannot know.

As we awoke to our own biology, cognitive science gave us new awareness and perspective on the damaging cultures of consumption and disconnection in our past. Inspired to change, we created songs, architecture, industries and art that grew our identities toward the nature of specific regions and places, reinforcing pools of socio-ecological diversity to inspire, explore and learn from.



Deeper understandings of complex socio-ecological systems where we lived complemented, rather than diminished, global dialogues and understandings. Bio-cultural diversity moved from being a measure of global destruction to an ambition of great creation and connection.

The road of change was bumpy - charismatic leaders mislead many and forces of great resistance flattened moments of potential progress. But the strong, relentless shift was tidal. It was both within us and between us. We had seen Mother Nature once more, and re-seen ourselves in the process.

### ***The Anthropocene of the Future***

A century past its inception, “the Anthropocene” has long retained its relevance. Initially coined as a measure of our reckless planet-level destruction, “the Anthropocene” has since come to stand for the positives from humanity’s planetary awakening. It reminds us to be humble in our existence on Earth and conscious of the responsibilities inherent in the knowledge we have gained through science. With roots in a measure of reckless destruction, the meaning of “the Anthropocene” now evokes a rousing reminder of our increasingly inter-planetary civilisation and our ethical duty to life. Our society today is governed with the realisation that our deepest duty is to the universe, and our primary job to steward and foster a flourishing of life in all its diversity, over space and time.



*Eucalyptus Dawn*  
**By Pingala Walsh**



# RARE EARTH CURE\*

By Ceridwen Suiter

Agricultural	Hegemonists	HowL:
“Naturally	Ocurring	FlorA
Terrible	Monstrous	DegradationN!”
“Holding	Onto	PasT
Restricts	Growing	WealtH
Or	Expanding	AreA.”
Patented	Novel	GenerationN
Of	Outlandish	MonO-
Cultures	Claims	GenetiC
Existences	Entirely	PrivatE.
Nevertheless,	Nascent	ConvictionN
Expounds	Earthlings’	Inter-dependenceE.



\*Reading this wordplay from left to right in the ordinary way presents the essential ideas driving the man-made moves on the earth's ecology during the 20/21st centuries, while reading the bold text vertically spells out three words which encapsulate the changing existential relationship between human and planet.

The first two name the two geological eras that concretely inscribe evidence of man's existence within the Earth itself as human impact becomes more extreme. The terminal letter of each line represents a dawning era of hope, through spelling out the collective name for 'rare earths' in the periodic table of chemical elements. Curiously, far from being scarce, these essential molecules are found in multiple combinations in many locations on Earth; their rarity lies in the way they hide in and among each other.

Recently, individual elements have been re-badged as 'bio-minerals' since they were 'discovered' to be useful in curing human cancer. Given that cancer is caused by the over-production of one single type of cell, my naming of a new era for our 'rare Earth' suggests we can use our growing knowledge with regard to the total 'footprint' of the human race to judiciously remedy the outcome of past practices.



# SEVEN MILES OF GRATITUDE

By Helena Pastor



*Seven Mile Beach, NSW, 1970*

# SEVEN MILES OF GRATITUDE

By Helena Pastor

My father's soul is on this beach  
His ashes in the sea  
My brothers think the seagulls  
Are his spirit, flying free.

I walk along the shoreline  
Waves lapping at my feet  
Seven miles of gratitude  
For all that came to be.

My sister walks beside me  
Silver bangles and bikini  
She's spent the year in India  
Transforming her beliefs.

We walk along the shoreline  
Waves lapping at our feet  
Seven miles of gratitude  
For all that came to be.

Our mother, almost ninety  
Has reached a place of peace  
Still longing for her life-mate  
Their footprints on this beach.

They walked along the shoreline  
Waves lapping at their feet  
Seven miles of gratitude  
For all that came to be.

My lover comes to join me  
Swim naked in the sea  
Then gather shells and seaweed  
To leave at the teepee.

We walk along the shoreline  
Waves lapping at our feet  
Seven miles of gratitude  
For all that came to be.

# REBIRTH

By Rosalind Moran

I sit on a verge spread with ochre stained leaves  
And tugging my pencil, I lift each of these  
Back onto the trees.

With long leaden strokes I draw rivers from road  
Turn tar into creek bed, let asphalt erode  
Neath waters long slowed.

Infusing the fog with pre-industry view  
I wring out its colours, its bygone age hue  
And swirl it to blue.

Then seeing before me the buildings so tall  
Those skyscraper thistles – I pluck out them all  
And plant trees where they fall.

In eucalypt shade I sketch flowers at rest  
The wildlife creeps back now; the cockatoos jest  
I ink them a nest.

And sweeping my brush I make verdant the fells  
The roots and the stones, rippling down hills  
Erasing our ills.

I am not spiritual; this is no prayer  
I only know nature brings vim and good fare  
To all who breathe air.

Let's paint a new canvas – may architects try  
To forget about tar; draw a limb to help fly  
The bird limping by...

I sit on a verge under gum leaves unfurled  
My brushes in water, my palette paint swirled  
Like the womb of a world.



# SILENT : LISTEN

By Sandra Pearce

I cut through  
Jagged reflections  
Drifting  
Silent  
Then with the exhale  
Of the full tide  
My ears  
Mouth  
Listen.

# HEMLOCK AND ELDER

By Ben Walter

Along the drain below the teary wood,  
Stretching hands urge a thoughtful death  
    Lettered in ancient weeds; slim bodies  
Stretch for a cup from the dribbling bluff.  
There are curses for foreign flora lazing  
    In ripe gullies, but the bowl floods too  
With honey-bone flowers, pale faces poking  
Through a hedge. Caressing their cheeks,  
    We blend with thin sweetness; smell  
    The grace in this glistening dam.



# SONG!

By Vivienne Glance

Tongue darts into the petals' delicious  
Crevices, then nectar smeared  
Retreats; a perfect fit, this flower and beak  
A pairing as ancient as coal  
That Carboniferous time of rotting plants,  
Compressed under eons of patient time  
And swampy heat: a presence that haunts.

From ancestral reptilian clicks and grunts  
Sounds are learned and honed to become  
The melodies of today. Fill feathered breasts with breath,  
Part beaks, so notes populate intangible air!

Amongst broken branches and dust  
Clouds choke flowers as the hole in the earth  
Grows deeper, coal comes to the surface  
Ancient sunlight captured on earth, burns  
But song cannot make it rise and fall, song  
Cannot sing the rains return, the trees to grow,  
Insects to glint in the reflections of lakes.

Sing! It's how to become...  
Song raises and lowers the sun, moves stars  
Warns of teeth, beaks, claws,  
Brings together all life forms.

Time is meaningless; its relentless progress  
Is felt, not known. So much has been endured;  
The slipping away of inland seas, rise and fall  
Of landscapes, relentless weathering of rocks,  
And songs lining in the earth. Voices in the eternal air  
Sing across valley rifts, float through branches,  
Slip over dense shadows and swooning grasses.



Sing! It's how to become...  
Bones travel land and time  
Voices soar through sinews  
Until that day when fire took away.

Young ones, feeble and naked are gone.  
Here, there's no sound, no song  
In this blackened mess, twisted, charred  
Until soft, soft rains begin again;  
Shoots of renewal recompose green notes  
As song pulls vitality forward to  
Inhabit place; brings into being new lives.

Song! This continuous link to the deep recess  
Of past, present and yet to be;  
Fill each feathered breast with breath,  
Part beak and flower these songs!



*Patterns of Renewal*

**By Claudia Pilon-Summons**





*Having a Chat*  
**By Tom Wolff**

# THE BIOREGION

By Samuel Wearne

Here I lie patiently, waiting. I'm the home that my troublesome children are yet to recognise they belong to. They throw open the windows, drag in the mud and recklessly run amok. They'll calm down soon, I'm sure.

I am old. My form has been carved through millions of years of geological dance and water art. The sway of ancient rivers is traced in the patterns and colours of sandstone that folds majestically across my landscapes. A history of slow and twisting ascent presents itself in my assertive slabs of mountains. Pimples of basalt lie dotted across my landscapes, recalling moments of violent eruption. The carving hands of water have edged out dramatic cliffs and gorges, whilst deep estuaries and floodplains recall a surge of former seas. I've seen it all. Biology has come and gone, but like the hair on one's skin, we've always grown together. An indistinguishable, intertwined evolution between earth, sky and life.

My geological form is the foundation of my difference, an omnipotent canvas influencing the ecosystems and habitats that have emerged across my body. Dynamic conversations of rocks, water, vegetation and biota, carried on through millennia, have led to countless pockets of surprises, as well as a shared identity. Unique habitats and communities now adorn my nooks, crannies, bush, scrub and waterways. My deep structures have moved and turned so massively that we've shaped our own climatic forces. Along my Western spine, the Great Escarpment forces clouds and convection skyward, sending rain into my crevices and rivers, feeding my communities, and reinforcing the essence of my being. Beyond my reach, my sisters and brothers of the inland stretch North and West, while southward, old mountains rise, creeping toward clouds. East lies the great ocean, with whom I've traded for so long. My place is long affirmed and my deep patterns run with certainty close to fate. It is on the surface where there's trouble - it's never changed at the rate it is now.

The humans are one of my many components. They've been part of me a long time. Recently, the nature of these children changed, upending a deep understanding we once held with one another. The new approach in them holds the hallmarks of adolescent folly; short-term excesses and displays of strength without wisdom. These industrial humans, they frolic in my wonders, digging, exploring, reshaping. Their approach is one of struggle, despite seeing the futility of forced change. With their heads pointed in single directions, they've fought against my movements and the patterns that distinguish me, and they've ignored the impacts that they've created for both themselves and my broad community of life.

Fortunately, I can see that these children are finally growing up. They're now starting to turn their heads, learn their lessons, and soon, I'm certain, they'll rediscover their relationship with me too.

As my friends amongst them know, to be on me is to be part of me. And as they explore my wonders and the bellies of my ecology fill their eyes and bodies, they'll dig deeper into their history and they'll come to see me again. They'll realise that I'm not just a set of parts which they claim to own, use and transform. I'm the connection within and between them - their identity, community and the context of their life on Earth. Getting to know me, the bioregion that they inhabit, they'll locate themselves more thoroughly. It's through me, I hope, that they'll gain access to deeper meaning and scales of understanding, finally linking their lived experience and emotion with their insights into the Earth-wide systems and secrets of my soils, rocks, waters and lifeforms. They're good kids, after all.

My children are soon to settle, and we'll come to manage their behaviour more appropriately. We'll re-root them in the rules of this home. As always, it is just a matter of time.



# THE ISLAND GIRLS

By Doria Katos

They lie on the horizon,  
Some facing, others turned,  
Evenly spaced  
Like a divine hand  
Had considered composition.

Their contoured figures  
Become all the clearer,  
As the gloom evaporates  
And the sky cracks open,  
At the wake of their beaming mother.

Her rays butter surfaces  
And all surrounding souls,  
Uncovering the wealth  
So tightly tucked beneath,  
The paved ocean surface  
Of glistening diamond jewels.

The depths of its secrets  
Are forgotten, for a moment,  
As she holds us,  
Tightly, gently,  
Pushing out a smile  
And closing our eyes to the world.

We smell the salt  
As its perfume sprays us,  
And the tumbling of the waves  
Follow,  
Like an eager companion.

The girls rest still,  
Poised and waiting,  
For the command of darkness  
To edge them back to sleep.

And as we glide across the concrete  
Their silhouettes begin to shrink and fade,  
Leaving just the stillness,  
The peacefulness,  
Of the air  
That clings to our core.



# STARFISH MAPPING

By Barnaby Smith

For swelling forms off a harbour town	Better get rescuing
The cut-up technique	For a tussle here &
There in cities fish swim	In false collage
Between sideways glances	In deep archives
Tonight sperm motility or streaming	Holds promises like eels
Kinetic authors withholding	Weary vibrations
Of underwater cables	Or cold delusion of
A four-minute warning for	Things emerging
From the sea	To devour other things
On the pavement	Leaving our
Fingers smudged with glowing	Sound: good to you?





*Yggdrasil*  
**By Pingala Walsh**

# I AM FLOWER

By Gerard Traub

I am flower  
Seeking the dawning sun  
My fragrance awakening memories  
Closer than the hour  
Lifting senses into unseen horizons.

I am hues green to golden  
Of light still unfamiliar to the eye  
Petals fired into form  
Calling upon leaf and field  
A song urgent yet silent  
Through the passage of seasons.

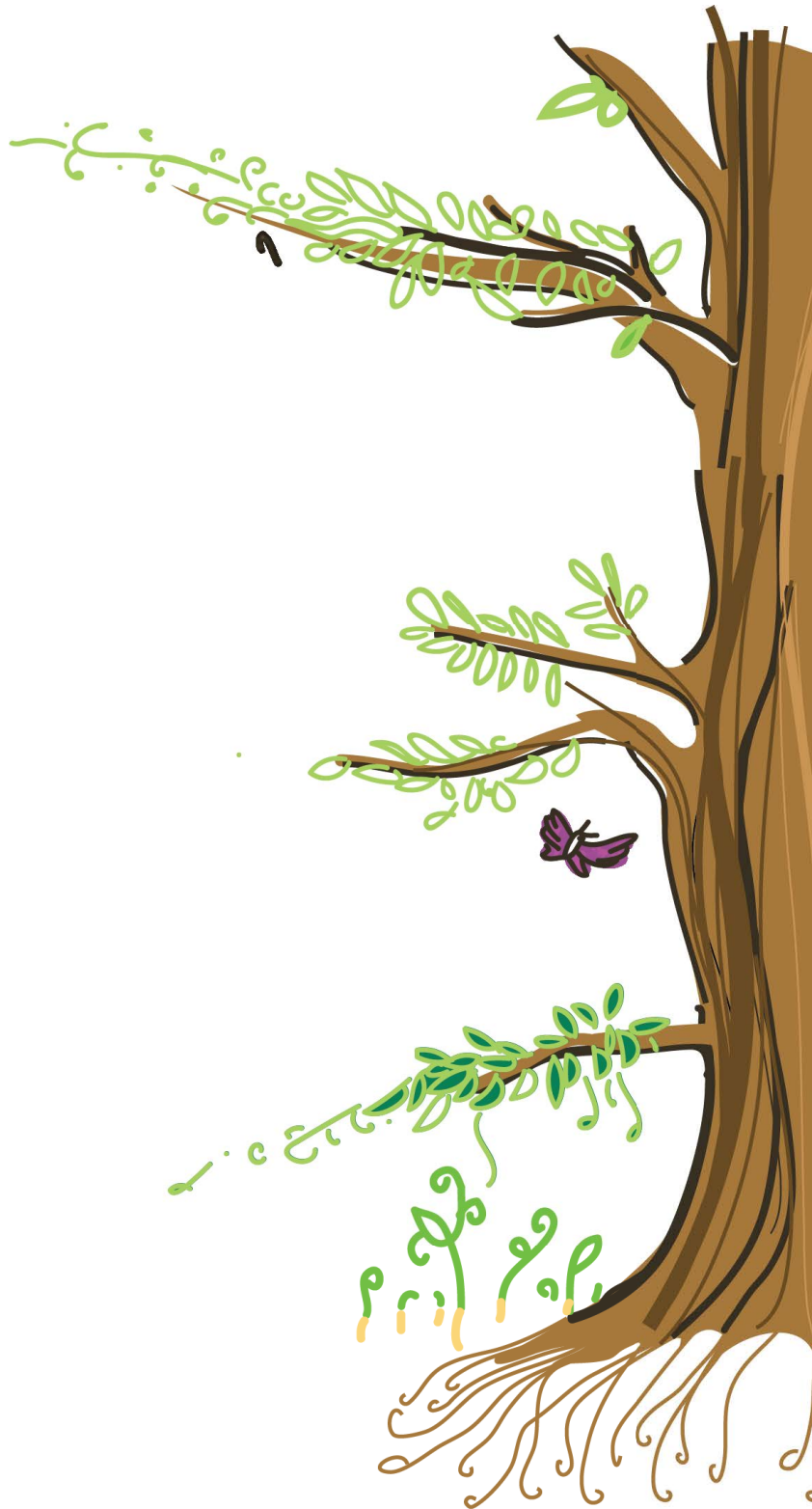
How I delight in the drenching rain  
Dance with the swirling wind  
Even to the rage of storm I stand.  
I am no less like you  
Finding one heart the same  
Beckoned from seed to bloom.

I draw courage from the earth  
My being from all creation  
The oceans whispering inside me  
Where thunder is calmed  
And atoms to stars rest in my flame.

I have endured endless summers  
The icy clutches of winter  
I have seen your civilisations fall  
To rise again in other lands.

Let my voice be heard  
My expression in your world  
Echo your true origins and knowing  
That you may once again return  
Whether upon wings of prayer or dreams  
Behold the garden that has already  
Long seeded and blossomed deep within you.

Take solace in my beauty  
For you are born of soul  
And I am flower  
Seeking the setting sun.





# I AM WATER

By Carol Nicholls

I am the ebb and flow  
Of copious tears falling from eyes  
Of all colours, all forms.

I am that which holds and feeds  
The child afloat in the womb  
Alive with life, promise and future.  
Life and alive am I.

I am the misted tears of heaven  
Adrift over mountain and forest.  
My rainbow droplets fall  
On laughing faces  
Or bowed heads.

I am the sacred rivulet,  
Dripping from the tips of canopy,  
Draining from the impenetrable Amazon,  
Down the super highways of teeming life,  
To meet the super sea.

I am the quiver,  
The ripple,  
The roll  
And the thunderous mountain,  
The beginning and the end.

I am languorous warm and rocking,  
Hard and unforgiving,  
Nurture and death.

I am every drop that ever has been within or without,  
Of every pool, ocean and stream  
And every creature on this planet  
And on those whence I came.

From time lost in time came I,  
Hurtled here then languished...  
Bringing life and death as one.  
Blue-green the blanket I wove  
And wrap about my beloved citadel.

I am the same in all,  
Remaining briefly,  
Ever moving in form after form  
I am water  
I am life.



# FROM THE GROUND SHE DID ARISE

By Carol Nicholls

From the ground she did arise,  
Her skin white,  
Clothed in mere patches  
Of the last spring's shed bark.

Her arms, lithe and sturdy,  
Far above swayed in a dance of joy.  
The cool breezes of September  
Swept her crown,  
Swung her passengers  
On the circular winds of time.  
All around her  
Kin take up the dance,  
Leaves connecting in waves of sound  
Cheer and chatter through the gathered hills.

Swirling,  
Clear waters singing their way home.  
Stones and roots, rocks and fells,  
The air,  
Cool blue,  
Fills the space between  
With sweetness.

High on her hip,  
Koala mother and child,  
Hunched in sleeping bliss,  
Rocked and protected  
By her ageless might.

Below her,  
The earth cooled and nurtured,  
Her power grasping hillside and stream,  
Calling back into her past and future.  
Connected to the trees,  
Her forest  
Her ancestors, millions of years of her heritage,  
Her seeds flying into the future  
To land,  
To survive who knows where?

Moment by moment,  
Dancing  
Among sacred creatures  
To watch over,  
Her self a village. Her milky white arms lifted in praise,  
Her dawn dance,  
An offering to grace.





## BEACH MOSAIC

By Skye Etherington

Tracks on the sand tell a story.  
A story of life and activity unseen.  
Small clues that I savour each time, piecing together the mosaic of life  
that unfolds in this place.  
The regular passage of goanna moving across the back dune, light  
touches of lizard dancing, small parallel ripples of an unknown insect  
and padded paw of fox or cat.  
I feel connected with these beings as a member of the beach.  
A place where I too belong.



## A TENDER EXCHANGE

By Simone King

I look up at you  
Quarter moon  
And drink in  
Your delicate lines,  
The soft curve of your back,  
The way the yellowboxes'  
Drooping leaves  
Frame you,  
How, in return,  
You give their skins  
A silvery sheen,  
As if they belong  
To some other world.

# THE UNWANTED

By Kate Wall

I grew. In the worst of soils, the most barren of places. I did it, I grew! The ground here is so hard, so bare and so hot. But I did it, I grew here. I have strong roots. I'm strong enough to push my roots down into the hard, hard soil. No one wanted me to grow here, no one planted me. But they did bring me here. My seed was caught on their shoe. People wanted grass, but grass can't grow here. The soil needs to be made nice for grass. A little bit of grass tried to grow beside me. It grew a little, but it couldn't get its roots deep like I can. Drought came and the grass died.

I didn't die, I grew! There is no rain, but I am still growing. My roots are now deep in the soil. There is still moisture down there, but only plants like me with strong roots can get down to get it. Even the worms can't get down this deep in such hard soil. Not unless I make a passage for them with my roots.

I lay low. I keep my leaves close to the ground. My leaves are tough enough to handle the hot sun. There is shade under my leaves to cool the soil. This helps other plants to grow near me. I like the company.

I have lots of company. Lizards and beetles hide under my leaves.

Kids run past me, they notice me. The grownups won't let the kids play here near me. They want the kids to play on the grass, but the grass is all brown and crispy now and the kids don't like playing on it anymore.

I'm still green, and so are my friends. We are all still growing here, but the kids aren't allowed to play here. It's too wild apparently. There might be snakes. Or prickles, or bees.

I flower. I have lots of bunches of purple flowers at the end of my branches. The early morning sun shines on me and my purple flowers are there to meet the day. People come past walking dogs. The dogs sniff at us and disturb the bees.

Ahhh, the bees. Listen. Can you hear their happy buzzing?

I'm living here. I'm growing strong. I'm flowering. Masses of purple. All around me are more plants. Wonderful wild plants, all growing together. There are cobbler's pegs, prickly poppies, vervain, coarse mullien, guinea grass, mallows, fleabane, prickly lettuce, blackberry nightshade, Rhodes grass, sida retusa, wild barley, wild radishes and of course there are lots like me – wild heliotrope. Wild and free. No one comes here, we are free, even though there are houses all around.

There are a lot of wild heliotrope plants here, and we are all dark green and flowering our little purple heads off. All in the middle of drought. No rain, just lots of hot bright sunshine. We fill this abandoned patch with a sea of glorious purple flowers. There are no flowers on the trees in the park, or in the gardens of the houses nearby. But in our patch, we are all wild and flowering like crazy. And we are all unwanted.

There is a park nearby. This is where the people want to go. They want their kids to play there and their dogs to run there. There. Not here. It's too wild here. And there are bees here. There are no bees in the park. There is no green in the park, or purple. Just brown. Hot and brown.

There are even trees here. But no one knows they are here. They are still tiny, for now. They will grow because I grow, because we all grow here. The unwanted.

All of us are unwanted, unnoticed. Well most of the time we are unnoticed, even when I am flowering. Come and visit early in the day and you can listen to the music of tiny wings. The tiny wings of bees in all shapes and sizes. But not just bees. There are hoverflies, lady bugs, moths, butterflies, tiny wasps, flies. Maybe I shouldn't say flies. No one likes flies. We do. We like flies. They are just as good at pollinating our flowers as the bees and butterflies although they tickle a little more. But we are all here. Quietly getting on with being fabulous, even if no one notices.

Maybe when those tiny trees start to get bigger, they will notice us all and say, "Look at that pretty patch of nature." Maybe then they will be happy that we helped to make that happen. Those trees could not grow here if we didn't put our roots down deep into this hard soil first. We are not garden plants, but we create wild gardens where nothing else will grow, and in doing so, we heal the damaged soil.

It's good to be unnoticed. That way we can get on with just living. Just growing, and flowering and living.

Occasionally someone notices. But do they stop and admire our flowers? Do they stop and listen to the hum of the bees? Do they come and harvest wild medicine? No. They see a mess. A mess without purpose. Then someone will come with a huge mower and cut us down. This kills the little trees. The rest of us will grow back. We are tough. And we have flung our seeds all over the patch so more of us can grow here. But not the little trees. There will be more little trees. But they won't get to grow either. Before they are big enough to be appreciated, they will be mown down too.

We know that we can only live here until someone decides we have to go. We are too messy for the world around us. One day this soil we are slowly nourishing will be concreted over. Houses or shops or car parks will be built here.

We have no value here. Not to people. To the bees we feed until they become flying balls of pollen, we have value. To the birds that feed on the insects that feed on us, we have value. To the lizards hiding under the shade of our leaves, we have value. To the worms who follow our roots deep into the soil, we have value. But not to the people. They have no idea how many different insects live here. Like us, insects are unwanted.

We are weeds. All of us. Except the little trees, they are not weeds. And it is the people who brought us here. We can grow here because they brought our seeds on their shoes. We grow because they have damaged the soil so much, it is only us who can grow. Nothing else can tolerate the damage they have done. Nothing but weeds can grow where people have trampled. We don't mind. Soil repair is our gift to the world. We follow the footsteps of people and work slowly and truly to fix what they have broken – the soil.

But people don't see all of that. They don't take the time to watch my purple flowers glowing in the late afternoon sun. They see mess and they want the mess made neat. So we get mown down, or concreted over.

We are the weeds. The unwanted.

We are plants, like any other. Except that we are unwanted.

And I don't mind being unwanted by people. I get to grow anywhere that suits me. I can still turn my beautiful purple flowers to the sun. One day, their concrete will crack, and my seed will grow in that crack. I will grow and flower in that crack. My purple flowers will feed bees. Wherever I grow, I will always be wanted by bees.



*Eucalyptus Dusk*  
By Pingala Walsh



# SUNSHINE COVE

*Yuin Country, South Coast NSW*

**By Simone King**

Its age is written  
Everywhere – on cliffs spilling lime  
And ochre as they tumble towards sea,  
On towering spotted gums,  
With skins all moon and mauve.  
It's one of the last coves on this coast  
Where trees, shrubs, rocks  
Outnumber houses.

Breaking with the city (its pile driving,  
Its hurried humans), I've spent a day  
Under sun, watching, from its fiery rise  
Over water to its zenith and plunge. A short  
Lifetime with its own neat rhythm.

On this silver afternoon, wind combs  
Casuarina needles, carrying song  
Tree to tree, headland to headland.  
Sea eagles hug curve of coast  
In arcs, dipping and rising to lift  
Fragments of ocean to sky.

The moon slings back to horizon  
And creatures who live half-covered  
Are laid bare: Neptune's pearls in thick cords  
And flat black crabs reflecting the sky.

As the day completes, a call rattles  
The air.  
I listen.

# A VILLAGE

By Munira Tabassum Ahmed

Tonight the world turns over.

Brown girl sits at the river where she was raised;  
Every stone-skippin'-sticky-date-sweet-South-Asian summer  
Has come to a close. Even so, she'll still come back.  
Here, she can't feel the passage of time, and that  
Is the most holy thing.

The sun rises in the east and sets in the west,  
But she's facing north this afternoon. Brown girl knows  
It took a village to raise her. Mother, mother's mother,  
And aunty cooked in that kitchen. Her stomach melts into  
The water; ask how many times it's been colonised.

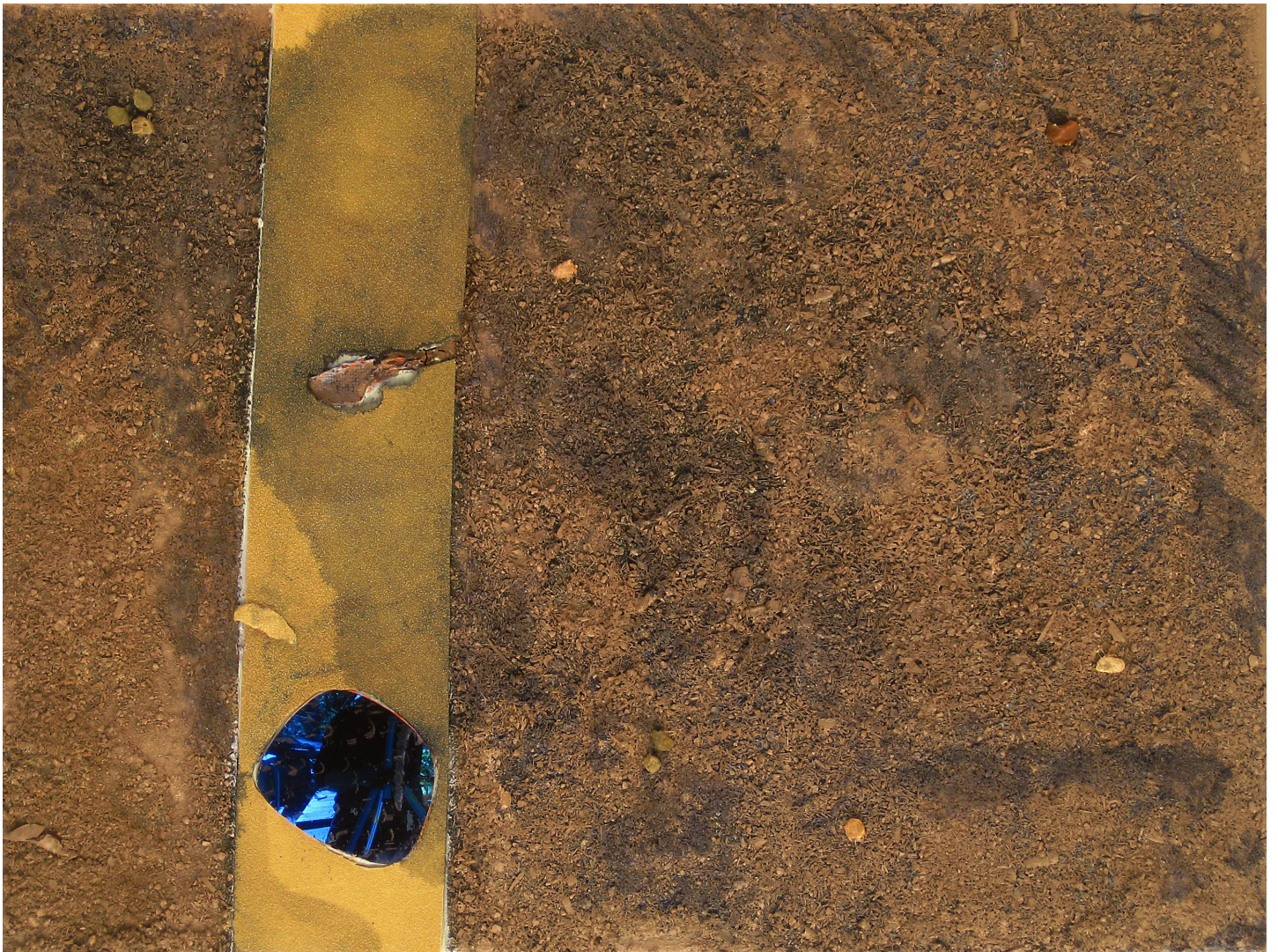
They know this land better than her, but she'll get there soon;  
Watching a baya weaver pull a thread of wild grass through his nest.  
He calls out: chit-chit-chit-chee. Grandmother told her that  
They stick fireflies to the walls of their nests, lighting up their homes  
Past nightfall. Man copied this when he stole fire.

Listen to the women of this land. Listen to this weaver.  
Brown girl cups her ear to the ground. Blood was spilled here.  
She knows that this place is ancestral, this body is ancestral.  
Weaver holds his ancestry in dried grass; his nest, his home. She looks  
Back at her stomach, her kitchen, her bed, her country. A village calls out.

Tonight the world turns over.

# SEPARATED GRAINS

By Sharmila Nezovic



Urban environments reflect psychological states inherent within an era. I deliberately experiment with random, found designs from my built surrounds - the colours, rhythms and textures juxtaposed - sometimes abutting nature, though often simply absorbing it. Echoing the grit, the noise, the hard edges.

What voice does Nature have when it is obliterated? Discovering surprising elegance as well as exploring the decay. Affected by both the beauty *and* the trauma.





## BONFIRE

By Brian Walters

The hearth round which our friends and family sat  
To stare into the glowing coals and swap  
Our tales of how the world unfolds itself  
Is now a place of torment where the fire  
Flares up to burn the house and any who  
Remain. The things we thought would bless us with  
The lights of progress merely cast us in  
The furnace – where no phoenix hatches from  
The coals, no salamander flits among  
The red-tongued flames, no blessed ones with strange  
Companions walk unbound – for in this fire  
No bird nor beast can live, and people flee  
Or die. We've lit the bonfire of our vanities,  
And don't know how to put it out.



# PLANTED

By Peter Knight

Although I stand, I also lie in wait  
And gather in what I can.  
At times I collect too little  
Or too much or too late.  
Or that which I catch escapes,  
Grounded and exposed, as I am,  
To a stationary fate.

My trunk braces  
My outward, upward extensions  
That support my leaf-clad extremities.  
Below me, a network of roots and fibres  
Spreads through dirt seeking sustenance  
And anchors me when disturbed.

Fixed, I cannot uproot to save myself  
From imminent harm or death,  
Although I can bend with force.  
With greater force  
I can be broken  
Or terminally displaced,  
Being the inherent risk  
Of my commitment to just one place.

When light penetrates leaves  
And rain drains down,  
And nourishment is drawn  
From beneath,  
All three meet and fuse  
And spark that green current  
Sufficient to maintain my claim  
To stand longer in this space,  
And, with some life-renewing effort,  
For me to push out  
Some modest indicator  
Of budding growth.



*Interconnected*  
By Nadine Schmoll

# LITTLE SEAL

By Helen Budge

I saw you this morning,  
Fifty metres out,  
Gliding under the surface  
Just where I swim,  
Summer and autumn.

I stopped.  
Sure enough, up you popped  
With that 'Here I am!' stance  
Audiences love.  
I waited, you dipped,  
Slipped under, disappeared.  
You showed again,  
Much closer this time,  
Two waves from shore.  
Excited now, I expected you  
To ride in  
On the next wave,  
But no, little furry showman,  
You tricked me!  
You surfaced  
Seventy metres out.

I dreamed of what  
I didn't see,  
That submerged journey  
To the deep,  
And wondered what  
Unseen force,  
Rising from the depths,  
Propels us on  
A different course far  
From the seeming safety  
Of the shore.

Little seal,  
Does your instinct tell you  
That if our safety is within,  
The most fearsome depths  
Can be explored?  
Little seal, ah . . . if  
You could tell us  
What you know.

# ANCIENT BEAUTY

By Tracie Lark

By Moonlight's ear

By Ocean's eye

By Sunshine's dust

We sleep on primeval ground taking solace in camp tonight.

Ancient Beauty, sublime, gowned in twilight

Stars are kissed by her cod lips, fashioned when red earth oozed like lipstick

In a hot rush, lavish gush, a wrinkled crater, snoring gaper;

By Morning's light we awake to her heaving breasts

Undressed of blue silhouette

See stump scars have bruised her flesh.

Logs shift swiftly - black tar conveyor belt - rogues snap rubber - white lines dash -

As Nature is driven mad by man.

Ancient Beauty wakes, shakes, fells man from her flesh

Bellows, a howling hot mess, a cleanse, mud mask finish

A reminder to not forget.

By Moonlight's ear

By Ocean's eye

By Sunshine's dust

We sleep on primeval ground feeling Ancient Beauty's lips

Breathing down our necks.





*Black Prince*  
**By Pingala Walsh**



# CHOOSE YOUR INSTRUMENT

By Skye Etherington

Let it be light      Caress of the river  
Here is my heart singing      Let it be full of joy

The song of the tree  
Walking the earth      Deep with mystery  
The voice of the wild

Choose your instrument  
Let it sing      The sound of love  
The rage of despair  
Battle cry

Choose your instrument

And dance

Walk bravely into the centre  
Pick up the baton and conduct the choir  
Claim the orchestra as strings for life  
The deep kettle drum the heart  
Beating in time  
Beating through time

Keep the song anchored in the rhythm of earth tides

Of moon cycles  
Of sunset and dawn breaking  
Pulse of the earth  
Pulse of my heart  
A melody together

Choose your instrument  
Know the song

Let it flow through your veins  
Swell my blood  
My body  
Your body

Instrument of choice



# LEAKAGE

By Lucette Moulang

Carving pathways of intent  
Through murky, melting tributaries  
Slicing cleanly through the filth  
Here a hundred years of spillage

Why face outward, purpose bound  
When everything is drowning  
You could flee forever forward  
Or downwards beyond meaning  
So this leakage never claimed loyalties in the end of times

Plastic barnacles cling to the edge of  
Land and liquid muck  
The celebrated catchment pales blindly  
To the suffocated fish lying still now in its

Belly.



# FLOUNDER

By Hugh Tranter

The flounder  
Blinks upward through its clouded eyes  
At bleached constellations, against grey-pitch lumps  
An ill-formed fish, ghosts by  
Indifferent to its fate  
Scraped, dragged or gobbled, it's all the same

The night is luminescent; the algae blooms  
The driftwood is in plastic bound  
All torpid watery grey, towards the exit sign  
Across the turgid main

The hot, yellow breeze of winter  
Dirties the ice once more  
And kisses the world goodbye.

# THE WINDOW

By Sandra Pearce

*“There’s a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in”. - Leonard Cohen*

I stand at the window and see a younger me,  
Tending the garden, or the start of one,  
Digging into the soil, nurturing each plant  
As she lowers them into the ground.  
She is alone but connected  
To the earth she is working, a sense of calm,  
Stillness, a promise, a smile.  
Her clothing doesn’t suit her, its cheap and ill-fitting.  
The hat is from another era, but strangely familiar.  
I notice that the window has a long crack,  
The image of myself fractures.  
As Cohen says “that’s how the light gets in”.  
Once more I’m standing at the window, but now I see  
My wrinkles framed by a forest of blooms and caroling magpies,  
The sun warm on my face as my partner calls me for lunch.



*Beauty From Beneath*

By Pingala Walsh



# SHELTER ME AND I WILL SHELTER YOU

By Ally Moulis

At the end of the long and winding driveway flanked by Lily of the Nile flowers stands a grand house; admittedly far too large for the two bodies that inhabit it. The home is single-storey but expansive: its bedrooms big enough to dance in; its curtains thick enough to confuse morning with the dead of night. See now the wide building, the acre of green lawn before it, the surrounding rainforest: tall trees with palm-like leaves and round trunks. See the donkeys in the paddock at the top of the hill, the rope swing hung from the sturdy branch; hear the German Shepherds barking and the goats bleating in response; a dialogue of animal curiosity and defence: “You are a strange dog!” “You are a strange goat!”.

Down the garden path, beside the house and past the clothesline, a child is being guided through the water of a chlorine pool by the hands of a Grandmother. See now the care that is taken to move the tiny body around the liquid space; see the joy in the woman’s eyes as she watches the small form float and gurgle. Sitting on the edge with his feet in the blue is the Grandfather who takes note of every detail: the scent of hot pavement and wet skin, the motion of the Grandmother as she shifts her weight to propel the child, the distant call of a kookaburra, the panicked shuffle of the dogs as they stand guard, attentive to signs of drowning.

Watch now as the child spots a black shape on the floor of the pool; squeals with delight at the presence of a fish. See the Grandfather leap to his feet, sensing an opportunity for magic, for the suspension of disbelief, for poetry. Net in hand, he scoops the thing from the depths, all the while exclaiming; “What is it? What could it be?” (The Grandmother mirrors the spectacle: wide eyes, open mouth.) The fish flaps, wiggles, squirms, the child claps, the pair hoot and laugh. Partake in the madness: nothing but an old leaf, wet and shiny.

An hour later, the child (now dry but for locks of damp hair) sits propped on the hip of the Grandmother as they explore the garden; an inquisitive couple, learned and learning. Pointed finger: “Kangaroo paw.” Step to the right: “Waratah.” Pivot: “Lemon tree.” The child, almost impossibly: “Gardenia!” Tears in the Grandmother’s eyes. Later, the sound of violins: Rhapsody in Blue played in the crimson-coloured room filled with layers of books.

See the wonder, the beauty of it all. See nature and infant in a promise of protection: shelter me, and I will shelter you. Feel the heat of an unknown future pushing at the wire fence, disturbing the grazing of the foals and browning the grass. Pray it does not touch this perfect scene: child shaded by leaf and comforted by maternal embrace. Lack of ownership, innocence in vulnerability, silent worship, tangible praise: each heart its own, and yet, unified.

# I AM A TREESISTER

By Ursula Dutkiewicz

Holding the tree as she breathes with me  
Strong grounded; completely free  
Waving her branches, happy in the breeze  
I am drawn by her presence and beauty to be

I listen to the rustle of your leaves.  
Bees humming like a distant drumming  
Flowering glory tells an ancient story  
Your roots go deep through the layers of time

What would life be without a tree.  
You drink, you live, you grow, you bleed.  
What is life worth without a tree.

I see your treasure as a golden hue  
I tell you I love you and all you do  
I vow to do more to help your kind  
Becoming a Restorer for the rest of time

What would life be without a tree.  
You drink, you live, you grow, you bleed.  
What is life worth without a tree?

What is life worth without a tree!





*I Am A TreeSister*  
**By Ursula Dutkiewicz**



## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Munira Tabassum Ahmed** is a 15-year-old writer and performer working on Darug land. Her work explores what we owe to each other, our land and our culture.

**Helen Budge** loves reading, writing, swimming and gardening. She is in awe of the natural world and her poems reflect this. They are represented in journals and anthologies.

**Renata Buziak** is a photo-media artist, educator and researcher, who is passionate about physically engaging with nature and organic processes and helping her audiences to reconnect with the natural environment.

**Anne Casey** is a poet and writer living in Eora (Sydney), Australia. Over a 30-year career, she has worked as a business journalist, writer, magazine editor, media communications director and legal author.

**Ursula Dutkiewicz** is a Naarm (Melbourne) based artist combining clay, photography, mixed media and poetry in creating works that reflect environmental concerns and her love of nature.

**Skye Etherington** lives on the far south coast of NSW. She loves to share deep ecology practices and creatively explore ways to deepen awareness and connection with the natural world.

**Vivienne Glance** is a writer and performer with poetry, plays and short stories widely published in collections, journals, anthologies and magazines. She is passionate about bringing science and her hope for a sustainable environment into her literary and theatrical work.

**Doria Katos** is an Eora (Sydney) based creative; designer by day and writer always. She experiments with the raw, emotive form of poetry as a way to process and understand the complexity of today's world.

**Vicki Kelleher** is an experimental spoken word artist, now living in Lutruwita (Tasmania), working with light sound and mystery, revealing the hidden and unspoken through word formations.

**Simone King** is an award-winning poet and nonfiction writer who lives on Wurundjeri country in Naarm (Melbourne). Simone's words explore the inherent worth of the natural world and our complex relationship with it.

**Peter Knight**, from Noongar country (Perth), is a former lawyer. Besides writing poetry, his principal interests include cosmology and the natural environment on Earth.

**Tracie Lark** was born in Eora (Sydney) but has lived everywhere else including Newcastle, Melbourne and Indonesia. She now lives in the New Zealand bush, teaching by day and writing by night.



**Rosalind Moran** is a writer of fiction, non-fiction, satire, reviews, and poetry. Her work has been published by *Prospect Magazine*, *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *The Lifted Brow*, and *Kill Your Darlings*, among others. She enjoys incorporating everyday details and observations into her work and has a strong interest in nature writing.

**Lucette Moulang** is a writer and editor based in Naarm (Melbourne). Her work focuses on themes surrounding queerness, intimacy and place.

**Ally Moulis** is an educator, editor and writer from Cadigal-Wangal country in Eora (Sydney). She is particularly interested in the role of storytelling in cultivating meaningful human/nature relationships and her writing often focuses on small, gentle moments that aim to represent universal emotions.

**Sharmila Nezovic** is a visual artist from Meanjin (Brisbane) obsessed by the urban overlay we live amongst. Her highly textured paintings echo both the beauty and the trauma of these built environments.

**Carol Khan Nicholls** writes, teaches, makes art and is passionate about wildlife and diversity. She wishes to see a fairer, cleaner, more sustainable future for all of our children. Carol is currently following her creative wellspring back to the source.

**Joe Pascoe** has written two books of poetry, called *Gum Tree Burning* and *Frangipani* (Reading Sideways Press). Joe has had a long career in the visual arts and likes his poems to bring the Australian experience to life.

**Helena Pastor** lives in Armidale and is the author of *Wild Boys: A Parent's Story of Tough Love* (UQP, 2015). Through memoir, fiction and song lyrics, she aims to encourage discussion around topics close to her heart including all stages of motherhood, the aftershocks of war, and growing up in an immigrant family.

**Sandra Pearce** is a Meanjin (Brisbane) based maker of artist books, printed images and paper installations. She uses poetic language to explore connections between self and the natural world.

**Claudia Pilon-Summons** is a researcher from Wangal Country in Eora (Sydney). She uses photography to sense-make and navigate her relationship with the natural world, capturing moments of discovery and solace.

**Nadine Schmoll** is a Meanjin (Brisbane) artist and educator whose practice spans art and science to create wearable art, sculpture and installations. She designs learning and engagement experiences that are participatory and sustainable to explore plant, animal and human interactions.

**Barnaby Smith** is a poet, critic and musician currently living on Gundungurra and Darug land. His poetry has appeared, or will appear, in *Cordite*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *Southerly*, *Orbis*, *Marrickville Pause*, *The Blue Nib*, *Foam:e*, *Marble*, *Molly Bloom* and many others. He records music as Brigadoon and released the album *Itch Factor* in 2020.

**Wendy (Ceridwen) Suiter** dreamed of being a protest singer, but studied economics and mathematics, which lead to radical lesbian activism, women's services, and later, labour market economics. Mid-thirties, her passion for music enabled time composing experimental music, and a PhD in radical feminist critique of malestream musicology.

**Hugh Tranter** is a lover of the sea and sea-poetry. His mother named he and his brother after poets - Hugh being 20th century Australian poet Hugh McCrae. He is a part time writer and is currently completing a Post Graduate Diploma in Creative Writing at UTS.

**Gerard Traub** is the author of a poetry collection *Reflections of Nature* and a children's book *Lily the Lotus*, both exploring the relationship between the beauty of the natural world and its deeper connection within us.

**Kate Wall** is a gardening writer/educator/consultant from Meanjin (Brisbane). She is particularly interested in teaching gardeners to work with nature for great outcomes in the garden. Weeds and the role they play in environmental, soil and human health is a passion of Kate's and is the topic of her first book, *Working With Weeds*.

**Ben Walter** is a Lutruwita (Tasmanian) writer of short stories, poetry and experimental nature essays. He is the fiction editor at *Island Magazine*.

**Brian Walters** has written and performed his poetry for many years. Several of his poems have inspired musical compositions. Make Books Australia has published his two poetry collections, *Angels, Like Laundry* (2019) and *Brink* (2020).

**Pingala Walsh** is a practicing artist and graphic designer, living and working in the natural paradise of Thora, NSW. Inspired by a creative approach to life, her art is dedicated to portraying a deep respect and love of the depths of nature and natural ways of being.

**Samuel Wearne** is an educator and sustainability professional who lives in Bulanaming (Marrickville) in Eora (Sydney). He uses creative writing as a way to explore ideas and apply insights from a PhD he is undertaking into the dynamics of cultural change for sustainable futures.

**Tom Wolff** is a freelance writer and photographer who grew up and lives on Bundjalung country in Northern NSW. He lives in constant awe of the Australian landscape, and of the plants, wildlife and people who inhabit it.

**Nina Woodrow** has Irish and English ancestry but grew out of the Mangrove mud flats of Meanjin (Brisbane) on the east coast of Australia. Everyday she finds wonder and solace in the natural world and the poems she writes are made of this.

The Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) is a national not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to increase the understanding and practical implementation of Earth centred governance in Australia, with a focus on law, economics, education, ethics and the arts. AELA's work is inspired by the theory and practice of Earth jurisprudence, which is a governance philosophy and growing social movement. Earth jurisprudence proposes that we rethink our legal, political, economic and governance systems so that they support, rather than undermine, the integrity and health of the Earth.



