



Shorely

Peter Frankis

Acknowledgements

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Sweet potato

a dirigible
one end noses the future
the other a smatter of roots

like Europa
(or other undisclosed moons)
under its pockled skin it's protean
an orange ocean – every slice
a sun god rising over the Yucatan
or a coir-wrapped kumara sprouting
in the stern of the outrigger

the Navigator strides the sky
from Panama points
the Southern Cross
low over Nuku'alofa

Holt (17/12/67)

Bunurong country

it comes around

 this most dangerous / celebratory time of year

50 years ago

 as a new generation began

 lifting us from the old royals

 this tanned philanderer

 our own JFK in a wetsuit

 kissing a mulloway for the press

with the tide on the turn

 the Rip at Cheviot Beach

 is a train

 Port Philip Bay to Antarctica

 the continental shelf

 is littered with bones

after

 Marjorie, his lover (and family friend)

 on the sand with a detective

 the salt ruining his shoes

 pointing the obvious horizon

 divers hands barely

 in front of them

earlier

Marjorie, on the rocks
in a bikini and shift
the wind at her hair
sees the prime minister
arm too sore to wave
just a head bobbing
like a leaf being taken out
 maybe a frown
 or a wry smile
 his winged feet finding
 no purchase

and later

Marjorie unconsolated
like Helen on the shore
waiting to be implicated

Harbour city's fucked

Gadigal country

the palm at the end, beyond the fence
one last thought of green.
pavement declines to nothing – now what?

bronzed lawns, water like tinfoil

once you could find a spot
catch a feed
now the bay's full of shopping carts and
gangsters tied to cookers.

Maggie won't let me in
– laughs cruelly, says I have no idea.

The early swimmer

Dharawal country

Jesus on the water
way older now
long cord stark ribs
speedos snagged on the horns of his hips
being knocked about

wave after wave takes his legs
so he sits into
the wash
then an arm across
to rise again

slow bend from the hips
lifts cup over head
blowing
the living waters

while all about a host
of seabirds dive
for the fish full
in the shallows.

Bucolic, MM beach

Dharawal country

You know how when the drug (poetry) kicks in
everything – cars, lawns, a V-Energy Boost can on the sand
– is glazed with potential;
the young mum, barely taller than her eldest
marshalling stroller and kids across Military Road
in this light looks like Canova's Helen of Troy.

And the birds, the birds
4 black cockatoos lift over the ridge
so close I can hear feathers catch the air
galahs chack on the high voltage wires
a kestrel on a 24kV transformer
targets a fieldmouse in the tussocks.

Then when I thought all was done
right here in the lantana
an eastern whip bird
listen...
[<https://open.spotify.com/search/eastem%20whip%20bird>]

here on the degraded rise
behind the works
with a thousand linear feet
of medium carbon steel
being punched and welded
and forklifts back-up beepers.

What to make of all this life among the trash and
wastewater?

by the time they're done
the heavy metals will leach a kilometre down
the creeks will run toxic for years
yet here's an eastern water dragon on the muddy
shore.

Truth is the forests are still here –
slick in the swell the cormorant
is spearing sprat and mullet
dolphins tear at the salmon until the water's red
the mynahs gang the raven
for last night's Happy Meal®.

The bodysurfers

Dharawal country

lift together
in the wave
as if for a moment
there was something
greater than us

jump together
like kids at skip rope
(timing is everything)
as if for a moment
we were more
than skin
over rocks

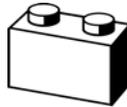
8 ways to look at a Lego® block

(after Stevens)

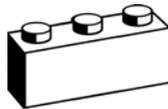
Dharawal country



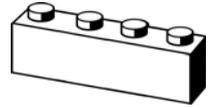
Among everything moving –
the gulls and the kelp lifting and
slumping on the sand in the early heat
Lego® is still.



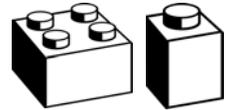
400 billion since Adam
almost exponential
36,000 in the time it took to read this:
enough.



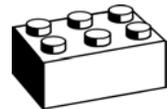
I found one this morning
battered matt orange (was fire engine glossy)
abraded by the seabed as it abraded
faded by UV and salt as it imperceptibly
faded.



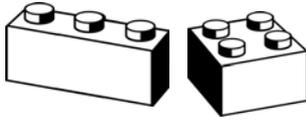
lego is pig-Danish for *put together*
yet alone resembles a stone;
once part of the consumer cycle
now the sedimentary cycle
sand to stone to sand.



< 2 grams of acrylonitrile
butadiene styrene
of forests buried, compressed and liquefied
hot rocks tapped by money makes the world
catalysed, injected, marketed, lionised.



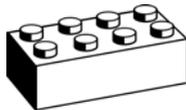
I kept my Lego® in a biscuit tin
alabaster pipers chased nymphs
round the battered lid.



A speculation

(a) maybe blown
from a young maker's hand
on the *Oriana's* deck as it steamed through the Heads
while parents at the railing watched the new country
(so clear, so harsh) come into view.

(b) dragged down for an age
and then from yesterday's storm, freed
tossed with weed and fishing line and
remains of drink cans where
the dog and I
walked.



it'll take another hundred years
like a juniper in reverse
sloughing off a molecule or two
until finally and fully dispersed
into our plastic sea.

Sonnet

Down in the channel the tide inhales and
seaflowers fixed against the suck and swirling
rush wave frantic at tenant fish tripping.
Blue jets out of their heads smile and
are vacuumed up, diced by razor jaws to
end in bits, an eye, a bladder stinking
on the sand where we, hands idly swinging
stand. I kiss the salt from your fingers and

– distracted by air (this other bright ocean)
over and over acacias in flight
lay down their hair, beating on the glass.
Sealed in the room my delight
is of pleasure fast fading (you bite my ear)
and flowers beating on the glass.

Floodlands

Dunghutti country

1.

out of nowhere
a swollen wash of logs and silt
moving but still
as if the noun
were a single thing

2.

fully dimensional like air
things occupy
their particular place
as it bangs into bridges
churches and chooksheds

3.

eucalypt limbs catch and release
vines spiralling
leaves eddy in the froth
roots poke thru
the loamy rot

4.

a snake god, head held up
serpentine across
a roo, a drowned angus
legs tangled in fencing wire
rolls back over

5.

how many times have we repaired the levees
paid and paid
for backhoe and dozer crews
pounded foundations further
down these friable lines?

6.

so we pull together once more
sandbagging, trailers down driveways
mum's sofa, the tv in the roofspace
waiting / measuring by torchlight
the doorstep

Arcadia #2: The sound of mowing

Dharawal country

1.

rises from the back blocks and playing fields
hackers and homeowners
incantations over pull cords
and bloody knuckle repairs
on burning driveways
while offshore nimbus cumulate
in citadels and spires
of that metropolis we turn to
when emotion clouds in.

2.

this last sweet day, still holding light
grass bludgeoned to a planar of memory
(remember)
the Swans in 05 when
with nothing on the clock
Leaping Leo pulled that
pigskin out of the sky
and held and held against the flood of time
– you could hear hearts breaking
from Rotto to Mandurah.

3.

the sound of the crowd
fat on a hotplate
sausages outside Bunnings
folded in a square of Tip-Top white
sauce dripping on your boots
like it was your lifeblood.
the groan of the shed's hinges
again and again the windchime
that same pentatonic
– the screen door slams.

4.

by 4 the mowers are done
already the season turns
each day from now on
though suffused with brilliance
carries a winter inside
a worm in the Blakean bloom &c.
beneath its gloss and dusty glamour
autumn's using its last reserves
just to keep upright.

Autumn fucking leaves

(Tumbarumba, NSW)

Wolgalu country

again. Kilo bags of kanzi and jonathons
are sweating the change, butternuts curl round
roadside standings and here a whole parkful
of settler elms and Japanese maples
ablaze on the verge of the irrevocable.

No matter how still you sit
still they rush you
each enunciating the same damn kigo
and, being already enautumned
insist you wise up: tomorrow we're compost.

Down this lugubrious channel
milky with meltwater, a hundred upturned hands
clogging the drains and grates, same old metaphors
overflowing the pavement and parade grounds.

Autumn heart

Ngunnawal country

a fall
of golden leaves
tumbling in
brilliant air
by the black trunks
then steeled on
the soaking
lawn.

a wind
out of nowhere
pinwheels the yellows,
some frantic angel
while I deploy
the camera app
with fat
fingers.

his biro
draws an oval
on an a4
quadrants, flow, atria, ventricles
See how the blood...again
and again through
dark halls
tremulous
now.

imagine...(jisei no ku)

Dharawal country

a scour of waves in the afternoon wind
the bright hard at our faces

everything

the words fall away
until there is only light
then not even that

jisei no ku or death poem. The word *jisei* is made of two *kanji* – *ji* (辞) and *sei* (世) – which mean to leave this world, to die.

Sonnet on an unmade bed

Caught in the flux, memories shift again, each
an unmade bed. Words rearrange meanings undone.

Image after image, lift each slide to the light: your eyes
closed in the glare, lips pressed to a smile.
When was this? Who's that in the background?
No, I don't remember. I can't recall.

Lay it out on the table: a postcard, two tickets,
a hotel key. But still I have questions: was it
Marrakesh or Madrid where you spilt wine
down your dress, were starlings crossing
in the evening air was it the muezzin or
church bells that woke us in the field
what ocean pushed against stones
like a crowd come together to say your name?

'Love is all that matters,' you say (taking my hand)
'We'll be careful from now on, take notes, souvenirs
lay a trail back to the woods.'
'No (I insist). The dream's half-done. I'm going to
climb back in, eyes closed until every last word...'