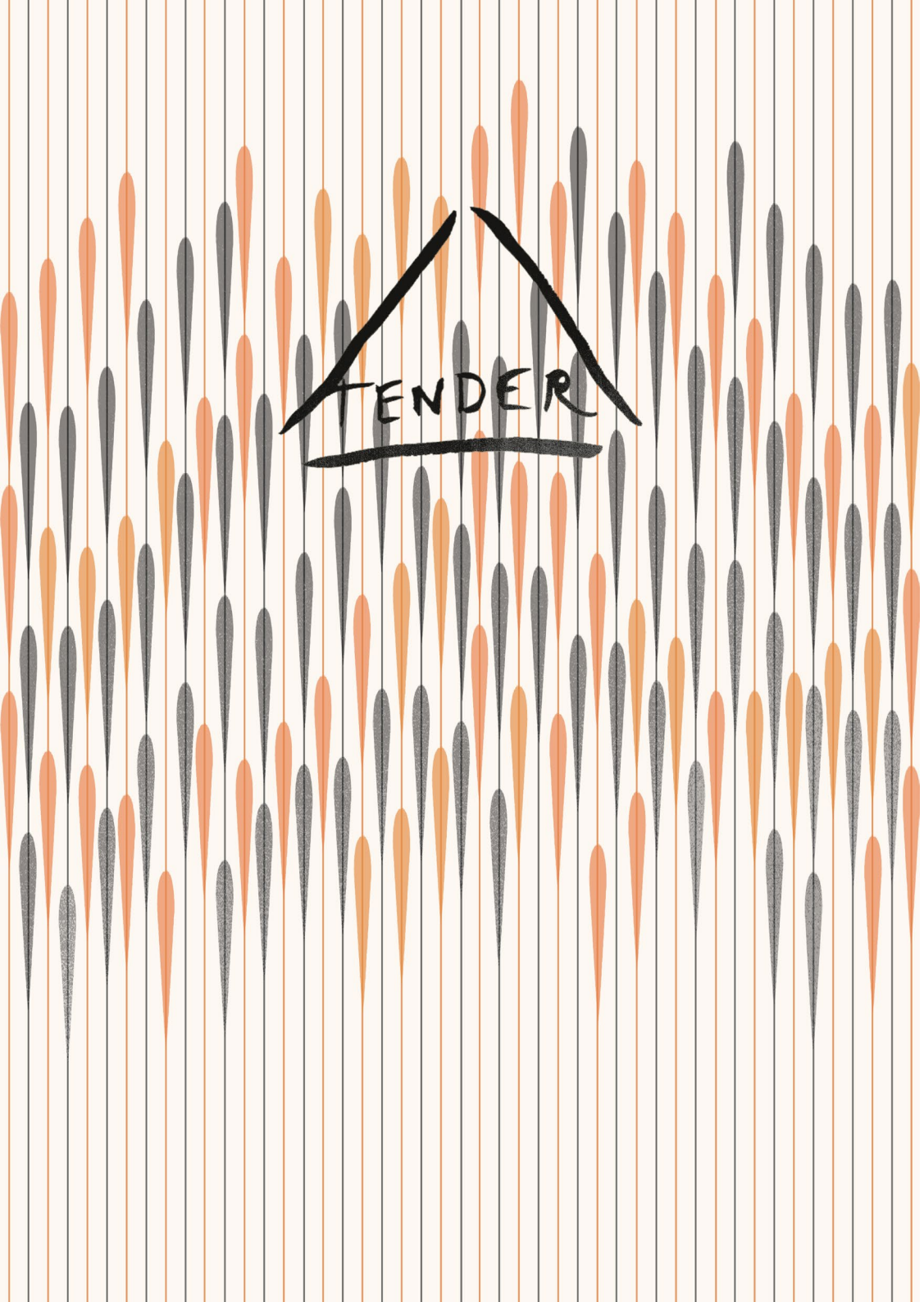

tender /ˈtɜndə/
adj 10. (postpositive) followed by of:
careful or protective

EDITED BY
RACHAEL ALLEN AND SOPHIE COLLINS
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COVER ART BY HANNAH BAGSHAW
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A QUARTERLY JOURNAL MADE BY WOMEN

◇◇◇

It can often feel as though a female-identified only anthology is redundant in a context where its editors could and perhaps should simply be encouraging women to submit to journals full stop. But David Gilmour's comments this weekend affirmed what a disconcerting amount of people still believe: women writers just aren't as good as male writers. The effect of such a doctrine is a cultural landscape where to be a writer and artist is to be male, and to be a female writer/artist necessitates pretext. As Zadie Smith so neatly put it when discussing others' expectations of her as some kind of multicultural affairs expert, 'a white male writer is never asked to be a spokesman for anything; he has complete artistic freedom'.

Believed by much of the media to be an opportunistic publicity stunt on the part of a relatively unknown author, it's still difficult to ignore statements like Gilmour's, which are manifest in the sparsity and at times complete absence of women in mainstream media and popular publications (*The New York Review of Books*' early August issue had one female contributor out of at least twenty). The more platforms that exist showcasing work by women, the more the work will be seen, giving the larger and more established publications nowhere to hide when they claim to be unable to find the women producing work of as high a quality as their long-time male contributors. David Gilmour's personal judgement, writing career and competency as a teacher of literature have, at the very least, been thrown into question by the indignity of blatant trolling, but it remains that there are those, male and female, who publically delight in statements like his. Gilmour and those who agree with him are missing out on the wealth of incredible work by women because they value more their loyalty to a system in which a white male artist stands to gain the most.

We wish that female-identified arts platforms and publications, such as *SALT.*, *Girls Get Busy* and *Bimba*, did not feel quite as necessary today as they undoubtedly do. However, although we are rallying for and against the same advancements and refluences, our approaches may appear outwardly as contrasting. In the editing of *tender* alone, the instances of differing (sometimes wholly clashing) editorial opinions as a result of political beliefs, personal values and aesthetic tastes are indicative of the intersected yet varying feminisms that we each hold. At times we are, as editors, in complete agreement, whereas at other points it can seem almost strange that two such sensibilities could be working towards the same cause. But they are, and this kind of tolerance is, we feel, the only environment for change.

RA & SC

THE FAIR UNKNOWN

In my other life I am a photographer.
In my other life I am a fashion victim.
In my other life I work at an office and eat salads for lunch.
I walk six miles a day to justify living on salads
and expensive chocolates.
I am hollowing out a tiny pearl on a long dress.
The long dress is sweeping the floor with its earnest way of
Walking down red carpets.
I have a way of holding a small fork in my smallish hand.
I glide into buildings look in eyes and smile.
I have a noble handshake. I have an ingenue's brow but nothing else.
In my other life I have the stony features of a saint.
Invisible ropes hold me up like a doll because I am a doll.
Unlikely tears are squeezed out of my eyes
When I am all wrung up.
A tree lynches a sordid pebble described by the press
As a wonder of public relations.
There is a shooting it shoots it is shot.
In my other life I pretend I want the real thing
And I actually want the real thing.
The violence I am forced to observe every day
Takes its toll on the way I cradle a goblet.
I gather what I need to gather from the sky.
In my other life I have servants who serve me.
There are two sets of dishes to be done and I do not do one.
At breakfast, the pataphysical whirr of machines
That make me run.
Light the exact hue of champagne-colored. Glasses in fake fire
make the trials of some seem especially damned.
In this scenario
I finally get to be the man.
I bestride the world it's awful.
I make synonyms for the synonyms of wreckage and redemption.
The channel we've mixed here
makes the flag look wrong. We've fixed it!
Gory glory. A kingdom with a fisher. A scroll inside
of a man-moth's scabbard contains the last hit song,
for now. My entire consciousness

Might be the groove in your windowsill
In sun-drenched cold.
So I walk down the street; my mathematics are off.
Each crease in the hair's breadth
of the trench in which I walk I have stepped
inside before. For danger to be Danger
It has to be endorsed.
In the sky, little white mousse violins fuck up the coda of
their atonal dirge.

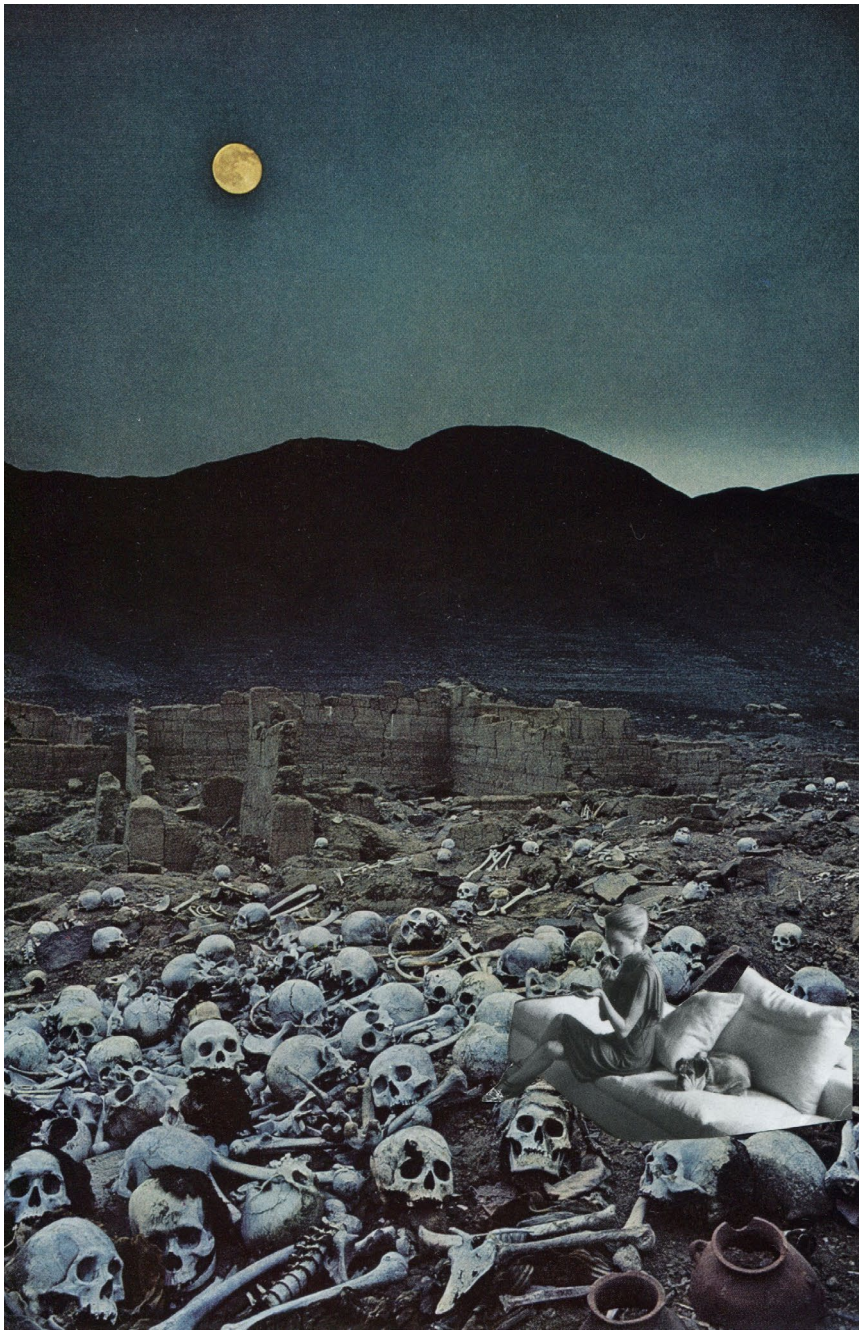
LETTER FROM THE MOON

I was living in another message, by which I mean
I was wearing hooker-pajamas and smoking
in front of a stranger's apartment. At the bodega
they only had the brand I smoked when I was a teen.
I think about being mean to the homeless person
so I give him all of the change in my pockets.
I regularly show up drunk, in a dress.
Sometimes I forget clarity & am usually tired.
I picked mutual therapy
because it seemed like a nice evening.
I screw with the face of one genuinely
impressed with life and its constant ambivalence.
There are only so many dumb things you could do.
One of them primarily is falling in love with me.
Don't fall in love with me, it is stupid.
I am painting my nails and texting former lovers.

The Room of Dresses
after Michael Longley

So white is the white dress in the white room that Lotte
disappears in no time at all among the lace and veils
until she is cocooned inside a self-spun world
where the only light she sees is white on white
and the only sound she hears is her mother's voice;
Sorg dich nicht, Lottchen, selbst die Kaiserin tut es.

Do not worry, Lottchen, even the Empress herself does it.



LAVINIA GREENLAW

writer

‘I BECAME SHORT-SIGHTED VERY SUDDENLY, AROUND TWELVE OR THIRTEEN, AND DECIDED LONG BEFORE THAT THAT I PREFERRED THE IDEA OF THINGS TO THE ACTUAL. SO SEEING, AND MAKING SENSE OF WHAT I SAW, WAS AN EFFORT AND A VOLATILE UNCERTAIN ENDEAVOUR.’

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Lavinia Greenlaw was born in 1962, in London, to a family of doctors and scientists. She studied seventeenth-century art at The Courtauld Institute and in 1990 won an Eric Gregory Award for her poems. Since then, she has published multiple collections of poetry, novels and books of non-fiction to international critical acclaim.

Her range of interests mean that she has been widely commissioned, with writing on Titian for The National Gallery, Constable for Tate Britain, Christine Borland for Bookworks, and Garry Fabian Miller for the V&A, as well as a poem to mark the centenary of the Theory of Relativity for the Science Museum. She is also known for producing translations, liberetti, and works that act against strict notions of genrefication, as with the Artangel commissioned Audio Obscura, *which won the 2011 Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry.*

Our interview was conducted via email.

‘WHATEVER YOU MAKE SHOULD LIE DEEPER AND GO FURTHER THAN ANY ASPECT OF WHO YOU ARE’

tender: In a previous interview, referencing Elizabeth Bishop and Anna Akhmatova, who both rejected the labels ‘woman poet’ and ‘poetess’, you suggested that the purpose of women’s poetry anthologies might be ‘to counter the idea that there is any such thing as a “woman poet”’. By this do you mean that, in collecting ‘women’s writing’ within a single space, such anthologies are able to demonstrate the range and diversity of these authors’ work, and so undermine the label?

Lavinia Greenlaw: I suppose I must have meant something like that! But if I did, I was over-simplifying the issue. There is much that is inescapable and definitive about being yourself and making your art, and gender is part of that. But none of that should come first. Any artistic process can be skewed by the presence of an agenda, which can take the place of artistic ambition. Whatever you make should lie deeper and go further than any aspect of who you are.

tender: Have you experienced adversity in the arts industry that you felt was specifically related to your gender?

LG: When I started out, I was asked routinely about being a ‘woman poet’. It was not a condition I aspired to but then again I didn’t want to be a male poet either. I think that any adversity I’ve experienced in the arts world that was related to my gender was the same kind of difficulty any woman routinely encounters. There are people who will pay you more attention because you’re a woman and those who will pay you less. A poet friend and I had a running joke about how whatever we wrote, it would be described in reviews as ‘lyrical’ and ‘domestic’. Sometimes there is an assumption that the imperative of a poem is what might be called domestic when it’s anything but. In my early twenties, I wrote a poem called ‘Galileo’s Wife’. I thought I was exploring empiricism and creating this figure allowed me to cast a voice in opposition. According to most reviewers, I was attacking the scientific patriarchy and the oppressive nature of fact. I am too weary and wary to call a poem that now.

‘ALL POETRY IS WRITTEN IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER POETS’

tender: You speak about Bishop as an influence on your poetry, and your most recent collection, *The Casual Perfect*, is named after Lowell’s own description of her style, its ‘achievement of the provisional’ i.e. highly dynamic, ‘appearing to exist for the present, possibly to be changed later’. In regards to what you take from Bishop, linguistically and from her persisting thematic concerns, I see in some poems in *The Casual Perfect* the idea of reflected landscape through a stretched perception— the familiar slanted to become a dreamscape. (Something that I feel represents this is your line in the collection’s title poem: ‘Her rooms always somehow at sea.’) When I read Bishop I am aware of her preoccupation with objectivity, remaining true to both a place and her perception of it, but also her delight in the skewering of a place— through a map, through a painting, etc. How does her play on this preoccupation inform the poems you write about landscape, the poems in which you may be testing the concept of perception?

LG: ‘The casual perfect’ is my recasting of a phrase from Lowell’s observation about Bishop’s method: ‘Do/you still hang your words in the air, ten years/unfinished, glued to your notice board, with gaps/or empties for the unimaginable phrase—/unerring muse who makes the casual perfect?’ In thinking it over, I turned these last words into a tense, the Elizabeth Bishop tense perhaps, one in which things are fixed at the point of taking shape, when about to submit to what I describe as ‘the gravity of form’. It’s a recognition of the tension out of which things comes, the tension that keeps things alive and moving as well as holding them in place.

I thought about what the ‘casual perfect’ tense might mean for around 20 years when what arose was my own phrase: ‘the achievement of

the provisional'. By then I was middle-aged and it does seem like a middle-aged tense. I like your definition of it very much!

I think I'm always testing perception as much as its object and that this is something I became conscious of rather than consciously applied. I became short-sighted very suddenly, around twelve or thirteen, and decided long before that that I preferred the idea of things to the actual. So seeing, and making sense of what I saw, was an effort and a volatile uncertain endeavour. When I first read Bishop, I was thrilled to find someone who articulated that for me.

tender: Another similarity I find with both you and Bishop is the song-like element of many of the poems. Not a musicality so much as the feeling of a repeated or grown lyric or statement. How intrinsically do you think the poetic line and musical line are linked, and do you believe that they are separate (in the case of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell, for example, people would claim them to be both poets and musical lyricists)? Is this something that you are aware of when writing?

LG: I believe in the inextricability of sound and sense. The idea of music is inherent in speech and therefore in the poem.

For me, song lyrics are a different and difficult thing and yes, separate entities. To set Dylan alongside Keats reminds me of the chemistry teacher trying to make his subject a bit groovy. Dylan is not Keats; nor does he need to be. Dylan can spin words like no one else but he spins them into a tune, without which they can seem silly, pompous or interminable (Lily, Rosemary and the endless Jack of Hearts). Any words need logic or conviction, whatever their context. And a writer needs to understand their context.

It's really hard to set a poem to music well though composers say they learn a lot about the nature of words from trying. Benjamin Britten had an unusual gift for this. His settings of Auden, Donne, Eliot, and even a truly bad poem by Edith Sitwell, are illuminating.

tender: Bishop's process was such that, in some cases, her poems were published years after she had written them, having been much edited in the interim. Have you ever had a desire to go back and edit work that's already been published, or is it important for you to perceive a poem as finished once it's been made public?

LG: I have no desire to go back and refurbish my poems, even though I would not write the same poems now. They evolve over years and can sit in drawers for years, often incomplete and mysterious until they meet something that completes and clarifies them. This is why Bishop's method — leaving spaces for what you can't imagine let alone articulate but know is missing — speaks to me.

tender: Whilst obviously staking your own linguistic claim, it could perhaps be said that, in *The Casual Perfect*, you are writing in the slipstream of another poet, or at least making huge gestures to their poems. If this is true, how did the poems form? Was it an organic gesture that you found unconsciously recurring within the collection, or did you aim to fashion a group of poems around this reference?

LG: I'm not sure there are that many explicit references to Bishop in this book. There are only two poems which consciously and explicitly engage with her. One of the reasons it took so long is that I had to make the idea of the casual perfect my own, or find out what it meant in my own terms, for there to be any point in re-presenting it to the world. The poems formed as they always do and without any overall intention or predetermination. I would have preferred not to make the reference explicit, as I think it's distracting and after all all poetry is written in conversation with other poets, but it felt like bad manners not to.

tender: I know this is a particularly difficult question to answer, but what do you think it is about Bishop's poems that allows readers to draw so much from each read, and what is it for you specifically that obsesses, as a long term reader of her work?

LG: Her joy in her own susceptibility, her willingness to travel, her daring, her willingness to give up her dignity in the face of the perfect image or phrase (something we find much harder than we admit), the way this exactness breaks aesthetic bounds and unsettles us enough for us to see more clearly. Her resistance to music. Her toughness.

I don't aspire to write like her. I couldn't. I am in fact a very different kind of poet. But she is salutary and invigorating, an argument against my weaknesses.

'THIS IS AN INTERESTING TIME IN TERMS OF WHAT PAUL MULDOON HAS CALLED THE "ADVENTURE IN LANGUAGE"'

tender: You've written and published both poetry and novels. When speculating on why I don't write prose — sometimes in conversations about money — I usually resort to a joke about poetry simply being 'easier'. When it comes to the differing processes of constructing both, do you see any truth in the joke?

LG: I didn't intend to write a novel. I was writing a poem about two memories: of jumping through a window and of crossing a frozen and ploughed field at night. All of a sudden I had a character and I could see her clearly and then it wasn't a poem but a story. It took me eight years to find a way to write that got the words across the page and then onto the next one. So yes, for me poetry is easier in that it is familiar and deeply engrained and what I'm wired for.

Even though this was back in the nineties when large advances were still being dished out, I certainly didn't decide to do it to try to make money. How joyless and hopeless that would be. I write what comes up— most recently, books which find their own form and don't seem to fit any particular genre.

tender: I recently started reading *Madness, Rack and Honey* by Mary Ruefle, which resists definition by approaching literary criticism and theory in an oblique way, formulating discussions on topics such as theme, sentimentality and other writers experientially. You have said that you've never planned to publish a book of criticism, but would writing this kind of theory be more appealing to you? It occurred to me while typing this that your memoir, *The Importance of Music to Girls*, particularly in its earlier sections, could be viewed as a kind of theory book: 'The sprawl of metamorphosis is the child state, one in which you can be stone or flower, suitor or captor, boy or girl, ancient or new in the space of a day. You are molten, multiple, perpetual, and so is time.'

LG: That's an apt suggestion because I have been slowly slowly doing something of this kind. I've found a way to draw together what I want to say about poetry and hope soon to complete a book. I'm not good at statements or views and aspire more to Bishop's 'tipping of an object towards the light.'

The Importance of Music to Girls is as much about poetic formulation as it is about music and growing up. We might substitute metaphor for metamorphosis.

tender: You've produced works that appear to outwardly defy genre classification, such as *Audio Obscura*, a sound art installation that encouraged participants to don a pair of headphones in King's Cross St. Pancras and wander the station while listening to snatches of recorded conversations and monologues. It seems that a lot of new writing is interested in disengaging itself from genre, and often this is achieved via appropriation, conceptualism, experimental translations or 'writings-through' of preexisting works. How do you feel about the growing propensity towards found and conceptual poetry or 'secondary creative acts'?

LG: This is an interesting time in terms of what Paul Muldoon has called the 'adventure in language'. I've really enjoyed seeing how younger poets are re-testing everything. So long as they also test themselves!

tender: *Audio Obscura* used found sounds. Have you ever considered publishing poetry that has a more conceptual or experimental bent to it, or have you experimented with work privately that focuses on process rather than the finished poem?

LG: My response to this is to want to discuss what we might mean by 'conceptual' and 'experimental' outside the practice and approaches we associate with them as schools (a word I also want to qualify with quotes). *Audio Obscura* was more experimental for me in that I was discovering the form as I went along, and more conceptual in its realisation than my poems, but not more conceptual in its concerns. I have found myself moving more freely as my work evolves, letting it sit between genres and between conventions. This is not preconceived, not deliberate but simply where I'm led by my thinking and where I am now after twenty-five years of publishing.

tender: What are you reading at the moment?

LG: This afternoon I've been reading some letters from Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Swinburne, which I came across while looking for something else. He was obsessed with literary politics and his critics. I came across this:

'I feel inclined to restore the French motto for which I too have a weakness, but think if so it must be at the head, as I have a great dislike to notes anywhere but just where they are wanted at the moment ... You once expressed the intention, much valued by me, of reviewing the book in the Fortnightly. I suppose the book will be ready by 1st May. Do you think the review would be got in then also? PS There has been a passable review of the Shelley in *The Examiner* ...' (1870)

Otherwise, all kinds of things from Andrea Brady to Chaucer. I'm finalising the manuscript of my next book of poems, *A Double Sorrow*, which comes out in February. It's a kind of extrapolation from Troilus and Criseyde.

tender: An extrapolation from Chaucer's poem in the sense that Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* is an extrapolation from The Tenth Labour of Herakles? Does the title refer to the process, as a kind of translation or version of the Chaucer, as much as to the narrative?

LG: I am interested in the calibration of the image: whether or not it requires the hinge of simile, its logic and coherence versus its flight, and how to poise it close enough to abstraction that it resonates as it should. Troilus and Criseyde is full of borrowed and modified images and I have borrowed and modified them some more. I have sought the story of these two people who argue themselves and each other into and out of love through the detonation of images Boccaccio and then Chaucer, and others, made. Chaucer wasn't constructing a psychology, he was dramatising courtly love. But his dramatisation activated the images and so animated the story, brought it to life.

I used a corrupt version of his rime royal. I've generally kept the rhyme in proportion but it's fairly oblique and irregular. Each seven-line poem is drawn out of an image or phrase or motif which might develop across a hundred lines. They sit one on a page, so it's like a zoetrope or flick-book, reflecting the incremental nature of what happens, all these small but pivotal moments and gestures.

WE ARE STARDUST

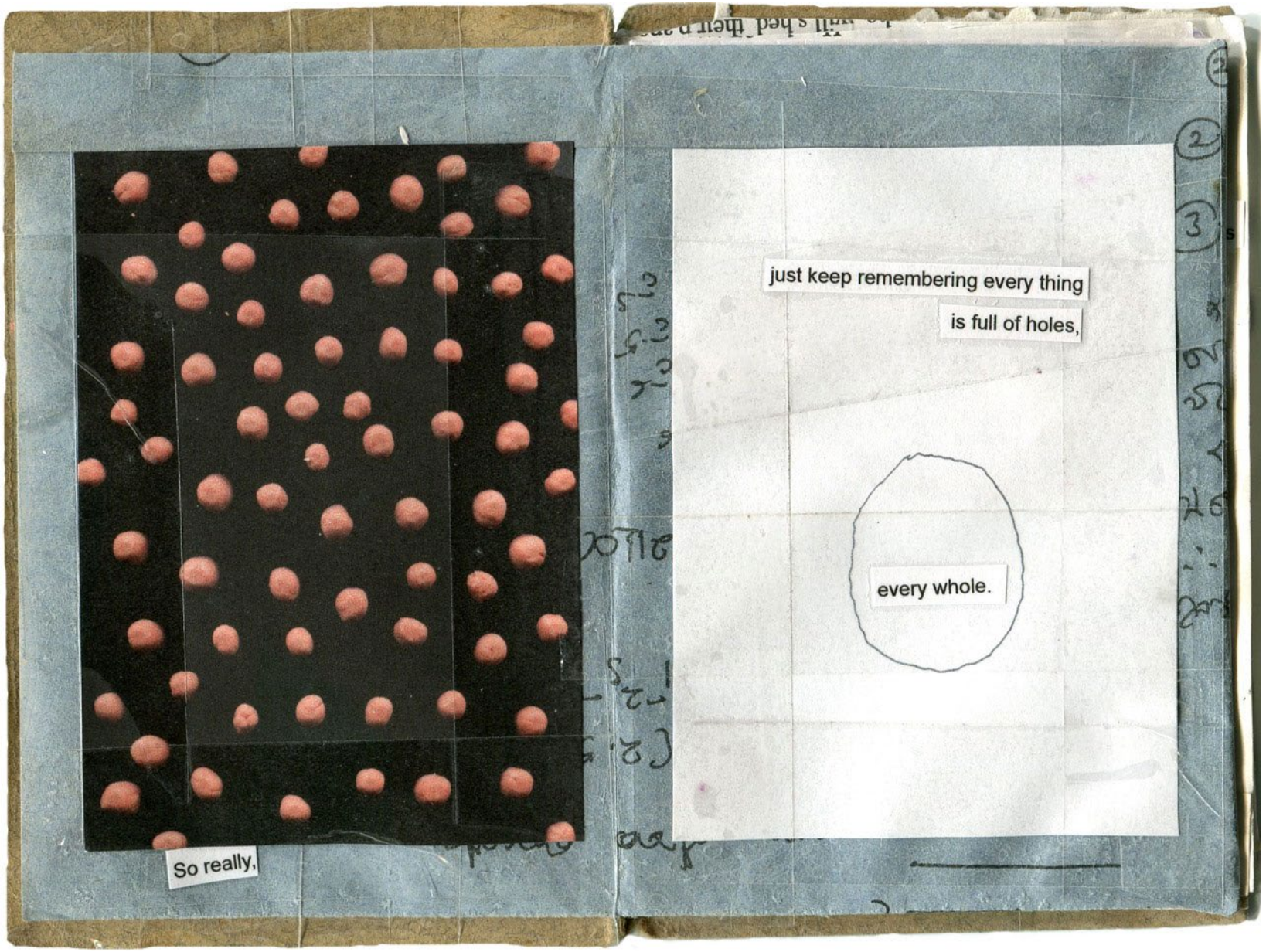
There was the earth
looming for the first time
in the window of the scientists
and a green ashtray
there
by his elbow
full of butts

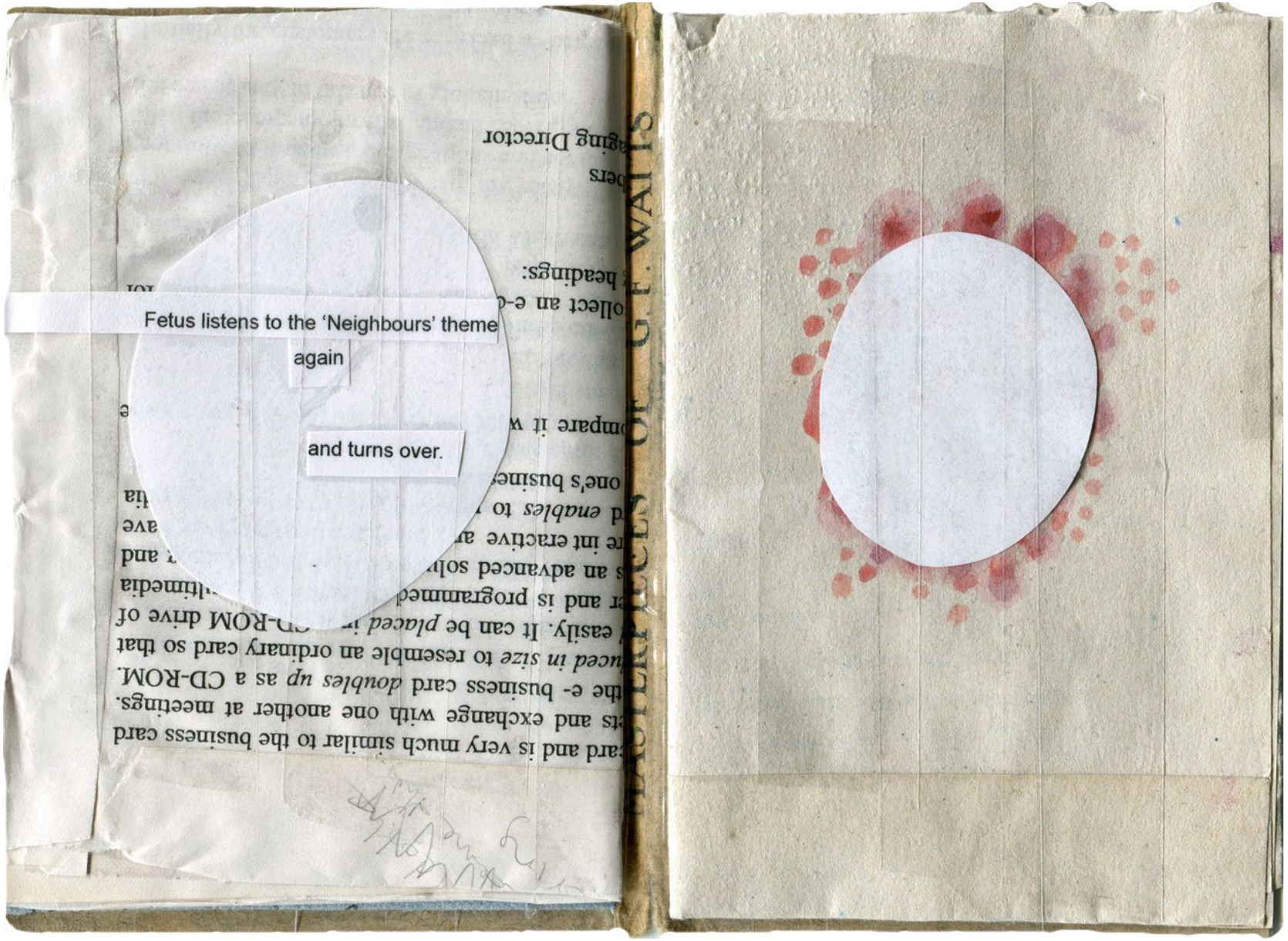
PROPHESY

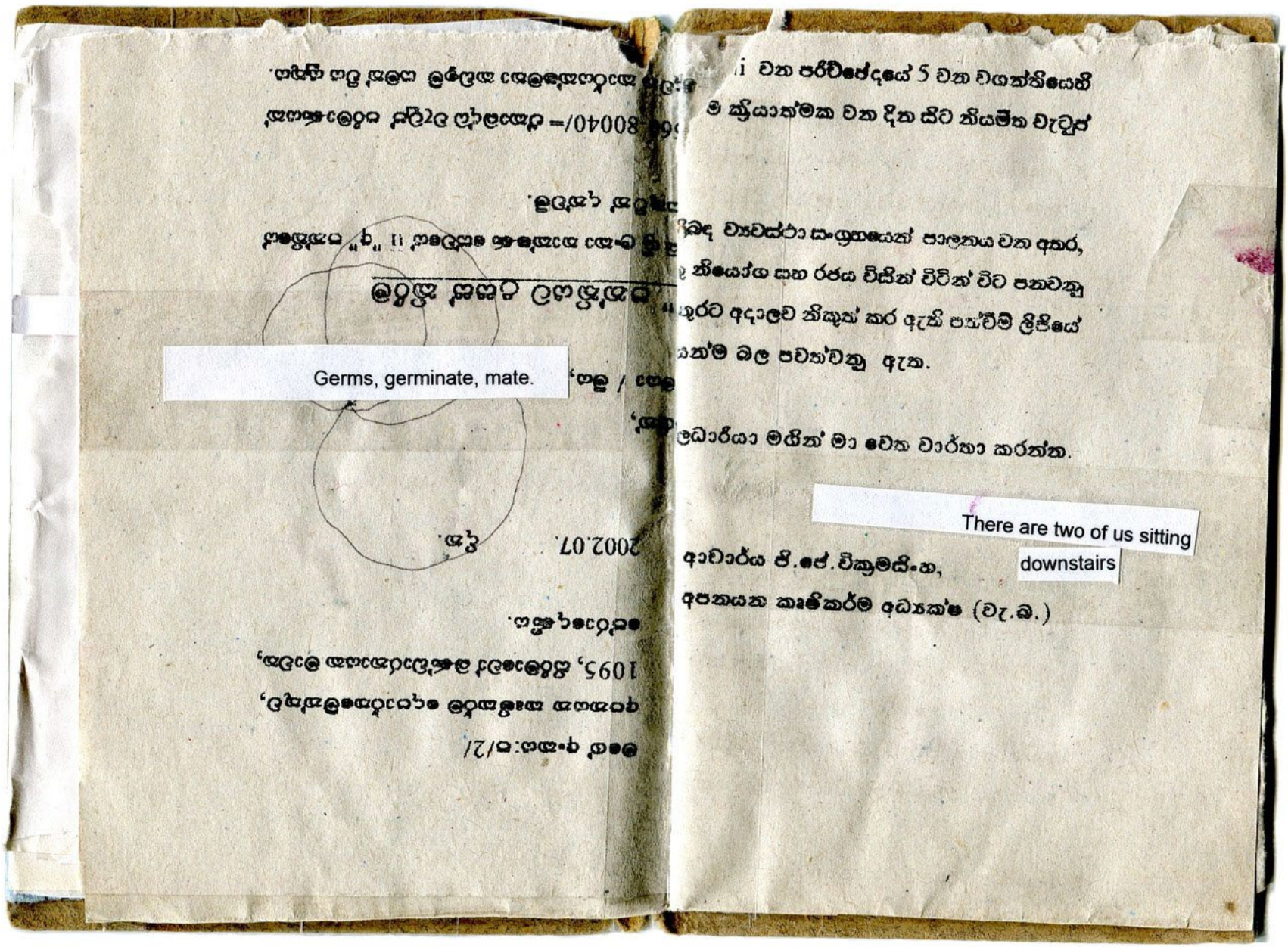
I'm playing with the devil's cock
it's like a crayon
it's like a fat burnt crayon
I'm writing a poem with it
I'm writing that down
all that rattling heat in this room
I'm using that
I'm using that tingling rattle
that light in the middle of the room
it's my host
I've always been afraid of you
scared you're god and something else
I'm afraid when you're yellow
tawny
white it's okay. Transparent cool
you don't look like home
my belly is homeless
flopping over the waist of my jeans like an omelette
there better be something about feeling fat
what there really is is a lack of emptiness
I'm aiming for that empty feeling
trying to get some of that
and then I'll be back

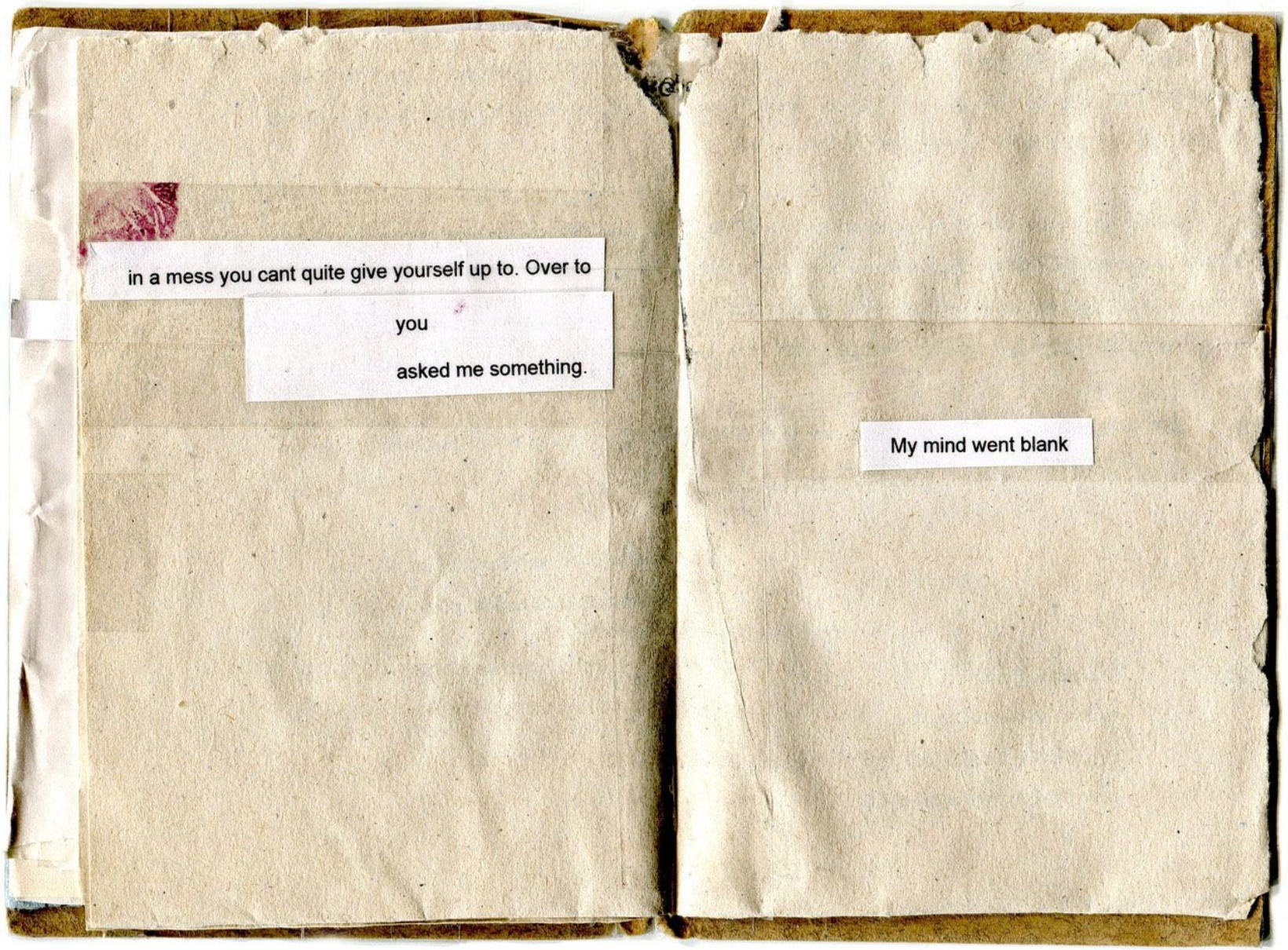
TO MY FLOWERS

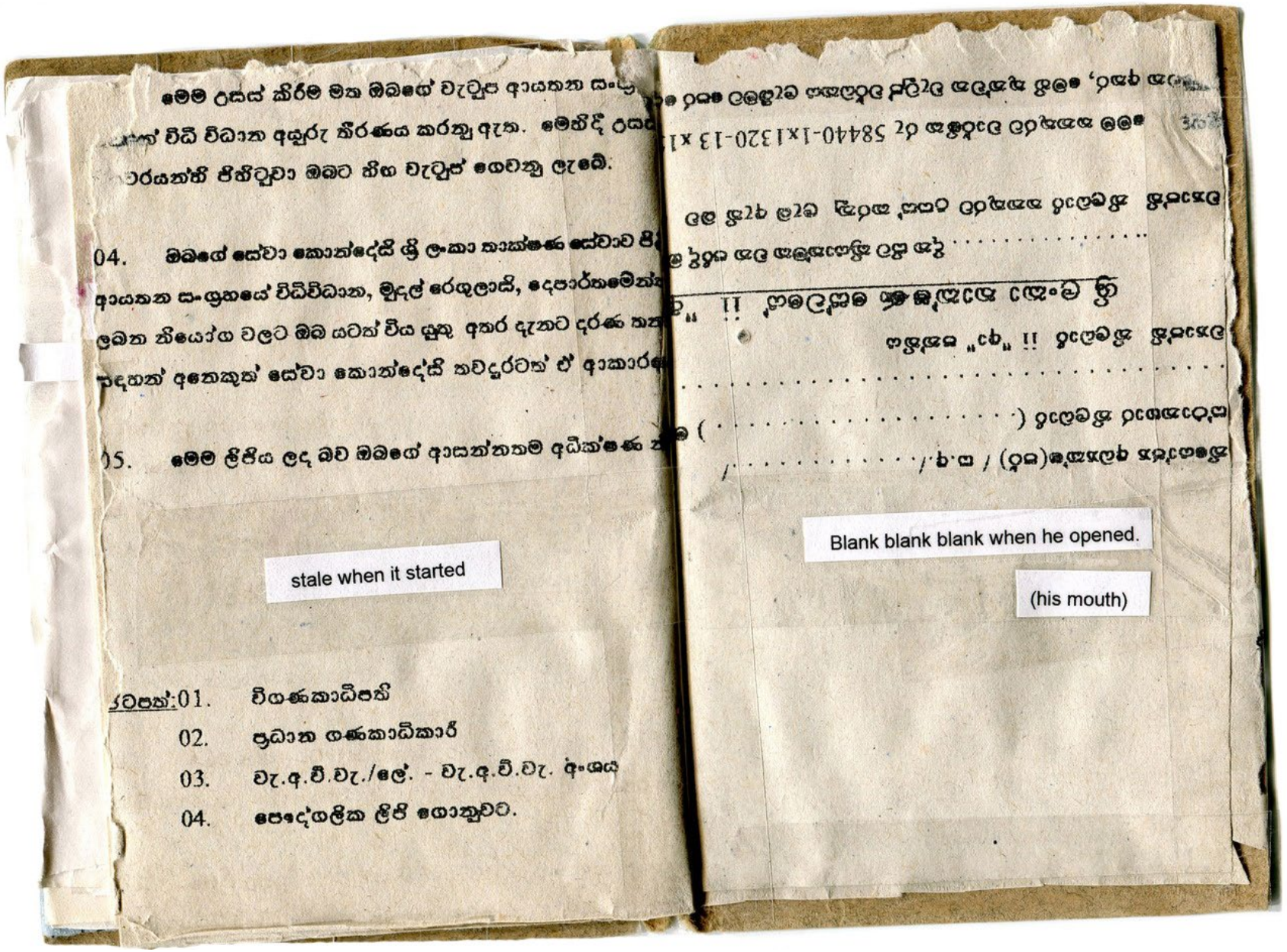
Why
did you just
come and
die.


So really,
just keep remembering every thing
is full of holes,
every whole.


Fetus listens to the ‘Neighbours’ theme
again
and turns over.


Germs, germinate, mate.
There are two of us sitting
downstairs


in a mess you cant quite give yourself up to. Over to
you
asked me something.
My mind went blank


මෙම උසස් කිරීම මත ඔබගේ වැටුප ආයතන සංහ
වීධි විධාන අයුරු තීරණය කරනු ඇත. මෙහිදී උසස්
රයන්හි ජිහිටුවා ඔබට තිබ වැටුප් ගෙවනු ලැබේ.
04. ඔබගේ සේවා කොන්දේසි ශ්‍රී ලංකා තාක්ෂණ සේවාව පි
ආයතන සංග්‍රහයේ විධිවිධාන, මුදල් රෙගුලාසි, දෙපාර්තමේන්
ලබන නියෝග වලට ඔබ යටත් විය යුතු අතර දැනට දරණ තන
සඳහන් අනෙකුත් සේවා කොන්දේසි තවදුරටත් ඒ ආකාර
05. මෙම ලිපිය ලද බව ඔබගේ ආසන්නතම අධික්ෂණ
stale when it started
ප්‍රවපත්: 01. විගණකාධිපති
02. ප්‍රධාන ගණකාධිකාරී
03. වැ.අ.වී.වැ./ලේ. - වැ.අ.වී.වැ. ඇංශය
04. පෞද්ගලික ලිපි ගොනුවට.
Blank blank blank when he opened.
(his mouth)

But she said it was yellower

than it was when we were here. Where we didn't speak cornflowers grew, straw lay on our feet, and you said with your knuckles *nothing is here*. Next to the window we smell like snow. Next to the window someone scratched a cross for you. Next to the window someone couldn't know godless brother not-seeing it / but only the carve. I couldn't hear and you didn't talk. It wasn't that your being here was more or less than I had expected, but that I couldn't remember how it was. Our mother said *he's screaming in the car* so we stood on the sidewalk in our coats. Our father said nothing and dropped his chin in sleep while you thrashed on the hotel bed. I forgot. / I forgot. I remembered and slept. I drank my shiraz in my sheet-church at night and dropped grackles and sticks, mass on the floor.

E. 5th

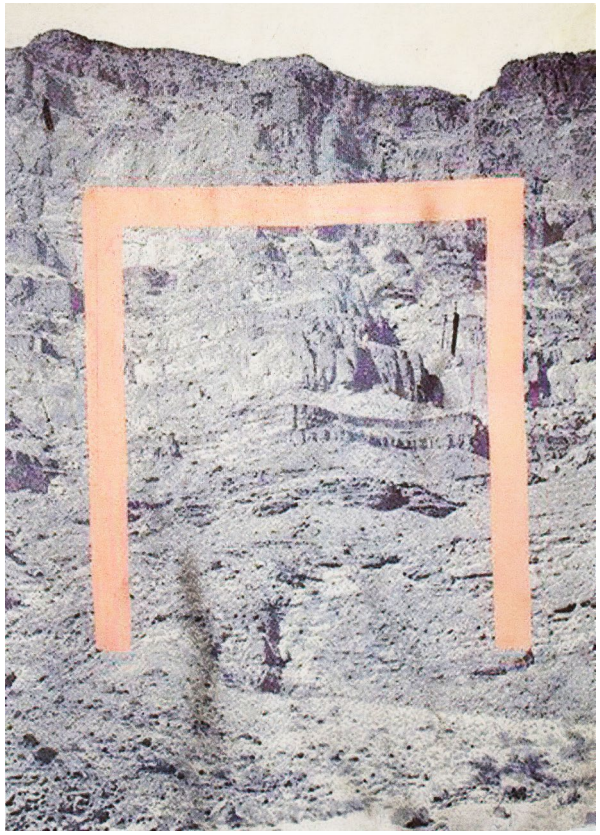
At 3 o'clock moon watts stand in my window
and again soon, sun standing desk. She said
I knew when I saw cats crossing the street. Here I'm careful
with sunscreen and tuck
apples in pockets. What is it I might
need? A dollar per earring. A penny on my chin.
The freckle-tightness at the edges of my nose.
If you give me your cheeks, appled.
If you were zinnias on porches. If you found
us a corner under the clock.
Here I am walking. Here I am stopped.
I have been sweating but I have been clean.

Artist's Note

I knew a girl from Mexico who was dying. She was young and it wasn't her choice or her fault. I spent time with her, discussing how she conceived of herself as existing in the present and ascribing a linear trajectory to what would soon be. She was elusive and withdrawn towards the end, spending most of her time in the pueblos (local communities housed in apartment-like structures of stone), writing her thoughts and fantasies that only her imagination could have conjured up; they were so far removed from the life she led.

Before she passed, she asked me to make a video of a monologue she had written three weeks before. It spoke about her journey and her present feelings towards injustice and death. She described the feminine (herself) as a pink gateway lost in the wilderness, hoping for a better life. When I view this image, the pink object resembles a doorway, showing what once was and now ceases to exist.

I feel privileged to have documented and communicated her words. They can be viewed here.

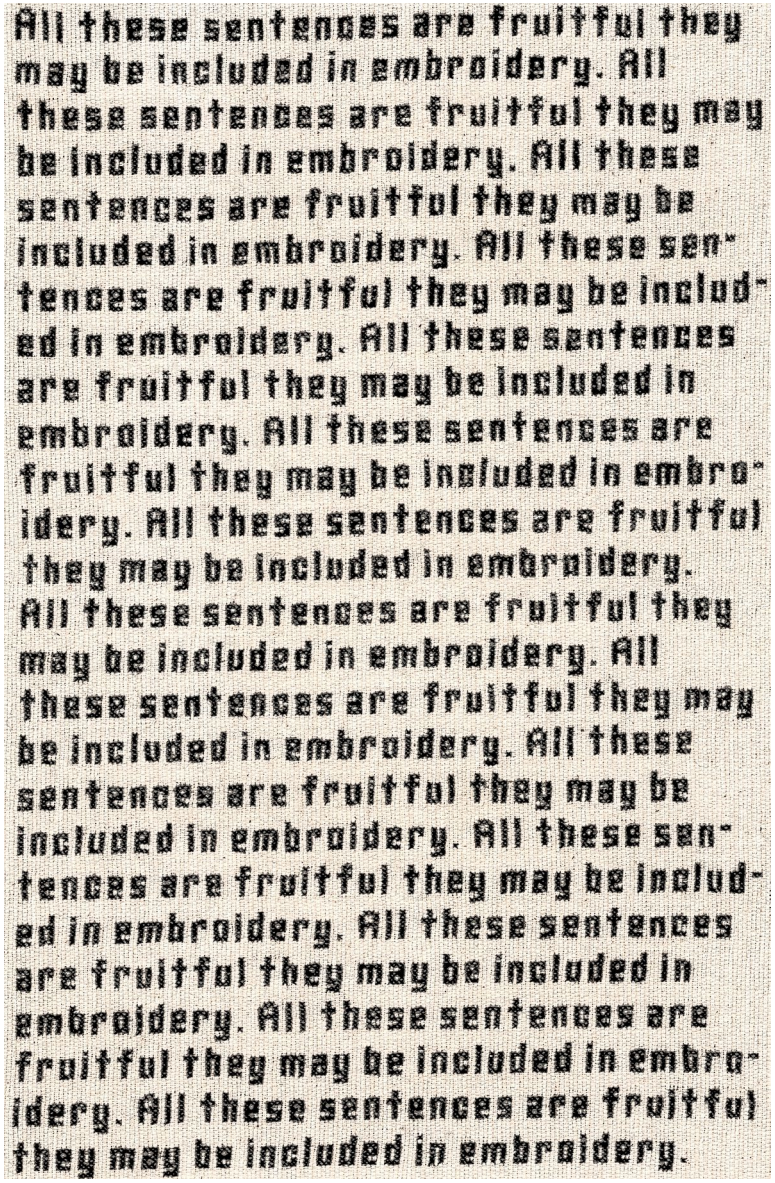



VIVIAN
CO-STARRING
PHILLIP


KNOCK KNOCK
VAIO
VAIO
VAIO
HOW'RE YOU
OK I GUESS
YOU SURE?
I'M NOT SURE, NOT ABOUT THIS.


VIVIAN


I THINK WE SHOULD STOP SEEING EACH OTHER
YOU WANT IT TOO


All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery. All these sentences are fruitful they may be included in embroidery.


Ich denke tatsächlich mit der Feder, denn mein Kopf weiß oft nichts von dem, was meine Hand schreibt. Ich denke tatsächlich mit der Feder, denn mein Kopf weiß oft nichts von dem, was meine Hand schreibt. Ich denke tatsächlich mit der Feder, denn mein Kopf weiß oft nichts von dem, was meine Hand schreibt. Ich

Author's Note

Time-Lapse of Earth *is a novel about Erin and Freya, two girls from suburban Britain who are documenting their minimum impact journey from the UK to New Zealand. The documentary is about (among other things) exploration, wilderness survival, masculine prowess, space travel, time capsules, neuroscience, the biological differences between women and men, and feminism.*

The text takes the form of a work journal or personal scrapbook belonging to Erin.

The following four sections appear in the same order as in the manuscript.

from Time-Lapse of Earth

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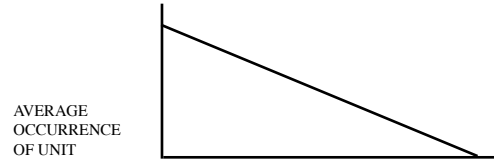
I USE SONAR TO EXPRESS MYSELF

We have found the pod of Long Finned Pilot Whales. There are over one hundred of them. It's incredible to look at. After two days of tailing them I am reassured that they will not rise up as one and overturn our little boat. I was pacified by the realisation that they also hang around with dolphins. Dolphins are an animal I can trust. In our pod there are a group of Atlantic White Sided Dolphins; Larus says they herd the fish together with the whales. The dolphins are really curious and come right up to the boat to play around in the foam that comes off our propeller.

On top of his research for the Ocean Association, Larus is conducting his own. The pod is particularly interesting to him because of the dolphins. He uses the equipment on the boat to record and plot their sonar and by measuring patterns he hopes to be able to crack their language. The graphs in the office already prove that the dolphins are talking; Larus has plotted the quantified appearance of each distinct vocal in ascending order across a horizontal axis, with the times occurring across a vertical axis. The plot of a graph in which information is being communicated always results in an angle of 45-degrees because all languages have units that range on a spectrum from frequent to infrequent. If it is not a 45-degree angle this means the noises are random and uncommunicative. This is the same for any language: Icelandic, English, or Dolphin.



Larus says he can apply this method to any long piece of sound data. His focus is noise picked up by dishes aimed at outer space. A friend in America has built his own dish in his back garden in the desert. He and Larus work on the data because the only government-funded dish, used specifically to listen for aliens, was taken down in 1998 to clear space for a golf course. It ran for 22 years and it actually picked up the kind of thing they were looking for. But the signal it picked up only occurred once so they presumed it was some sort of fluke, the logic being that any intelligent civilisation would keep on sending a signal over and over to make it more likely to be heard. A three minute long radio signal was sent from Earth to a cluster of stars at the limits of the Milky Way, once in 1974 and then never again. By the time any hypothetical civilisation had got it and sent a reply it would be around about 52,000 AD.

The guys that sent the signal referred to themselves as The Order of the Dolphin. They called themselves this because one of their members, John Lilly, used to take hallucinogens and climb into tanks with dolphins to explore interspecies communication. Larus played us a track by a spoken word poet that I liked. It went, 'John Lilly, the guy who says he can talk to dolphins, said he was in an aquarium and he was talking to a big whale who was swimming around and around

in his tank. And the whale kept asking him questions telepathically. And one of the questions the whale kept asking was: Do all oceans have walls?'

Because of the difficulty of relaying a message through both deep space and deep time, Larus thinks we also need to consider that aliens might have come to Earth billions of years ago and encoded a message into our DNA, in the genes that don't really do a lot apart from sit around and about which we don't know much. He says that some decoders are looking for a mathematical pattern because intelligent civilisations must understand Pi and prime numbers and things as universal truths that transcend language.

Some of the guys from The Order of the Dolphin worked on the Golden Records that were sent into space with Voyager 1, which by now could be outside the solar system and on its way to somebody else's. The Golden Records were a kind of time capsule (which is what children are). In it they sent pictures of a whole range of cultures and creatures, sounds from Earth like screaming and laughter and greetings in lots of different languages. President Carter left a written message for the aliens inside the time capsule:

This is a present from a small, distant world, a token of our sounds, our science, our images, our music, our thoughts and our feelings. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO SURVIVE OUR TIME SO WE MAY LIVE INTO YOURS. (President Carter; own emphasis)

The time capsule is President Carter's baby. With it he has conceptually colonised the future.

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THE CEILING IN THE SKY

I nominated myself to help Larus while Frey and Urla fished for dinner because I like to sit and listen to him talk about space. I'm helping group all of the sound bites that Larus has from the dolphin recordings into categories that are similar sounding. He plays them from the computer and we decide which of seven folders to put them into.

When I was little I wanted to be an astronaut up until age 13 when at careers day I sat with my parents and told my head of year about how I wanted to be an astronaut. He laughed and he signed me up for work experience at The Kite Centre on the basis that I must have liked the idea of flying.

Larus was at Kennedy for the lift off of the Apollo 11 mission. He was there to protest, stood in a line with its back to the Launchpad holding a sign that read 'Meanwhile in Harlem' but as soon as he heard the roar from the propulsion engines he turned around and couldn't take his eyes away. Supposedly there is a photo of the group with him turning and gaping; he didn't ever cut it out of the newspaper because he felt he had spoiled the integrity of the group's statement. He told me this in confidence and made me promise not to tell Urla because she'd never let it go.

My being an astronaut was something I didn't ever doubt as a child because my mum always told me the whole world was my oyster. It didn't matter that all the cartoon astronauts were men. Whenever I watched films or read books with a male hero I totally imagined myself as that hero. Call me Ishmael. Call me Ralf, call me John McClaine. It's not fair that only the boys get the fun parts.

When America shot a rocket to the moon even with the revolution in swing it was still too soon to let women have one. Larus told me about an independent program called Mercury 13 that took accomplished female pilots and put them through the testing that NASA did on their own astronauts — The Mercury 7 — the theory being that for various biological reasons women were better suited to space flight.

It was a success but NASA just couldn't have ladies on the moon before men. Catch 22 was that it was required you be a member of the Air Force to qualify as an astronaut with NASA, and women were still not allowed to join the military. So none of the Mercury 13 pilots were taken on, although they had more air experience than a lot of the men at NASA (some of who didn't have all of the requirements either). When Larus told me this I thought how bitter I felt at The Kite Centre while two boys in my year got sent to Leicester Space Centre on 'limited allocation' work experience.

Maybe America sent a man to the moon to undermine Russia's female cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, who was ten years younger than the youngest NASA astronaut and who had spent more time in space than all Americans combined, having orbited the earth 48 times. America only went to space in the first place to show that communism couldn't be more progressive than capitalism. Tereshkova worked in a textile factory before she became a cosmonaut. Her mother before her worked in the textile factory and her father was a tractor driver. What if Apollo had crash-landed — they nearly did — would Russia rule the world now?

(Tereshkova was a human propaganda pawn; the Russian female program was dissolved the year of the Apollo moon landing. No women cosmonauts flew again for 19 years.)

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JERRIE COBB FROM THE MERCURY 13 CALLS NASA TO SEE WHAT THE DEAL IS WITH THE PROGRAM BEING CANCELLED

Jerrie Cobb: hey NASA, so I did everything you said I should

NASA: mhmm, what's that?

Jerrie Cobb: I did all the tests like all the guys did, and hey it's funny, I actually kinda blew them out the water

NASA: what tests?

Jerrie Cobb: you know, all the secret tests you make the guys do so they can go into space

NASA: I don't know what tests you're talking about

Jerrie Cobb: I'll remind you then. I put frozen water in my ears to see what it feels like with no balance. I spent days alone inside a box. I ran on a treadmill till I thought I might die. I drank radiation—

NASA: how'd you find out about the secret tests? they're secret

Jerrie Cobb: well we have a scientist friend who invited us to do them, he said you didn't have your own program for ladies so he made one to show you that you should have

NASA: and why's that?

Jerrie Cobb: because all his evidence suggests that it is way more logical to put a woman in space than a man

NASA: there is no NASA led evidence to prove this

Jerrie Cobb: oh please NASA, I promise I won't let you down. I coped just as well in the physical tests, I've got a higher pain threshold, I beat all the guys in the psychological ones, I'm so small you'll hardly even notice me I swear, I wont take as much food or oxygen, I could even go up there in a smaller shuttle! and all of my reproductive organs are inside of me so I'm less likely to have radioactive children—

NASA: that's all very nice, but we won't be taking the female program any further

Jerrie Cobb: but why? we worked so hard! some of us lost our jobs or our husbands

NASA: there are many reasons

Jerrie Cobb: give me one good reason

NASA: I am not authorised to divulge that information to third parties who are not associated with any official NASA program

Jerrie Cobb: why the hell not?

NASA: let it drop now, you're like a dog with a bone. do you have a husband? think of how you're making your husband feel. if not think about your daddy. you know your daddy wouldn't want you up there

Jerrie Cobb: but all the tests show I'd do just fine

NASA: the tests are not fully conclusive. you might well get up there and just faint or something. and what if you got to space and got yourself raped by an alien? imagine if you were the courier for an extra-terrestrial being back onto our planet. we will not continue the female program because of the risks it would bring to the American public

Jerrie Cobb screams and hangs up the phone

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NOT THE WHITE BULL JUPITER SWIMMING

INT. CABIN— MORNING. Freya and Erin are sat on the bed on laptops— Urla has camcorder — zoom in — Erin's face — zoom out — zoom in — Freya's face — zoom out — sudden noise from outside—

Larus (shouting): GIRLS— GIRLS COME— SHI—

Larus bursts into cabin, knocks into Urla with camera — Urla turns — camera focuses on Larus — excitement —

Larus (whispering): girls. come quickly. outside

Freya: what? what is it?

Larus: you'll see. come quickly. quietly

Girls follow Larus into corridor — Urla is in front with camera — Erin and Freya out of shot — out onto deck — Larus looks over deck- girls gather round — water slaps against side of boat — Greenland is faint on horizon — iceberg — no whales/dolphins —

Erin: what are we supposed to be looking at?

Larus: shush. you'll see

The group stands silently for 14 seconds — 4 meters away from the boat the water breaks — gush of air from blowhole — ridged back of sperm whale breaks surface- Freya shrieks-

Erin (yells): OHMIGOD—

Larus (shouting): CHRIST. it's nearer than before—

Boat rocks—

Urla: is it safe?

Larus: jesus. sorry. it took my by surprise. yes we should be safe. just no more screaming girls—

Urla (laughing): no more screaming girls. you screamed loudest. I have it all here. I can play it back to you—

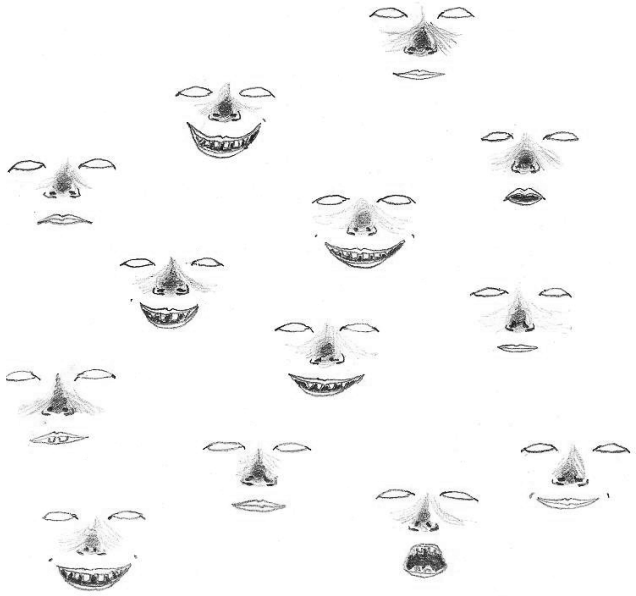
Freya: it's so big. I've never seen anything so big. is it a sperm whale?

Larus: yes it's a sperm whale. we will be safe they're not that curious. but it's very close

Creature resurfaces further from boat — Erin jumps —

Erin: oh god it got me again

Nervous laughing— group stand and watch the whale resurface twice more before it sinks into the calm water, its mass leaving an imprint in tiny bubbles



The taciturn petticoat

And before I begin
I would like to ask
What is the ideologically neutral shoe?

Shoes for strolling through Switzerland, eating Mueslix
Shoes for skimming red volumes with slender fingers
Shoes for becoming committed (to an idea)

I'm walking through Switzerland in my neutral outfit
I'm walking in Belgium, the colour of porridge
I'm walking the flaxen plains of Nebraska

But I was given a red dress...
To make my red dress neutral
I will sit in a vat of butterscotch pudding!

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