JESSICA HART

LAND MOUNTAIN

A COLLECTION OF SONNETS

WRITTEN FOR TRINITY COLLEGE, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>vv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouveau</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Mountain</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland Verse</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarraman</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearied not Pretty</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cape Bedford</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward Drift</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Room</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perhaps readers will always make a distinction between dramatic poets and philosophical ones: poets of action, like Chaucer and Byron, and poets of reflection, like Andrew Marvell, Wallace Stevens, and A. D. Hope. And those three powers from England, America, and Australia hover lightly as tutelary spirits over this collection of sonnets: ‘There are those who ask a hopeful question;/was it by chance that there was morning,/as it was by chance that there was the night?’ These are delicately but intensely poised meditations: they take us out into the empirical world, and bring us back refreshed. And they can transform a humble garden bird into a messenger from somewhere else altogether:

‘The garden fence posts are most apparent
holding the tightrope for the wagtail
that waits and at last gleams to see the man
who goes house-to-house to give the mail.’

Every young poet should try a sonnet sequence, and Jessica has done herself proud with this one. More, please.

Richard Lansdown
Associate Professor of English
James Cook University, Cairns.
INTRODUCTION

But for the first two poems, *Land Mountain* was written between September and December 2014 as a gift to Trinity College. The collection is based on my idea that fundamental to the act of interpretation is, what I call, ‘degree of distance.’ Degree of distance is necessary between the poet and the poetry to maximise the creative freedom of the reader.

Maintaining degree of distance, whilst managing conviction of meaning, is vertiginously challenging without pronouns. In *Land Mountain*, I omit the personal ‘I,’ but use third person pronouns. I have found that this degree of distance works particularly well with the sonnet form. To the extent that it serves as a poetic device, distance can facilitate the critical analysis interpretation requires.

Just as our environment is a ladle of particulates, a spoon feeding us a measureless enclave, our interpretation of our environment should be free from any fixed lens that may limit the sublimity of our critical interpretations. As much is true of poetry and everything that it engulfs.

From the clear-mindedness that objectivity offers to us, with a degree of distance, poetry may not solve the problems within our environment, but it may show us how to.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Mr Campbell Bairstow, Mr Peter Gebhardt and Mr Jeff Sparrow for your prosperous fellowship in the making of the Nakata Brophy Short Fiction and Poetry Prize for Young Indigenous Writers.

Thank you to the judges of the prize: Trinity’s Head of Academic Programs, Dr Sally Dalton-Brown, poetry editor of literary journal Overland, Dr Peter Minter and, writer and academic, Dr Tony Birch.
LAND MOUNTAIN

A Collection of Sonnets written for Trinity College, The University of Melbourne

By

Jessica Hart
There are those who ask a hopeful question:

was it by chance that there was the morning,

as it was by chance that there was the night?

Lemongrass, paperbark, sand cliff - finite.

The assortments of tepidness and cold

never mix as one, yet as dunes they change,

and, as grows a garden like no other,

the earth is today unlike another.

Photonic waves live in constant transit

and are the moving candles of the sea;

once indeterminable, twice the same,

one faded away but another came.

If people turn to stone and so does all,

let no nest to be robbed and no eggs fall.
LAND MOUNTAIN

The environment we create
is a ladle of particulates,

a spoon feeding us

a measureless enclave.

What is a place,

if not a placement of shapes,

loops of forms, down, around -

wood, metal, words, sound?

A seagull knows no hate,

or human thought,

and knows no better

than what it’s learning.

Sea floods, mazes of waves,

evening candles burning.
HOMELAND VERSE

The mast is the want of a sailor;
the sky is the want of a fish
swimming to the surface
to breathe for a wish.

To brave the wind
the sun to stand,
to brave the launch
the moon to land,

it jumps as a dormant surge,
boosts to the open air,
its departure quiet,
its entrance rare,

and in one look, in one thrust,
it captures the earth, the sailor in us.
YARRAMAN

Empirical life is as known to us
as a scratch upon a stone

where upon a horse’s hoof

pressed its trotting tone,

or as cumbersome as its mane

of macro-shots that shows to us

quasi orbs of capsuled dust

within the code of rain,

or sun as it stabs the green

ants on the river nest,

going, going—it flurries, begs,

spins around on its last legs,

silk and larvae swallowed whole

as fruit for water’s thirsted bowl.
WEARIED NOT PRETTY

Lost seas unbundle the coastline icebergs, seasonal water signalling them to melt and be taken away, taken to shore, to show the cities the cards they’ve dealt.

To free the bergs from their statues and stones takes first an ocean to swallow its ice, its coral reefs, its anemone zones, itself volcanic and larva to life.

The garden fence posts are most apparent holding the tightrope for the wagtail that waits and at last gleams to see the man who goes house-to-house to give the mail.

The man forgets to nod and say hello; it flies to the fence, but he doesn’t know.
CAPE BEDFORD

Opal vibrancy, it ends not with none,
colour and cloth on the salt of the shed,
tall gradient, clever contrast of sun
and Velcro vines on the silica bed.

Sleep with your hat on and binoculars
rested in the groove of your languid arm.
There is the tree-swing slowing gently down
in the looking-glass of clear and calm.

Handle the jetty, and nail it up;
oar to the current; the floating buoy drifts.
As tea was made in the ramekin cup,
the visitor whistles; the silence lifts.

Light from the lantern and food from the line,
he says, “What’s mine is yours, but yours is mine.”
UPWARD DRIFT

The ulysses droops silently over
and latches on to the damp of the wood,

its wings curled, its keenness a masquerade,

its promptness brooding that to us is good.

Lines run left of center, a lullaby,

and leaves are weaved in matchless disarray.

But, this, the dot-painting left out to dry,

has the texture of life, and last it may.

Prompt the butterfly on the garnet rose,

calmly fiddling its antennae, its wings -

The further it flies, the further it goes,

yet, resting halfway, to pollen it clings.

On the stone wall, a hand, outlined in white;

below it, the dreamtime, just out of sight.
Lines and letters, the long-shore poetry,
forming waves of centripetal delight,
spindling around books of the library,
king tides of paper, much more to write.

The darling buds of May, spirit ditties,
thunder, tumbling to and from the page:
notes, written by the hand of the poet,
the written word coming better with age –
not with pertinent glory or spheres,
globes, or settings of plays inside the heart,
but with silent drops of thought in moments
belonging to the reflecting of art.

The time of day goes away here;
evening’s already drawing near.
NOTES

Page 10: “Yarraman” – ‘horse’