



## Cartography (Paul Hetherington)

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### Cartography

1.

The width of our expression was never as wide as the ocean. The depth we knew rarely troubled the lantern fish. Yet your hands were waves, absorbed in rocking motions. A long passage to travel; stiff sails to liberate, while sea shanties hung in our minds like a different kind of air. Singing, you said we travelled best in words, tightening a rope, tying our direction. We saw shoals in our thesaurus; imagined a hundred cities, and you spoke of merchants as if they might have been near, carrying their parcels of cloth and spice, hoisting languages like flags into the sky. 'There,' you said, pointing to a bird. 'That's Coleridge's albatross.' We had no bow or arrow and watched it for an hour. A wide gathering of words. A poem busily writing us.

2.

Squares and rectangles map the body like a compulsive cartographer. So much pale, coveted territory; many geometries of desire. Years decline in hollows and declivities like the hand of mother time caressing a clock face; a second hand ticks like a heartbeat; a flurry of words rises like the cresting, swooping turns of starlings in Rome. The night's darkened by movement; the map is in the mouth; twelve centuries are assembling in a poem from Persia. This intertext that's a shiver in the spine.

## Catechism

He finds himself talking to the wind, examining absurd propositions. No-one is listening. Without thinking, he finds his thoughts attaching to a body, and soon he's listening to poems. They're obscure—each one a gesture like the trail of breath on glass. Afterwards, he can't remember the words, and feels a sense of the disconsolate, ushering in what he doesn't want to remember. The dead come back, as if to remind him that they never finished talking. Wisps of poems float in the air like fragments of catechism.



**Paul Hetherington** has published numerous books, most recently *Palace of Memory: An Elegy* (RWP 2019) and *Moonlight on Oleander: Prose Poems* (UWAP 2018). He has won or been shortlisted for more than 20 national and international awards and competitions, including the 2014 Western Australian Premier's Book Awards (poetry) (winner), and he undertook an Australia Council for the Arts Residency at the BR Whiting Studio in Rome in 2015-16. He was also shortlisted for the Kenneth Slessor Prize in the 2017 New South Wales Premier's Awards and

commended in the Surprise Encounters: Headstuff Poetry Competition 2018 (Ireland). Paul is Professor of Writing in the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Canberra, head of the International Poetry Studies Institute (IPSI), and one of the founding editors of the international online journal *Axon: Creative Explorations*. He founded the International Prose Poetry Group in 2014. He has undertaken numerous interviews with creative writers and is particularly interested in exploring ways in which creative work is able to be produced through collaborative processes, and ways in which creativity is often the product of complex interactions between different people rather than the product of individual 'inspiration'.