

65.1

New Writing from
Western Australia

Fiction

Creative Non-Fiction

Poetry

Essays

In this Issue

Felicity Plunkett

Nardi Simpson

Nicholas Jose

Tracy Ryan

Kevin Brophy

Westerly



'Angel Buddha Temple'
Brigid Lowry

It is never just an ordinary day.
It is a never-before and never-again
moment, a day of particles moving
through space, arranging and
rearranging themselves in ways
mysterious, terrifying and miraculous.

Westerly

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At the end of everything

after Donald Friend

Jen Webb

Jen Webb is Distinguished Professor of Creative Practice at the University of Canberra, and co-editor of *Axon: creative explorations* and the literary journal *Meniscus*. She researches creativity and culture, and her most recent poetry collection is *Moving Targets* (Recent Work Press, 2018).

Nights were hard, you and me restless in the narrow bed while mosquitoes whined beyond the nets, and wind shook the roof beams, and trees scratched against the blinds. This house, this museum, that artist who lived here then left; the lover he left behind who planted roses and plum trees, and glanced down the road that disappears between plane trees, who never left. There are no stories about him. We hear him at night, breathing in the next room, rattling cups. We stumble to the kitchen to find the kettle already boiled, the radio tuned to the news that never came. When the evening wine began to reek of kerosene, when the water in the tank tinted red, when the phone rang and only the wind replied, then we called it quits, locking the door pointlessly behind us, leaving the radio on, music spilling across the kitchen floor, marking the minutes of the day.

Hill End—a gold town in New South Wales—was once named Bald Hill, but its name changed decades ago. Local wags described it as ‘always at the end of everything’. Donald Friend and his partner Donald Murray had a cottage there, and Murray stayed long after Friend had gone. Now it’s an artist residency.

Spectre

Alex Philp

Alex Philp’s writing has appeared in *Overland*, *Voiceworks*, and on the *Meanjin* blog. In 2017 she won the Rachel Funari Prize for Fiction.

I look up when I see a girl walk in. It isn’t Paige. It’s been years but I know I’d recognise her. The waiter puts a plate down in front of me. It’s duck: rare with shallots. I thank him and hear my voice. English. I fumble to correct myself but the waiter has already smiled. Walked away.

I stare at the pink meat. The plate is small and expensive. I eat the duck quickly, letting it slip down my throat. When I’m finished I stare at a lone shallot and have the sudden urge to do my trick. My trick first happened a month ago. It was by accident. I didn’t think anything of it until a wet afternoon in the studio a week later when I remembered in a rush of both excitement and loneliness that no-one knew me here and so I might as well do it again. I feel pleasure run splotchy up my neck as I slip the gold ring from my pointer finger to my left ring one. I rest my head on my hand. The ring glitters under the restaurant lights.

A man starts to glance at me. He’s in a suit, like the others at his table. He leans over.

‘You’re married.’

‘Two years.’

‘Shame.’

I laugh, and try to make my face seem like I’m far away remembering a honeymoon or an anniversary or maybe even the first day I met this person somewhere, back home, that loves me.

‘Sorry,’ I say. ‘A keeper.’

The man smiles. Warmth spreads through my chest.

A girl of Paige’s gait and posture walks in and I feel sick. I stare until I’m sure it’s not her.

I should check my phone. Paige is probably lost. But if I don’t check it I could pretend that I haven’t seen her messages. I could pretend like I’ve completely forgotten that she’s coming and then we wouldn’t have to see each other at all.