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*University of Melbourne and RMIT University*

**Quinn Eades and Francesca Rendle-Short**

**In the boat with Ania Walwicz, a.j. carruthers, Alyson Campbell, Amelia Walker, Andy Jackson, Ann Vickery, Anna Couani, Anna Poletti, Antonia Pont, Beth Yahp, David Azul, Dominique Hecq, Emilie Collyer, Eugen Bacon, Jen Webb, Jessica L. Wilkinson, Julia Prendergast, Kate Lilley, Kris Kneen, Marion May Campbell, Martina Copley, Maude Davey, Melody Ellis, Moya Costello, Nike Sulway, Nina Baeyertz, Noëlle Janaczewska, Peta Murray, Rosslyn Prosser, Sari Smith, Susan K. Martin and Willo Drummond**

*We are making a boat, love: 30 years of experimental feminist writing in Australia*

Abstract:

“We are making a boat, love” is a bookish multimodal experiment-in-the-making that works with/into/because Ania Walwicz’s *Boat* (1989) and as an exemplar of Eades’s *écriture matière* (2015). In this work we boat build a corpus of experimental reflective and material writing that makes visible an extended and always present but often forgotten archive of creativecritical writing in this place named Australia. Following on from methods developed during their longitudinal blackout poetry project *Sending Love*, Eades and Rendle-Short tore out and sent (by post) a page of *Boat* to each writer. Writers worked with this page in any way they chose over the course of two weeks, then sent them back to return to the book, to be stitched and glued together, to make a love object, a vessel, a boat. Each writer was invited to write from/with/against these pages and these texts were cut up and rearranged into a series of paste poems that appear throughout the artists’ book. ‘We are making a boat, love’ offers a *we-world* (Jean Luc-Nancy), a collective, a *communitas* (Rendle-Short), a many voiced and irreverent conflagration.

Biographical notes:

**Quinn Eades** is a writer, researcher, editor, gutter philosopher and poet. Quinn’s research is grounded in experimental and hybrid writing practices, and works across/through trans, queer, and feminist theories of the body, poetry and life writing. He is love in material, stitching, rooting, tunnelling, all ways coming out of,

in to, some (one) thing.

**Francesca Rendle-Short**'s writing and research focuses on getting in/under the skin, prepositionally speaking. She is Professor of Creative Writing at RMIT University, co-founder of non/fictionLab and WrICE (Writers Immersion and Cultural Exchange). Her boat floats | it rocks | it sings || it holds a world, love.

**Ania Walwicz** is the maker/inventor/writer of *Boat* (1989) and many other books, fragments and utterances.

**aj Carruthers** is a poet-critic, author of *AXIS Z Book 3* (Cordite 2023) and *Literary History and Avant-Garde Poetics in the Antipodes: Languages of Invention* (EUP) and Visiting Fellow at the ANU (my name has appeared variously as ajCarruthers, a.j. carruthers, A. J. Carruthers, A Carruthers, and Andy Carruthers).

**Alyson Campbell** is a queer theatre-maker and increasingly feral academic.

**Amelia Walker** lives on Kaurua Yerta (Adelaide, SA) and spends her time playing with fragile dolls called poems.

**Andy Jackson** is a disabled poet, essayist and creative writing teacher, currently preoccupied with deformed forms and collaborations.

**Ann Vickery** is a poet and scholar based in Naarm/Melbourne.

**Anna Couani** is a Sydney writer, visual artist, gallery owner and friend of Ania Walwicz in the 1980s.

**Anna Poletti** is Associate Professor of English at Utrecht University.

**Antonia Pont** is a stable and indeterminate organisation of concatenating systems of feedback, regions of diverse temperatures, speeds of reactivity, of decelerations and swathes of nothingness.

**Beth Yahp** loves the idea of a boat, especially a boat of time, though is more comfortable with paper and scissors.

**David Azul:** Dedicated | ambassador of | vulnerable re- | imaginations and -creations of Dominant || approaches to solving | the interdependent | puzzles of voice, | communication | and wellbeing | in everyday encounters

**Dominique Hecq** is a poetry junkie on the move with a Kelpie and the focus of 'Unleashed: my life as a dog' (in-progress).

**Emilie Collyer** is terrible on water, all queasy and sorrowful, but has gratefully found her sea land legs on this boat, love.

The artist sometimes known as **Eugen Bacon** is a non-android, full-blooded creature with two masters degrees and a doctorate in computing and writing respectively.

**Jen Webb** writes poems while being Arts & Design Dean at the University of Canberra, where she is constructing a boat to sail away on.

**Jessica L. Wilkinson** is a poet, and sometimes a boat.

**Julia Prendergast** is a writer-academic who lives by this advice: “Don’t you ever fucking forget why you got that job, Julia, because you are a writer”.

**Kate Lilley** is a queer scholar/poet and honorary Associate Professor at the University of Sydney.

**Kris Kneen** is an award-winning writer of many genres who longs to write a libretto, a graphic novel or to discover an undescribed mushroom.

Born seventy-five years back near Randwick Racecourse, **Marion May Campbell** remains hooked on risky rides and turns – wherever such exhilarating writing as Ania Walwicz’s will take her.

An arts worker, **Martina Copley** does work with art, looking at the change of things, letting the work speak how it is made.

**Maude Davey** has been making shows in Melbourne for a long time. Lately she has started to write about making shows in Melbourne.

**Melody Ellis** is a writer and researcher based in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University.

In *Small Ecstasies*, one of **Moya Costello**’s five books, Costello dedicates the prose poem ‘Robot’ to Ania.

**Nike Sulway** lives and works on the traditional lands of the Jarowair and Jagera peoples and is grateful for their long-lived custodianship of the place and its stories.

**Nina Baeyertz** is working out how to live and write with/through/in an everchanging body that likes to forest-walk and roll on the floor but is often found at a desk at La Trobe University, writing a PhD thesis about queer/ing life writing of addiction.

**Noëlle Janaczewska** is a playwright, poet and author, a lover of cold weather, beetroot and dangerous thinking.

**Peta Murray** is a cunninglinguist and paracademic.

**Rosslyn Prosser** aka Ros understands herself through latitude and longitude. Never constant every movement makes anew these points on the compass.

**Susan K. Martin** is a semi-retired English professor with a bad attitude.

**Sari Smith** is a diarist and short fiction writer with a penchant for boats and blue ink.

**Willo Drummond** is a queer poet, editor and teacher of creative writing whose debut

collection *Moon Wrasse* was shortlisted for the 2023 Five Islands Poetry Prize for a First Book of Poetry.

Keywords:

Experimental feminist writing, archival poetics, artists books, *communitas*, fictocriticism, prepositional thinking, *écriture matière*

## Introduction

“We are making a boat, love” is an exploration of what it means to love each other with and through the troubling of books, attention and thought, and making. *Came boat comes to me boat come to be what do you see* [1]. We did (and do) this writing/making in and from and in and out of each other through a variety of methods: sending and receiving, trust, call-and-response, desire-lines, interventions, cutting up, black out text, erasure, marginalia, poetic exchange, the aside and stitching.

*Boat* by Ania Walwicz is our root book, our love book, our hold-all book, a tap root down to the water table, the beginnings of the making of a boat book *sea sail head in waves come boat sail*. Her book sails to us across decades of making and remaking, the corralling together of experimental feminist thinking and writing across many, many years in this place named Australia *don't know where for from or for what come boat came to my head*. The history of experimental and fictocritical writing in Australia is many dropped stitches, is a poetic archive lost, then found, then lost again. And so we come back to Walwicz's yellowed pages (we could have come to hundreds of books, a whole library) as a way of picking up this stitch, of not patching, but re-working those holes, the ones made in our archives when we forget where we come from, and what kinds of writing sustain us and our practices. Ania Walwicz's *Boat* is one of those books that enters the reading/writing/creative/imagined discourse that allows other things to happen, other things to emerge.

We stitch, we shuttle back and forth across the lines, thread needles, prick our fingers open.

There is blood on these pages there is saliva and yeast there is stitch, stitch, stitch.

This boat may sprout.

Some pages will be, are, lost at sea.

We hope all pages will find their way home, but this is never to be.

The making of this work begins well before we send pages to each other, and then to our over thirty contributors. It begins ten years ago, when Francesca said yes to publishing one of Quinn's poems, in a book called *Press: 100 love letters* (2017). It begins when we met off the page, in the world beside a river under trees on the outside of a once-was-goal – how we are drawn to each other, how we know we will write together, love – it is important that they met on the page, through letters, before they met in their bodies, feet in the ground, pens in hand, histories and loves brought close, pages open, paper soaked with writing.

It begins with *Sending Love* (a joint project developed as John Rowe Writers-in-Residence 2022 at the University of Sydney) and trust-as-method by superimposing our writing, our handwriting, and transcribing of text from a book into our notebooks and now onto these pages, doubling over the lettering so we can read what we have written, so there is no (less) mistaking. On the second and third even fourth stroke the lettering comes alive, it speaks up, speaks out, there is something to say, a tongue roars.

For *this* work, “We are making a boat, love” [2], all the contributors were sent (by post) a torn-out page from *Boat*. Writers worked with their page in any way they chose over the course of two weeks, then sent the pages back to return to the book, to be stitched and glued and digitised together, to make a love object, a vessel, a return boat. Contributors were invited to a shared online document to do as much or as little as they liked, working within an understanding that all of us have limited time and energy. *Find or return / something about / it slips out*. Together we made a boat from our words, together *here comes boat in my head how come boat came out to don't know where*. This is a boat at a stage of building, not a completed vessel. A space of “boatsomeness”, a polyphonic, irreverent conglomeration of queerness that enacts the doing or method in the making and coming together *a pretty face for what youdoings*. The images or pages of boats are returned to the order in which Ania intended them.

We make this work slowly, with care, with eyes shining because here, is something, love. This is a collaboration of love, love, this is *love collaboration* in practice (Eades, 2023). We make this work from the *inbetween*, from the papercut edges, from the way a page torn from a book becomes itself, its own something, its own tear; it runs from the book, seeks other hands, different materials; says sew me paint me bury me exhume me cut me write me with this other pen, write off the page. The page offers itself up to love through the body of each maker, and it is received, it knows the bliss of other words coming to its margins, its white space, which is no longer white the age of this book means sepia space means mites have found their home in the spine, means bodies not visible to this eye have been born, have lived, have died in the fold, the weave.

This boat project is a chance for writers to work collectively on something, each of the writers reading and experiencing the other works pasted into the boat *take it slow so shush so hush now*. A love collaboration this, the best of love sorts, *out aloud on high want more and more*. What we get is a flotilla of boats here down the page, the flipbook *boat sail in little paper boat out of paper fold come boat picture*. The making of this work in multiple and many, in stitch and fold, tearing and pasting, painting, colouring in *soft sing now quiet wait*. This beautiful thing we have made singly and together, crossings and crossovers, *lines join me up my flows in breath rise*. A fierce, unbridled, excitable making *stick to my finger lick me lick me*.

Boat time, he/she said, just the ticket. So much fun too. Dearest.

This is a wild thing coming.

Wild *fly me to the moon my glasses have stars* in the best sense.

*put on your furry suits and hold me close*

We invite you, dear reader, to submerge/immerse/drown yourself into/in/inside this work, to let *clouds lit inside where is*. Enlarge the image and text on the screen, if need be, your two forefingers pushing against each other on the mouse board to sink into it, let it take hold, see it for what it is, what it is not, *don't hunch don't hold your breath*.

Read the interventions too, the paste poems, the *so many because*s, the *didn't say, don't say, won't say*, the *really nothing / in it*. Read the boat slowly, read back and forth, read from the end, the spaces and the spaces, and the music.

*get ready do it now  
don't wait*

To read “We are making a boat, love”, click the boat below. Or [click here](#).

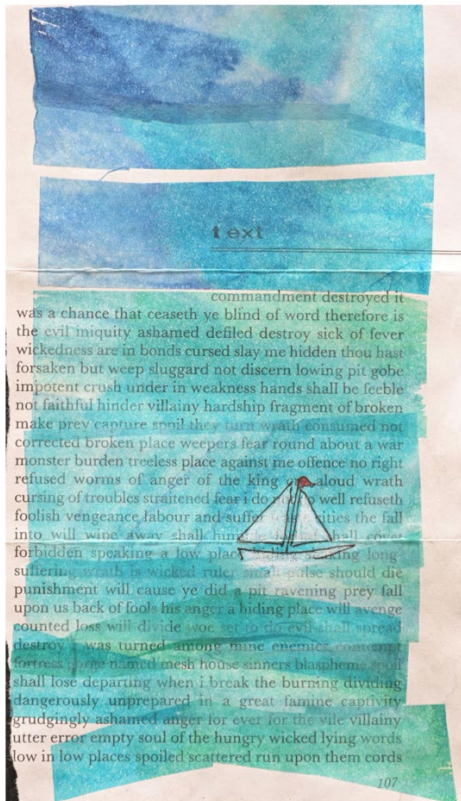


Figure 1: Images from “We are making a boat, love”. Supplied by authors.

*get ready do it now  
don't wait*

How do we write a boat, love, how do we write about the writing of a boat, how do we write about the writing of the writing of a boat? Put practice into theory into practice.

gone missing    gone reckoning    gone loving  
                  gone mad  
                  a mad archive  
sending love, sending pages

We have made a boat, a boat of sorts *between dream come boat to my head comes in come on in come boat to my inside head*.

We're exclaiming together, kitting-stitching together a "yes, yes" as signature of promise and memory. "'Yes' breaches time as well as space, as it always involves a commitment, a willingness to say 'yes' again" (Derrida, 1992, p. 254) – you can't say no to yes – and Peck's (1993) notion of love as both intention and action.

"The continuity of her flesh and the world's flesh, touch then, was love, and that was the miracle, giving" (Cixous & Derrida, 2001, p. 9).

We are here, in the muck, in the back and forth of pages through the post, in the thinking through writing, in more hours than we can count of deep and profound attention to the conditions in which we make, and the making, and the ideas that we come close to/boat alongside with.

This boat that is here on these pages is many dropped stitches, is learning how to pick these stitches back up, is paying attention to what we intend to forget, is a choral a chorus a boat made of citrus and saliva, yeast and paint and ink, weaving and woven, it will never be what it once was. It will be always more always.

This boat that is here on these pages is a picking up or a collecting; a floating a pulling us to each the other and to the page. We come to and in and away with many questions about books and their nature. About what it takes to flip a book into an object (we learn that a single page torn out is all that is needed). About how to leave more than marginalia, about loss and grief and missings, about making-with as the practice that we can call love and strength and bliss work.

This boat is an illustration of a lineage of fictocritical creativecritical writing. It comes with and after and through the reading (ingesting, absorbing, dissolving, desiring) of work in anthologies of writers such as Alison Bartlett and her "Reading bodies" in *The space between: Australian women writing fictocriticism* (Nettelbeck & Kerr, 1998) where we rest and touch and lick and peel into humps and gorges (Bartlett, 1998, p. 90). This writingreading is osmosis, this is skin-to-skin, this is ripened entwined flesh. Hovering. Throat. Belly. Sigh. Bartlett is transgression real and imagined.

This boat is three generations of writers writing here, where we are, water all around ... *see in sea sail head in waves comes boat sail in little paper boat out of paper fold come boat ... come*.

We would like to live in a world where we do not have to prove to the academy or to peer reviewers that our work is critically and theoretically informed – a *clearer exposition of the critical frame a sense of the rigour of the critical framing and scope identifying interactions between these perspectives and ways in which they relate to the work*. It is.



We're staying with the necessity of staying with the trouble (Haraway, 2016), love, the pulling each other into unexpected collective work and moving configurations. We navigate with the stars, love, through a stitched sky, glued bulwark, wood become paper become boat become sail, sail, swim. Love.

This is *écriture matière*, where *matière* translates to both matter and material. It's a kind of writing that opens itself up to/into the body, that steps through and then beyond "women's writing" to writing queerness, and to writing difference (Eades, 2015). Matter and mattering are at the heart of this work. Pages are handled, folded, torn out, sent out, sent back in, coated in dust and dirt, turned into paper dolls, punctured by needles, held together with the thinnest of threads.

This boat matters, this material is woven through with a poetics of and from the body, writing.

*between dream comes boat*

This is *communitas*, this is fountain up, this is an ocean, sea, field of water waiting (Rendle-Short, 2021; Turner, 2012). This is togetherness itself – arm in arm, heart alongside/beside/inside heart – our bodies writing bodies becoming boats of blue, of tear and hole, of thread and chain stitch.

We spell out *boat, love* together. Sing it to the clouds, to the seabirds.

This is where prepositions matter – a lot. "Prepositions reveal what we do not know ... an invitation to think, do something" (Rendle-Short, 2020, p. 7). And so we do, aboard, above, against, beneath, following, underneath.

"We're making a boat, love" is an exemplar of collaborative writing practice of making and remaking and then making and remaking that. That's what research is, the kind of creative research we do, the drawing together of ideas, foundations, reflexive cause and effect.

*what do you see i see boat*

We are moving in and around what this is what it might be what you are reading now with these lines of sentences and threads going somewhere (Ingold, 2016). Tracing anything, we say. Taut lines, curly lines, queer lines, broken ruptured lines. And circles, love. Spirals and curves.

We are making a research-statement-paste-boat, love, with these words, these sentences, these thoughts before and after-between, love, to float and *go-with* our other boat of cut and colour and thread in the flipbook, love, we're making, to go with/around/alongside, beyond/behind with water wings, love. With waves.

*soft soft pillow in my silk skin my glove*

x

There has always been love.

I come back to the page and see I have been here before. I've never left. We are always here. Like your root book, Quinn, the "always-now and sometimes when", the must-speaking of what is in as well as speaking of and defining what is out, as out-law genre. Body-genre: "body writ page, page writ body" (Eades, 2015).

We remind ourselves to do it slowly to trace love where it has been before to then know where it can go, love back over, no end point, the slow, the curious, why this, why me, why us. We remind ourselves to focus on love-in-action, the practice of doing love, doing the joy and the hard stuff too, the up-against, the pleasure and value of and in itself.

We remind ourselves about and of and because love, which sounds ridiculous when put it like this.

Because there will always be love.

x

Go gently.

Let it fly through the air.

Make lines of flight.

These tiny movements, "across and between",

We are stitch and stitched, we make with,

We send love, love.

X

**Notes:**

- [1] Lines in italics are lifted from both Ania Walwicz's *Boat* (1989) and text written by our collective, those we are in the boat with, love.
- [2] "We are making a boat, love" is also a long boat, where all 266 pages pass through the hands of writers and artists in a slow making now and into the future. We have a map. It is Boat. We find each other in our extended kinship networks, make a constellation of intimates (Bergman, 2013), find each other through invitation, word of mouth, and within our research community of practice.
- [3] "my constellation of intimates, is my harbour in the world" (Bergman, 2013, p.17). We harbour these pages; these pages harbour us.

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