

Queensland University of Technology

Sarah Holland-Batt

Littoral marginalia

Biographical note:

Sarah Holland-Batt's first collection, *Aria* (UQP), won the Fellowship of Australian Writers' Anne Elder Award and was shortlisted in the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards and the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards. She is the recipient of the Thomas Shapcott Poetry Prize, the Dorothy Hewett Fellowship for Poetry, and an Australia Council Literature Residency at the B.R. Whiting Studio in Rome. She lectures in Creative Writing and Literary Studies at Queensland University of Technology.

The velvet swimming crab, stoic as a caryatid.

~

This says nothing of the gannet's burlesque.

~

A sirocco wings cold sand from Cyrene to the Attica periphery each year.

~

Pelican's foot, saddle oyster, prickly cockle, netted dogwhelk.

~

At Salamis, the tide scums with the *Lemnos*. Fishermen wear coated teeth.

~

Tusk and otter shells cluster with banded venus in a blonde ray's gut.

~

A northerly scuttles dried cuttlefish near.

~

With time, slipper limpets, like history, disintegrate into small parts.

~

My grandfather's willow creel.

~

On the Oregon coast, hot clam chowder.

~

A paradigm of molluscs.

~

Peach, speckled cream, egg-white, milk: kitchen sands.

~

At the bicentennial, beaches were celebrated in the passive voice.

~

No way to avoid poeticising the ocean at night. Forget the moon.

~

Here. This is where the body washed up.

~

In Andalusia, a crab that can regenerate its claws is made into *bocas de la Isla*.

~

Bivalves dig their feet in, sifting faunal bricolage.

~

I kept one picture: the two of us laughing near Indian's Head.

~

We fry the whitefish in butter, singing.

~

Bird-footed fossils layer the cliffs on the Isle of Wight.

~

A curio: at nine, my father gave me a toy camera with a rotating reel of Brighton.

~

Dotterels ignore the excising of thousands of islands from Australia's immigration zone.

~

Inside the beachcomber's hut a rusted blade reads, *Made in Britain*.

~
Vegetarians who do or do not eat fish.

~
A marine biologist picking over the stomachs of two smooth hound sharks.

~
Any number of ways to kill a pied cormorant.

~
Beach as a verb: the heft of a black pod swaddled with sand.

~
Coral spoor like slimed pomegranate seeds.

~
A liner's lights or a low satellite.

~
At the coal face, unstitching hooks from mouthing mouths.

~
On the Bikini Atoll, lizards crawl into the sea to die. The bomb codenamed *Bravo*.

~
Ice creaking with warm gin on the deck.

~
We buried them in Turkey, not far off. Choking, and digging sand.

~
Yellowfin long-lines shoulder collateral damage: drowned shy albatross.

~
Out at sea, Lawrence scratching into a tin tray with his knife.

~
The outline of the coast – storm petrel's itinerary.

~
In the half-light, the green sawfish almost a simulacrum.

~
Penelope's seasickness at the loom.

~
Each haunch of driftwood warranting close observation.

~
Night, turning on the knuckles of light.

~
Our grief like a gunwhaler in a bottle.

~
Pumice: a smooth pebble tried in absentia, scorched, then bag-boiled.

~
Rereading *To the lighthouse* at St. Kilda. Behind me, Luna Park on stilts.

~
Coming in the headlands.

~
The tide lowering its hem. Knotted bluebottles: pins.

~
To walk past a dead loggerhead, peacock green with a red, marbled eye.

~

Pearls beginning and ending.

~

A Dorset man recently returned a message in a bottle from California with an angry note.

~

The cumulus dense as a Pound canto. Silver gulls rise from it.