

*Me* by Louis Fratino

Dirigible I felt your pampered roundness  
grow around me as though I were seeds  
soft within fruit—oh, everything!

Someone made this

for us:

coffee and eggs, Mario Mieli  
somewhere wrote this, lemon and splendid  
rugs and pink to tint with  
acid-mauve for the flecked hint in eyes  
so we could do modernism as we pleased  
again and again.

It is a mood for preludes

to the world's musk-

blue like the powder that clings to bodies  
washing my knees in summer light, in red  
abstraction when I walked the city  
between break ups and found everyone  
is gentle with me, except the ones I love.

## Living next to the sea was like having tragedy for a neighbour

Opera, in a school hall, the voices impossible  
and good, sudden throng of them lost in the bad  
acoustics, singers singing to a feeling  
they haven't felt yet. Ten or eleven, some  
have swum in all the sea's moods already and only  
ever fancied the idea of it, Love as  
abstract to them as Truth or Death, something  
that happens to other people. The organ  
pedalling it, divine croak as if filled  
with sand, that church-type enthusiast, teacher  
visibly sweating, not much good with his fingers—  
*We like sheep*—in the mind of children  
just a preference. All we like sea, too, tragedy  
which happens someplace else in the truncating  
deep, red blot in blind fluid, distending. It  
comes to us. No, it is there, I, here—  
it comes to us, this evening cold up  
to our ankles in it, cool tug of it, we find it  
like wave-worn shells, flint, some fossil  
of it—things that shook the body now smoothed  
down jetsam, drift words embarrassing to say.  
I take them home in my pocket (Love Truth Death).

**Acknowledgements:** These poems are inspired by and in conversation with other works. 'Me by Louis Fratino' is ekphrastic and refers to which is the painting *Me* (2019) by the artist Louis Fratino. The title of 'Living next to the sea was like having tragedy for a neighbour' is a quote from the Chapter 3 'Elias Smith comes... and goes' of Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006).