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).