

heads turn, old prayers wither  
in the heat of this pregnant man

slim Nefertiti glides  
through the city laughing

my queen and I  
can do anything.

(A, 64)

Both male and female, mother and father, Sun and Son, oppressive Pharaoh and the Moses who parts the Red Sea on his march to freedom—Akhenaten's polymorphous, shifting representations of himself evoke a flexibility of sexual identification that sits comfortably with a postmodern sense of a destabilised self, as well as reiterating an infantile and narcissistic desire to occupy all positions, *all* territories. His ethics of transgression—'I'm like a Hittite army/I don't recognise borders/I heap male and female/into one silky dune/and dig in my toes' (A, 129)—resist the categories of convention, marking him as an explorer of new, uncharted territories of sexual identity and orientation, even if that territory is dangerous, disorienting, as annihilating as the sun in the desert. However, to align himself with marauding Hittite forces also implicitly and ironically suggests the necessity for some forms of border control; preoccupied with his own sexual and religious transgressions, Akhenaten finally ignores the threats of the Hittites to the borders of Egypt at the cost of his political power and, ultimately, his life.

The fluid gender identity that Porter both reads within the fragments of Akhenaten and inscribes upon him, also resonates with a psychoanalytic account of identity that recognises the importance of family influences and of the dynamics of the 'family romance'<sup>10</sup> in constructing the mosaic we call 'self'. With his lovers being cousin, brother, and daughters, Akhenaten's 'family', those in whom he sees himself endlessly reflected, constitutes the entire parameters of his experience. Similarly, his increasingly obsessive desire with the 'one' god, as opposed to Egypt's pantheon, can be interpreted as the residual desire of the second, neglected child to be the only one, while the private forum of the family becomes, in the poem, as significant as, if not interchangeable with, the public forum of society, the bordered nation of Egypt. In 'translating' the past, in holding up the translucent remnants of memory to Akhenaten's own ferocious, fictive light, the poet inevitably uses the tools of contemporary modes of analysis and the lenses of a subjectivity that is specifically situated within a sociohistorical context. Porter thus presents *Akhenaten* as the archaeology of the imagination, a process through which to interpret and map facets of text and images that the endless past has placed beneath temporal and hermeneutic erasure.

## Ania Walwicz

Ania Walwicz was born in 1951 in Poland. She spent the first twelve years of her life in Poland and other European countries, before migrating to Australia with her family in 1963. She lives in Melbourne and regularly performs her work. Walwicz has published three collections of poetry. The works referred to in the essay following this selection of poetry (with abbreviations used given in brackets after the full title) include: *Writing (W)*, 1982 (later published as *Travel/Writing (TW)*, with Philip Hammial, 1989); *Boat (B)*, 1989; and *red roses (RR)*, 1992. A full list of Ania Walwicz's published works appears in the Select Bibliography.

## AUSTRALIA

You big ugly. You too empty. You desert with your nothing nothing nothing. You scorched suntanned. Old too quickly. Acres of suburbs watching the telly. You bore me. Freckle silly children. You nothing much. With your big sea. Beach beach beach. I've seen enough already. You dumb dirty city with bar stools. You're ugly. You silly shoppingtown. You copy. You too far everywhere. You laugh at me. When I came this woman gave me a box of biscuits. You try to be friendly but you're not very friendly. You never ask me to your house. You insult me. You don't know how to be with me. Road road tree tree. I came from crowded and many. I came from rich. You have nothing to offer. You're poor and spread thin. You big. So what. I'm small. It's what's in. You silent on Sunday. Nobody on your streets. You dead at night. You go to sleep too early. You don't excite me. You scare me with your hopeless. Asleep when you walk. Too hot to think. You big awful. You don't match me. You burnt out. You too big sky. You make me a dot in the nowhere. You laugh with your big healthy. You want everyone to be the same. You're dumb. You do like anybody else. You engaged Doreen. You big cow. You average average. Cold day at school playing around at lunchtime. Running around for nothing. You never accept me. For your own. You always ask me where I'm from. You always ask me. You tell me I look strange. Different. You don't adopt me. You laugh at the way I speak. You think you're better than me. You don't like me. You don't have any interest in another country. Idiot centre of your own self. You think the rest of the world walks around without shoes or electric light. You don't go anywhere. You stay at home. You like one another. You go crazy on Saturday night. You get drunk. You don't like me and you don't like women. You put your arm around men in bars. You're rough. I can't speak to you. You burly burly. You're just silly to me. You big man. Poor with all your money. You ugly furniture. You ugly house. Relaxed in your summer stupor. All year. Never fully awake. Dull at school. Wait for other people to tell you what to do. Follow the leader. Can't imagine. Work horse. Thick legs. You go to work in the morning. You shiver on a tram.

## LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

I always had such a good time, good time, good time girl. Each and every day from morning to night. Each and every twenty-four hours I wanted to wake up, wake up. I was so lively, so livewire tense, such a highly pitched little. I was red, so red so red. I was a tomato. I was on the lookout for the wolf. Want some sweeties, mister? I bought a red dress myself. I bought the wolf. Want some sweeties, mister? I bought a red dress for myself. I bought a hood for myself. Get me a hood. I bought a knife.

## THE ABATTOIR

I owe my living to the abattoir. My father, the manager, sat in the office. Red brick, smelling of death. These dumb and frightened sheep that travelled at

night. So I could eat them. Each stamp, clip in the office, smelled of slaughter. The purple, indelible pencil left a dot on the pink tongue tip. So very extra mauve like mark. Number or tattoo. Counted the stamp marks on the flesh pink, alive yesterday. And killed. These white paper sheets all written neatly and typed. These tiny pencil marks spelled the ending. The glazed, dumb eyes of the cows waiting. That I ate. That lived inside me. That I became. My vet dad, giving me needles. Like a pig. Earned money for my typewriter in the abattoir. Killing thousands of sheep and eating them all and every one. The blood seeping through the oil paper, these presents he got me. This meat. Red steaks I'd put in my hand. Lovely ladies, each one. Put my hand in the mince. Flesh squelching inside my fist. That's me. In here. Pink and gushing. One little scratch. And I'm one pig. Pigs at the cattle market. Pinks in the abattoir. My father, the artificial inseminator of cows, sits at his desk and kills. With his purple pencil. These healthy butchers. Very happy. Slicing away. Their stomachs taut. Looked at them, excited with their knives. The butcher at home, bending wire in his singlet. I had a cook. Had cooks. Never had the butcher. This butcher cut a piece. Put red meat in his raw mouth. My father stood next to the cow. The pig squealed. The healthy, young, beautiful butchers sang in their silver room. Hosed the floor. Sunshine in their mirrors. Lights in their glass. Glistening pink flesh on their plate. Sausages in my hand. Warm butcher's hands on my breasts.

## POLAND

I forget everything. Now. More and more. It gets dim. And further away. It's as if I made it up. As though I was never there at all. Not real. Child stories. Told over and over. Wear thin. This doesn't belong to me anymore. This is now gone and it left me a long time ago. It doesn't stay with me. This is the past. This is child. This is too small for me. I grow out of this. I leave it. I lose my photos. I lost my photos. I only have shreds and bits and pieces. That come to me now and then. Memory replaces. My shoes get worn. I get new ones. I can have better time elsewhere. It's all over now. The boat was here. Now it's moved over the horizon line. When I don't see somebody they go far away. And they die. I don't keep this. I tried to keep this. I was unhappy here. To start with. I went back every night. In bed. Think of the station. Of my town. I can't go back now. It's gone and it's gone. I can't catch it again. I don't have the smell of it. I don't have the taste of this. I was born there but I don't remember being born. I wasn't there at all. Not the way I am now. I never went there. I have nothing to do with this anymore. I could invent pictures. Slides of a trip. I'm not going to do this. I was very small. And somebody else. The child is gone now. I was a child once. But I'm not a child now. It's no good being a child. Somebody always makes you do things. You are not free to go where you want to go. I leave my child behind. I don't like it. This is finished and finished. I tell you to go elsewhere. I'm not happy with this. They ask me where I come from. I say I come from here and here. This is where I am.

Here. I don't remember Poland. I don't want to remember Poland. I read about it in the papers. And this is not where I am. Not where I am. I am just here. Now. Poland is a place. On the map. Poland is a name. I was there once. I was there. But I'm not there now. I'm here. I don't want to tell stories. I don't want to make things up. I didn't like Poland. I wanted to travel. I leave my Poland behind. It is gone and it is gone and it is gone.

#### JESUS

this man killed a policeman i saw i saw i saw everything that happened i was in the city near flinders street railway station seven years ago this man kills a policeman seven years kills policeman stands on the top of the steps of the flinders street station he killed him he kills him i see everything this man that lived in gordon house for derelicts kills a policeman my policeman the policeman i wanted to get married he thought i was jesus this man thought he was jesus goes out of the house and kills a policeman he cut his neck all the blood down the stairs red flowers on my street red river red waterfall red all over shiny and bright i'm so red now red all over there were people fainting on the street it was such a hot day i had two men i was seeing i was on my way to my cleaning job very hot all day long i spent shifting the furniture around i know it isn't any good that i'd never be happy with him all hot day long i had two men on my mind i was travelling from one to another i know what i had to do it can't have two i can only have one i was jesus i am jesus i can be jesus too anyone can be jesus the jews are still waiting for jesus to come i can be jesus i'm jesus now on my way to the city in a tram i step up step by step on my hot i kill the policeman he was so surprised in his eyes there is this amazed neck one slit in the right place he splashes the steps with blood he just flows out of himself burst out tomato soup can of red paint i run across the road i killed the policeman i live in gordon house i'm jesus now i'm jesus crown of thorns my body on across can't you just see i'm unhappy jesus on a hot day at the station in the middle of a crowd this man kills a policeman and i'm jesus i'm jesus i'm jesus.

#### CATHEDRAL

in my cathedral i have yellow window gold windows they fill my space with warm light i get polished and clean quiet solemn and solemn this is my where to go is how i treat me to a treat i talk to me nobody else help me i help me nobody else did this i did it myself you know i did it all alone i built my cathedral bit by bit it took me so long it took me five years to five one to settle the foundations two to do to build two to finish i did my cathedral every day it shines now bright and bright i am the cathedral bright and beautiful polished and polished bright and bright that's what i was all along so serious taking myself so serious and taking care of me in the dark day that was still night at six o'clock in my snow walking all the way to the cathedral that was my real home

everybody has to have a place a place in the world and i have the cathedral i was always going little girl in red stockings to the one and only place in me that felt good in every part of me where i talk to myself a prayer where i am the kind good god mother this is the huge place of god enormous and invisible he is my cloud in here i breathe him into my nostrils on thursday at three o'clock i had this empty hour i wanted to fill door door holy water i dip my finger i touch my head with the wet this is my place i belong here everything quiet and quiet and lovely there was nobody else there but me and me and the good god that sat inside me and in me said to me in my words everything is going to be alright everything is going to be alright i got this warm in my arms i embrace me i nice me i just washed my hair and i was all peace and i wasn't angry with me anymore it isn't my fault how people are to me it isn't my fault i was all good i am all good and clean without one sin from inside to out i shine in me he told me you are so good so good such a good girl and i know i am please help me god you are beyond pictures or words this is the good this is the god this is this feel in me in my cathedral the flying buttress the large window the big of it the sweet of it the welcome in it the embrace my cathedral floats on air i talk to myself i sit in the huge and space that i fill with my voice god loves me and put me together two arms two legs he gave me back my sight my taste my feel god lifts me and lifts me by my arms and my legs before i was so brittle broken egg flat i rebuild my cathedral stonemason stonemason build me a big aisle i walk in the middle gentle and gentle soft as a feather and bendy life outside is just first time the tree leaves ripple and shiver i have this kind in my cathedral that stands in the sky light and tall as clouds i let myself be i am the big beautiful without an end on my steeple i have the right to be i kneel on the floor and take myself i like the little girl me that walked in the snow and dark to the one spot that was all me good kind me god loving me and loving me

#### NEW WORLD

I'm newborn. I'm new. Brand new. New. Me. I'm new. It doesn't matter what happened before. Now I'm new. I'm going to start a new life. Go to a new state. Make a clean. Break. With my past. To start afresh. Be new. I'm new. Mister New is my name. I'm new. I want to do new. What nobody else before. I get a new life. New bread. Crisp. I'm at the start of things. Right at the beginning. Right now. I don't think about anything. But now. I'm right here. At the beginning. I'm bright new and early. I'm first mark on my page. I get just born. I'm new here. I do my first year. I'm first spring. I'm dawn light. I'm early morning. I leave my hospital behind. I just get out of prison. I meet different people. Mister New is my name. I'm new. I get new clothes for my new life. I live now. I live now. I'm alive now. Yesterday I was heavy with me. And today I give birth. I give me birth. I give birth to myself. I'm shaky leg young horse. The afterbirth hangs from my back. Thin dress. I'm just new here. Joy is my name. I'm one day one. I'm here just new. I get just born. I'm a new girl.

They ask me. Are you new around here? Are you new? And I say yes. I'm new. I don't know quite what to do but I'll learn. I'm new baby born. I do my first shout. I go to first grade. I'm new. I'm new. I'm new I'm first time first. I'm just here new. I don't want my past. I'm new. I've just made myself. I start just right. I'm new. I'm on the start line. Now. I'm new. I'm new. I'm new. Everything's different. From before. I'm new day new. I'm somewhere else than I was. I get this just here born fresh fresh. I'm early start. New day street. I'm clean clothes. I begin my piece. I do me right from the very start. I make myself anew. New. New. Everything's clear. And sharp.

## EUROPE

i'm europe deluxe nougat bar i'm better than most i'm really special rich and tasty black forest cake this picture makes me think of germany make me made me europe made me i keep my europe i europe this town is just like my polish town where born where is where am here is europe all the time for me in me is europe i keep it i got it i get it in me inside me is europe italy warm palms lovely palace chrome chair street busy alive me my end pier with a little lamp what i remember i don't forget keep this keep lighter and brighter now this is it this europe in me in me my only what i have what i have i keep europe hold on to that i thought i lost what i didn't had carl's mother said don't get out of bed there are goblins goblins they eat his white long leg i was so so so jealous jealous of what he had fresh new young just came two weeks from frankfurt and i'm too long gone left too quick didn't stay what what what i could have been exactly like him exactly like him they took my europe away they took my europe away they took my europe away they took me they stole me they boat me they float me take me took me away took but but but but but but but i bounce back i get back i add ten years to my life i look younger all the time i get it again the it how look my europe now i look fine i ride in my forest at night with goblins i look pictures i win i don't lose i always get another chance and i'm europe again and again and again europe better than it really is better soir de paris perfume my wrist my picture paris from photos is perfect i never saw paris i distil i don't have to travel i'm in europe i'm europe i get europe it comes to me what she said venice after the railway through door to lagoon i can just see it i can feel it you can go to europe but you can't be europe like i am i suck my finger and i taste europe i touch europe i travel on my map with my fingers in my newspaper floods rhine carl saw little mermaid carl eiffel tower climb famous people everything very important just tell me europe come to me now my city crowd friday could be rome now my europe my my my better than really better than is could be magic feel and taste carl smells of europe his coat is europe two weeks just came just came ran away from the german navy bought this trenchcoat in germany i'm young man i'm young man got this vest in stockholm beret in berlin i'm young fair strong long tall long tall my europe is best only best only nicest loveliest sweetest creamiest i

only want best most kind most marvellous i'm homesick for where i haven't been i miss france and i miss norway i only want what i should have had what i should have been where i now am i come home to that in my europe is europe all green all fresh all green i shot geese with my gun white geathers fell in my eiderdown dear carl i hope everything is well with you i'm young and now new i'm looking forward exciting to i'm twenty-two i'm studying physics i'm young man young man everything is going to be

## From WRITE

this does me i do this this is doing me this grows i let it want to hug little words hug me do me good make feel me i sweep letters with my little broom words fill me in was an empty they attach please stick me makes me big i keep me fill me in in do gush a gush tell to fingers boogie woogie just want to do makes me want me born in mouth to good noisy done goodie how's darls what you doing just playing come out tongue on balcony of teeth and waves to crowds just bloom loudmouth sure i do pointy tops tips words in rounds this makes me i make this makes me this does for me does me put my face in say who i'm so fond this does me through me just a rush set me on right join head no stop glue head more words keep a feel of topsy spin big jim gets in push me in tall sally sails now's gosh upsa daisy stay on leaper flow words hold me give me feels heady on lips taste tongue this me talky can feel me in head worker i catch me think along words come to me on little leg legs words get into my pockets and under my pillows have my way web meets weft i'm made of this writes me i just help along comes easy

## From RED ROSES

she sings me a sing me a lullabye mum does sin g a sing for me now sing me lull lella lulla byes goo song to clam dell to lull me lol do song me in my mouth in my voice she her hers that die she sings me baby on dark stations singing me to sweetly near me sing me to fall away all times my times you be sleepy now you just fly away a fall falling ways away i'm in dark mum say sleepy sings me in soft voice say warm to her warm put me to her put me near to my chest in her breast a sing song now in her in her dark mum say i'm swim in her adark cavern a station frightens we arewaiting and wait for so bodyto come next to my bag pack a rack insack oh sing me now lella lulla lulls a bye baby now's byes singing her to death to my death in bye a bye worlds in dark stations come along on my far away trains they took her sing my hum hums a hum hummmmm sing me now i can hear in ear drum tells my head to come you remember me now in one spot inmy brain sing songs are i store away shesang me then a lullabye now you rock me ways in back that's how it was that's how come here i come out a tunnel a dark tunnel i was being born into my cry in light room in earth in my mouth says songs come i open my chest tear my rib cage away she is come out in i'm give birth song come sings come she sings me

mum sings me now i'm push push i'll sing you to rock me asleepy you get in my then come in into my head a tune that what said me to play a piano keys in turn you remember me now i come ini know keys in i am come back to my sing song mum she does did do me now a song for my onelulla lella amother for my mother in sings me in dark for stations come we wait scared i'm scaredy in cold dark i'm get you all alone to me then do sing to tell songs for her in worlds in dark worlds mum sings she sang me to tell for one how is worlds in dark worlds for wait for her to come where are you she is dead will you send me aletter or a telegram will you tell me now where i now am send me your address your telegram number i just can't my believe it's all untrue to me it alal lies to me it's all untrue then tell me it isn't so tell me that she comes back does do here in my words say mum sings me she sang me and i sing to tell me i sing a lullabye for baby for my baby abby her me she sings me in my head is where centre at what songs said they kept in one store to keep all songs in me a centre where songs are in one place in my brain bairn barn a re song store man in my brain is song centre in where it come a mother for my mother that's what i'm now am i am coming back she is come back to me then i wait for her some one that with that she is far away gone that she is living with a lady that with she is with a grand piano she is learning to play a grand piano she is living with my dark dark man we ask for return she is reluctant to please return my letters call mymummy for mum mamusia droga droga mama mama my manna nan she says have you got another money to me in a fist on a telephone waving her hands you drift drift i will bring you my doona forme abig fluffy doona swells aswollenthe a very hot hand for her he says we lost her now didn't want to live they take her away my baby in cots lays too much on its face oh to rescue a toolate she she sings me in me now she sang me then a soft warm mother make me a one a towel for you to hold me sucky my thumbs mother sings me songin my mouth are teeth one hurts there was a root a canal i was to come through a certificate of birth legitymacja rada that i am to be born now but not yet still in dark stations in her she was my frighten they said she said bad things about stalin they interrogate her bright lights while i am at my swimming in her

## Ania Walwicz

### TRANSFORMING LANGUAGE

A number of contradictions shape the poetry of Ania Walwicz. These contradictions are partly bred by the literary theory that has so insistently surrounded her work, and are partly inherent, it will be argued, in the enterprise of avant garde or experimental poetry. Speaking in 1987 about Walwicz's 'no speak', an interviewer states: 'Yes, that's what I find disturbing in this poem, the sense of loss of communication and the feeling of desperation that goes with this kind of loss'.<sup>1</sup> Walwicz's response addresses the question of language through her concern with both experimentalism and being 'a migrant'. For the experimentalist, one who seeks the borders or limit conditions of language, and for the migrant, there is this 'being devoid of language . . . that loss'.<sup>2</sup> But such statements, by poet and critic, deal in a kind of fiction, a feared and desired return to origins, a space in which to investigate and rewrite the contours of the self, and of this all-devouring medium, language. This is the contradictory enterprise of both the migrant and the experimentalist, at least in one phase of their undertaking: to start again, to know both less and more than the dwellers at the centre, to point a way by being in loss, or sacrifice. This taking up of marginality, difference, is also, complexly, the nexus of female identity formation in one phase of feminism;<sup>3</sup> and it is informative, sometimes in negative formulations, and sometimes in positive, celebratory ways, in many Walwicz poems. In 'Poland', the terms are negative: forgetting, moving away from the origin, the known centre. Whether this movement away is through necessity, or whether it is being celebrated in a peculiar way, is left unsure:

I forget everything. Now. More and more. It gets dim. And further away. It's as if I made it up. As though I was never there at all. Not real. Child stories . . . I don't remember Poland. I don't want to remember Poland. I read about it in the papers. And this is not where I am. Not where I am . . . I don't want to tell stories. I don't want to make things up. I