

Westerly

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61.1 | New Writing from
Western Australia
Fiction
Poetry
Essays
Reviews

Westerly

Guest edited by
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The Sapling Barricades Of Trugernanner

Alison Whittaker

Alison Whittaker is a Gomeri poet and essayist from the floodplain fringe of north-western New South Wales. Her debut poetry collection *Lemons in the Chicken Wire* was the winner of the State Library of Queensland's 2015 black&write! Fellowship.

Sap clot

Tender! Horror!

Thrice upon the shore comes the violence;
Upon it too come the corpses, lukewarm by the fern
Tossed by the sea, fat and soaping
they churn.

Where will you turn, survivor, for guidance?
Kick the slag, mourn the sea,
heave bile at the silence!

Your parts archived in other places,
mothballed and stern.
Yet, we too are violent women—and violent we learn.

Yes! Tender we strike and shrewdly we yearn.
Til either vengeance or we are wrung out
our words'll tender the violence
while they
tender violets in drought.
And us women seeds
both sewn and unseamed by the fray.

The grey saltbush

'Full-blooded?'
Your other fullness is round
and stretching—a belly
whose fullness was hellish.
We
and others speak your fullness sans sound.

'Full blooded?'
Half of you's by the ground while
the other half's in books:
'The last hope, the last, the Machiavelli!'

Your fullness was more than blood.
And no, no blood could make we black women full.

So it wove through us, unsevered by the flag
Unscathed by its promise of our inevitable fade.

'The last?'
Did black girls merely play
While all hope sank further still? No.
With panicked strength
Fullness came through like sapling life from the slag.

We mutt bastards grown
This fragile reserve 'round your legacy's length.