

**ICE,
TIME,
DESIRE**
BY LILY HIBBERD

We have abandoned our first love. Time is coming undone, as the abstraction of temporality under capitalism increasingly divorces us from reality. Yet every societal precept strains to uphold this impossible system, and we tumble into a temporal chink where no love and no time can exist. This is a crisis that is escalating, for the effects of our continued opposition to the reign of the cosmos are in defiance of the order of nature, and they herald our demise.

There are two aspects to this undoing and they mirror each other: the first is time and ice, and the second is desire and capitalism. Time is held together by ice, while the fury of those who have been disenfranchised runs deeper for the accrual of an age of injustice. The disintegration of the glacial world is an unambiguous illustration of this increasing dichotomy. Terrestrial Atomic Time is scientifically coordinated based on atomic clocks, whereas Universal Time is based on the Earth's rotation and therefore its organic irregularities: one is linear, the other is always changing. The gap between the two temporal measurements is called Delta Time and is calculated by subtracting Universal Time from Atomic Time.

The increase of Delta Time is evidence of a burgeoning chasm between human measures of time and the ever-expanding universe. Meanwhile, capitalism demands that we structure time in a linear fashion, using atomic clocks and in the imposition of little adjustments such as leap seconds to prevent any dissonance being perceived. This of course maintains the dominant order of global markets, ruling governments, human productivity, and more subliminally the belief systems that provide the rationale for this hegemony.

Time as a human construct cannot be divorced from the planet. The Greenwich meridian is the nothing point of global time, fixed on its chosen physical location of zero degrees longitude, eked out across the surface of the earth metre by metre. This is no arbitrary measure, the metre being one ten-millionth of the length of the Earth's meridian along a quadrant. However, in 1889, as Lorna informs us in *Swallow window*, the International Prototype Metre was defined as the distance between two lines on a standard bar composed of an alloy of ninety percent platinum and ten percent iridium, which is measured at the melting point of ice. Melting polar masses are thought to be having a further unknown yet unavoidable effect on the velocity of the earth's rotation because of tidal friction, which is caused by the gravitational pull of the moon. This pull is currently slowing the Earth's rate of rotation by about 2.3 milliseconds per day per calendar year. Researchers are indicating that the shifting dispersion of water due to climate change is causing an exponential drag that is dramatically increasing this tidal braking and therefore adding to the length of each solar day.

On the flip side of this mirror, *First Love* challenges the dysfunctional order of human desire in contemporary life. There are two kinds of desire in operation today: one is produced under the law of capitalism, while the other is organic, consistent with anything that strives to exist. Capitalist desires are unsustainable by necessity. They feed the machine of consumption and burn it up like coal, leaving behind only exhaust and pollution. This is the purpose of capitalism; it binds us in its endless replication of production and consumption. The machine that drives this economy is very seductive. Its lure is centred on the false construct of the machine's promise of life, while it splurts and farts and breaks down all the time. We are held in this paradoxical relationship to the productive machine economy in a master-slave dialectic. We feed it; it feeds us. We fear that it will stop working so we give it everything we've got, yet we are never sated for it makes sure that we are always a little hungry because of its empty promise.

Organic or 'biodesires' are simple, although less apparent. They course through our bodies and through everything in nature as a sustainable ecology. They are harder to recognise under capitalism for they have been smothered by the constant excess of desiring production. Everything is overrun by capitalism's machinery, and everything I can think of is subservient to its organisation: time, thinking, eating, clothing, the home, friends, family, pleasure, and, most pertinently of all, lovers.

The endgame of this factory's line of production is dreadful. For I cannot have everything, and if I imagine that I should, I will be overcome by the idea of engorgement. This hunger comes from fear of lack, a fear of a lack of desire even. Yet desire being emptiness perpetually refills itself, it is futile to pursue it. Strength and fullness is founded on a political decision to dismantle this order, so that it no longer controls us. But this is hard because it is impossible to separate need from this lure and so we cannot identify what it is we want. But how can we relinquish desire? I wonder if the answer is in apprehending our physical existence in a form of asceticism. For example, to know hunger is a primal sensation, and in a few hours if I abstain from eating I will feel it distinctly. I may even come closer to a feeling of death, which could euthanize the power of capitalist desires so that sufficiency might satisfy my body and mind. In paring back extraneous capitalist production and consumption we may even return to first love, not as a repression of pleasure, nor as a fear of lack, but in an embrace of the joy of need, in which we will be able to dismantle the dominion these lacks have over us.

First Love is a response to this collective dilemma. It takes the form of a collaboration in which 13 unnamed lovers relate their experience of 'first love' as a joy and a predicament. Each writer shares a story that reveals a dispute with the laws of desire under capitalism and other such human ordinances as time and measurements of space. These stories offer a survey of the lineage of political resistance in literature, as each contributor has chosen a literary work that represents the writing of love in confinement.

These historical reflections are realised in an array of formal approaches, either as a melange of quotes, in formulaic similitude, or in one of a number of other wandering interpretations.

Love as confinement comes in many forms, yet is an experience conducive to writing and to resistance even when the captive is physically ill, criminal or insane. Psychological exile is the most prevalent form of segregation that lovers suffer under patriarchy such as those who have subtly belied social convention or a dominant culture, like Hélène Cixous, Roland Barthes, Charlotte Brontë and Virginia Woolf. Whereas Jean Genet, the Marquis de Sade, Janet Frame and Jeanette Winterson have found incarceration to be the consequence of exceeding the limits of the law. Those quarantined due to serious ailment, such as Marcel Proust, find that desire is exacerbated by the inability to take hold of the object. Alternatively, philosophers like Simone Weil deploy isolation to defy a political limit. For Marguerite Duras, Ivan Turgenev, Anne Carson, Helen Garner and Samuel Beckett, love itself results in confinement as a universal estrangement from others. In all these categories the individual experiences a crisis of desire because of repression. Yet each tries to write their way out of this trap, for words are irrepressible and defiant.

First Love plainly states that we can write our way to freedom and bring an end to our conflict with nature. As impassioned responses, the many voices in these accounts echo discordantly in a call for liberation. The thirteen stories offer a contemporary philosophy of desire, as their words transform the reader and the author, releasing desire from subjugation to the capitalist machine.



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LILY HIBBERD | **FIRST LOVE** | JUNE/JULY 2009

YOUR INVITATION
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FIRST LOVE
6-8PM THURSDAY
25 JUNE 2009

**LILY HIBBERD:
FIRST LOVE
GALLERY 1
GRANTPIRRIE
25 JUNE - 25 JULY
2009**



**Lily Hibberd:
FIRST LOVE**

**Opening:
6-8pm Thursday
25 June 2009**

**Exhibition:
25 June –
25 July 2009**

To preview the work prior to the opening please contact the Gallery on (02) 9699 9033 to arrange an appointment.

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Images:

01. *Ice Mirror 1* 2009
Oil on 4mm toughened glass over mirror
51cm X 36cm

02. *Ice Mirror 9* 2009
Oil on 4mm toughened glass over mirror
51cm X 36cm

03. *Ice Mirror 5* 2009
Oil on 4mm toughened glass over mirror
51cm X 36cm

04. *Ice Mirror 6* 2009
Oil on 4mm toughened glass over mirror
51cm X 36cm

05. *Ice Mirror 12* 2009
Oil on 4mm toughened glass over mirror
51cm X 36cm

05-06. *The preface (First Love)* 2009
Digital video (still)
Duration: 11:00 min

07. *Celestial navigation*
2009 Oil and phosphorescent paint on linen
112cm X 183cm

Cover:
Delta Time (detail) 2009
Oil and phosphorescent paint on linen
112cm X 183cm



Australian Government



Australia Council for the Arts

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01



02



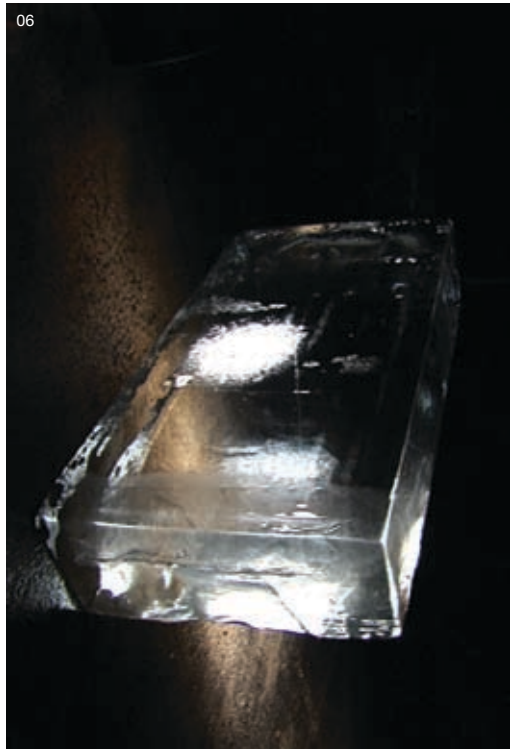
03



04



06



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