In Deryn Rees-Jones’ latest collection the ancient Greek muse of love poetry, Erato, conjures her sonic sibling, errata, the Latin plural noun for error. As antecedents go, love song as the mother of mistake informs all sorts of erasure: deviance, death, forgetting, disease, even hallucination, obscures the self from itself. *Erato* offers a multi-modal exploration of all these through the slippages of the body in memory and language. A ‘burning copse’ becomes a ‘burning corpse’ in the hinterland of dreams and the irreality of the past.

Knowing that the body defines its limits through desire, the poet calls up lyrical events both to determine and then discard the boundaries of self as previous selves. In the prose poem ‘Palisade’, the speaker returns to the family home where a diabetic father slowly loses his extremities to gangrene. She recalls translating from *Approaches to Latin* as a child, brings her own children into the palimpsest of relations and losses. Here we find a son costumed as a knight playing with Lego, a daughter dressed up as Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz.* The poem concludes with a nod perhaps to James Merrill’s ‘Lost in Translation’ in which the adult carries with him a missing puzzle piece from his broken home, an unsolvable childhood of loss.

And now when I walk with my son and my daughter down the street, it is you, and their lost father, and the future and the notes of the piano not played and the length of a stride as the sun creates shadow, and the small piece of LEGO in my pocket like the fragments of a dead language just translated that I’m holding onto, one step and one step each of us, falling in and out of time.

As Virgil in the *Aeneid* invokes the muse Erato as his guide, mid-epic, before a battle, Rees-Jones’s *Erato* plants itself between the lands of the living and the dead, between love and error, loss and learning, to locate where to begin, where we end.

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*How I Did It*

The ideas in the book evolved over ten years and in that way the book is very autobiographical, and raw. I wanted to think about the lyric as a place of complexity, how lyric can hold time as a form, which is one reason I have set lyric fragments and sequences in amidst prose narratives. I wanted to explore how we continue after traumatic events, how we might link the personal body with the political body? How might a poem hold pain, interpret it, without it becoming a place that simply repeats it in an inescapable loop? The conversation I am having with the muse Erato—with the lyric—is one about love, time, responsibility. I have a strong dislike of a simplistic narrative that suggests that poetry can save us. Poetry, as a different song goes, what is it good for? Erato answers back. I have no answers except in the exchange.

*Deryn Rees-Jones*