

## AVAST!

### PIRATE STORIES FROM TRANSGENDER AUTHORS

MICHAEL EARP/ALISON EVANS (EDITORS)

ISBN (PB): 9781760993993

YEAR LEVEL: Y9–12

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, Sustainability

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Pirates come in many forms – friends bootlegging CDs and chasing UFOs, cyberpunk renegades, or the heroes of a swashbuckling movie. From the tiniest rebel-crew liberating prisoners to survivors coming into contact with a sacred, ancient power, and from spacefaring hijackers to twins fighting to save their world, this treasure trove of stories unites characters who wield courage and reactivity in exhilarating escapades, all in search of a place to call home.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Michael Earp** (they/them) is a non-binary writer living in Naarm (Melbourne, Australia), the editor of *Everything Under The Moon: Fairy Tales in a Queerer Light*, *Kindred: 12 Queer #LoveOzYASeries* and co-editor of *Avast! Pirate Stories from Transgender Authors* with Alison Evans. With a teaching degree and a

master's in children's literature, they have worked between bookselling and publishing for twenty years as a children's literature specialist. Managing The Little Bookroom saw them named ABA Bookseller of the year in 2021.

**Alison Evans** (they/them) is an award-winning novelist, zinester and writer of short stories living on Wurundjeri Land. Their novels for teenagers, *Euphoria Kids*, *Highway Bodies* and *Ida*, are speculative, magical and queer. Their first book *Ida* was described as a 'landmark book in Australian YA'.

[alisonwritesthings.com](http://alisonwritesthings.com)

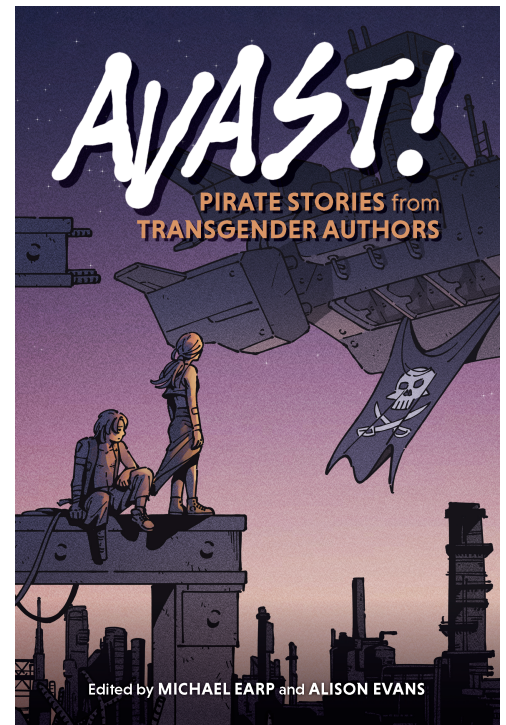
**Madison Godfrey** (they/them) is the author of two poetry collections: *How To Be Held* (Burning Eye Books, 2018) and *Dress Rehearsals* (Allen & Unwin Imprint JOAN, March 2023). They write and teach on Whadjuk Noongar land. [maddiegodfrey.com](http://maddiegodfrey.com)

**Vika Mana** (she/them) a Torres Strait Islander and Tongan storyteller that takes many forms. They descend from the Zagareb and Dauareb tribes of Mer Island and the village of Fahefa in Tonga. They've written for *Overland*, *The Big Issue*, *The Saturday Paper* and other publications at home and internationally. In 2019, they became one of ten writers to be part of The Next Chapter run by the Wheeler Centre. [@endlessyarning](https://twitter.com/endlessyarning)

**Mia Nie** (she/her) is a Chinese-Australian comic artist, essayist, illustrator, zine-maker and award-nominated ex-poet living on unceded Wurundjeri country. In 2020, she was a participant in The Wheeler Centre's The Next Chapter program, and her comics have been nominated for the National Cartoonist Society's Reuben Awards. [girlwithhorn.wordpress.com](http://girlwithhorn.wordpress.com)

**Maddison Stoff** (she/her) is a neurodivergent non-binary essayist, musician and author from Melbourne, Australia. She writes unapologetically leftist, feminist and queer fiction set in a continuous universe which blurs the line between experimental literature and pulp sci-fi. Her work has also appeared in *Aurealis*, *Overland* and *Andromeda Spaceways*. [maddisonstoff.com](http://maddisonstoff.com)

**Alexander Te Pohe** (he/him) is a Māori trans man living on Whadjuk Noongar Land. His prose and poetry can be found in the collections *To Hold The Clouds* (Centre For Stories, 2020), *Australian Poetry Anthology* (Volume 9, 2021–2022) and *An Unexpected Party* (Fremantle Press, 2023) as well as publications such as *Djed Press*, *Portside Review* and *Strange Horizons*.



## THEMES

- Transgender and LGBTQIA+ identities
- Diversity
- Gender and sexuality
- Intersectionality within the queer community
- Connection within chosen family and community
- Disability pride
- Transitioning
- Artificial intelligence (AI), technological advancement and invention
- Racism and colonisation
- Classism

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- 9–12 English
- 9–12 Science
- 9–12 Digital Technologies
- Cross-curriculum Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia, Sustainability
- General Capabilities: Personal and social capability, critical and creative thinking, ethical understanding

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### Videos

- What Pop Culture Gets Wrong About Pirates – PBS Origins (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xuT35ud41QQ>)
- Queer Representation in Speculative Fiction - An LGBTQIA+ Documentary by Tongal ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLnwN7CYstQ&ab\\_channel=Tongal](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLnwN7CYstQ&ab_channel=Tongal))

### Reading

- Rediker, M. (1993). When Women Pirates Sailed the Seas. *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-), 17(4), 102–110. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40258786>
- <https://overland.org.au/2022/04/how-the-abc-still-fails-transgender-people/>
- <https://overland.org.au/2021/11/beyond-token-efforts-why-inclusion-is-a-radical-concept/>
- <https://en.pronouns.page/they/them/themself>

### Websites

- Ahoy! Queer Pirate Books – Book Riot (<https://bookriot.com/queer-pirate-books/>)
- Space Pirates – TV Tropes (<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SpacePirates>)

## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### General discussion questions

1. Research historical and/or mythical examples of pirates who did not conform to gender expectations of their time, e.g. Mary Read and Anne Bonny.
2. Consider the costuming and fashion of a stereotypical European pirate from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, known as 'The Golden Age of Piracy'. What about this fashion might appeal to trans, non-binary and gender-diverse communities?
3. Discuss what features of piracy as a topic often lends itself to historical fantasy and science fiction genres – in particular the idea of space piracy and spaceships as an analogue to sea pirates and sea ships.
4. Many of the stories in this anthology explore the concept of 'found family'. Why is this an important aspect of the LGBTIQ+ community, even in modern times?
5. Editors Michael Earp and Alison Evans state in their introduction, 'There's something about pirates, and how they lived outside the law, that rings true to trans experiences.' As you read the stories in this anthology, create a working list of connections you make between the two experiences.

### 'Catgrrls' to the Front!' by Maddison Stoff

1. Create a profile of a character from 'Catgrrls to the Front!', including a visual representation. Discuss what this representation says about your views on invisible and visible disabilities.
2. Write a list of slang terms and definitions the characters use, e.g. *Uwu*, *nyah*. Discuss how they help to create a sense of character for the reader.
3. Stoff has created a post-apocalyptic cyberpunk world where anti-artificial intelligence (AI) sentiments in society contribute to the present setting. Create a Positive, Minus, Interesting (PMI) table, noting the varied ways AI is represented in the story. Discuss how Stoff's fictional depiction of this technology mirrors and/or differs from the Machine Learning technology we see in our daily lives.
4. 'Catgrrls to the Front!' is one of many stories set in one part of Stoff's continuous universe. See for instance her depiction of how AI is imagined in <https://burninghousepress.com/2018/11/22/maddison-stoff-android-court-transcription/> and the timeline of Stoff's work as set out in <https://www.patreon.com/posts/on-timelines-of-40071727>. Research the concept of a continuous universe and find other examples of it in fiction.
5. Write a short response examining how disability, intelligence and autonomy are represented both by the human and AI characters in the story, with reference to the text.

### 'The Underside Of A Boat Is The Part That Touches Water' by Madison Godfrey

1. Godfrey's verse novella is written from different points of view. How does their poetry support the content of their story, as compared to a prose story about the same subject matter?
2. Godfrey uses poetic language techniques such as simile, rhyme, alliteration and imagery to convey the experiences of the various personas (characters) in this text. How do these language techniques encourage the reader to experience the setting and the emotions of the story?
3. Create character profiles or draw a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the description of the actors versus real pirates presented in the story.
4. In the final moments, Godfrey writes of the oncoming real pirates: 'For Belly, the ship is a fantasy. For the men, the ship is a nightmare. For Ann, the unknown entity is just another man's hands coming towards her. She has been surviving that same threat for weeks.' How does Godfrey present masculinity, queerness and gender in their verse novella?
5. This story, a verse novella told through poetry, is written in four acts. Write a short response exploring how these acts connect to and build on one another to create meaning.

### 'An Ocean Bloom' by Michael Earp

1. Split students into pairs to engage in a 'Think-Pair-Share' exercise about the fantasy tropes Earp either embraces, twists or rejects.
2. Research the mythology of selkies across cultures.

3. How does the concept of a selkie, who can shapeshift between selkie and human form by removing their skin, connect to gender expression?
4. What difference does it make to include the characters of Kip (a were-salamander) and Quin (a selkie) in the story?
5. How does Earp portray the concept of 'found family' in 'An Ocean Bloom'?

## **'Hunger' by Vika Mana**

1. Mana presents a dystopia where sacred sites are destroyed by oil and coal companies in favour of 'kolonies' created by Kazure, Inc. How does this dystopia reflect the present issue of the destruction of sacred sites, particularly in Australia?
2. Identify the DN-8 system's features, comparing and contrasting it to other flesh-embedded technologies in another science fiction and describe how they are used and/or manipulated by the powers that be.
3. Discuss the ways colonisation has impacted the characters, in particular The Rats.
4. In groups of three, engage in a 'Values, Identifies, Actions' visible thinking routine: Answer the following questions in each column. Values: which values does the work invite us to think about? Identities: who is this working speaking about? Actions: what actions might this work encourage?
5. Write a response analysing how spirituality, both as a concept and in the character of the spirit Kabozie, helps and heals Amina and her family.

## **'Baby Makes Three' by Mia Nie**

1. How does Nie's title 'Baby Makes Three' set up heteronormative expectations for what the story will be about – and how does the author then subvert these expectations?
2. Create a list of graphic novel terms and definitions, with examples from 'Baby Makes Three'.
3. Write a short response analysing how Nie's graphic novella format of storytelling emphasises both action and comedic moments.
4. Rewrite the scene in which Wolfie finds the baby as a narrative scene with dialogue. Consider how you describe the emotions and setting to convey the same intent as Nie's illustrations.
5. Discuss which other story in this collection would make a graphic novella and design a spread or two of this story.

## **'What are False Stars to a God?' by Alexander Te Pohe**

1. Te Pohe uses celestial, astrological and mythological names in this story. Research the meanings between them and create a visual mind map of the names/terminology.
2. How does Te Pohe represent the differences between classes in 'What are False Stars to a God'?
3. How do Clem and Oliver's character arcs align with The Hero's Journey?
4. What aspects of piracy are evident in Te Pohe's story?
5. Draw your own version of the *Scorpius* map.

## **'CHANGELINGS' by Alison Evans**

1. What kind of piracy does Evans showcase in 'CHANGELINGS'? How does this subvert audience expectations of a 'piracy' storyline? What does this kind of piracy have in comment with piracy on the high seas?
2. List objects, people and places Evans uses to show that the story is set in the past.
3. Which aspects of queer and trans culture from this time period, as represented in 'CHANGELINGS', stand out to you? What has changed and what has stayed the same since then?
4. Why is the magazine, 'CHANGELINGS' so important to Astro? Write a list of other articles one might find in such a publication.
5. What conclusion does Astro come to about changelings and aliens?