

## Love Letter for Jenny Hval

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Above washy synth arpeggiators, elated pop grooves and 90s trance beats, *Practice of Love* unfolds like a dialogue between many voices, all speaking about love, intimacy and care. Asking what they mean, and how do we, *can* we, express them in languages that so inherently bind and define them? How do we speak love? And sure, this dialogue discusses romantic love, desire and sexuality, but it also attempts to express other kinds of love.

It was some time last year that I became enamoured with your sixth full length album *Blood Bitch*, in all its grotesque eroticism. I listened to it almost daily, sometimes multiple times a day. I listened to it from the window seat of a plane suspended over the red-dirt Kimberley. I listened to it driving foggy southbound highways in my Mitsubishi Outlander. And this kind of listening, the kind that retraces and rediscovers the familiar over and over, whilst tracing and discovering an unfamiliar landscape; this kind of listening is a practice of love. Jenny, I write this as a love letter to you and your most recent album, *Practice of Love*. Which is in turn its own love letter, really.

On the track *Six Red Cannas*, you say:

*I think I was trying to write to Georgia O'Keeffe*

*Like Joni Mitchell writes to Amelia Earhart as she is driving in the desert*

Georgia O'Keeffe was an American artist most known for her paintings of New Mexico city and portraits of closeup flowers. When I think of Georgia O'Keeffe, I remember the print of her pastel orchids that hung on my sister's bedroom wall. So labial and soft.

And Joni Mitchell a Canadian singer-songwriter and love of my life. Hearing her album *Blue* was the first time I realised that you could actually write ... anything. Her melodies and song structures were so revelatory. I felt so full, bursting.

And Amelia Earhart; the first woman aviator to fly solo across the Pacific. In every photo, even the ones in ballrooms, she appears with her short hair ruffled, as if she had just taken off her pilot's helmet. Amelia and her navigator Fred Noonan disappeared in 1937 while attempting to make a circumnavigational trip of the globe.

In 1976, Joni sings to Amelia:

*I was driving across the burning desert  
When I spotted six jet planes  
Leaving six white vapour trails across the bleak terrain  
It was the hexagram of the heavens  
It was the strings of my guitar  
Amelia, it was just a false alarm*

So in the same way Joni drives in the desert, spots six jet planes, and sings to Amelia Earhart, you, Jenny, look up and spot six red cannas; their large red petals unfurling amongst clouds and sing to Georgia O'Keeffe. Knowing that Georgia too, shared a canna lily love (distilled in her 1924 masterpiece, *Red Canna*).

I love you, and all of these women; their daring capacity to take flight, fly alone, spill confessions of love, not just for those you desire romantically or sexually, but for those you admire, respect, have learnt from and owe thanks to. You set in motion a sprawling kind of love affair that continues to grow in the silence at the end of a track. My love for you and them is fuelled every time I listen to both of these songs.

Jenny, you remind us that *we don't always get to choose when we're close and when we're not*. You remind us we can be *elsewhere ... all over the place*, and still be *making room for lovers*. There are so many ways in which we speak love. And now, in this precarious time of uncertainty, pandemic virus, and enforced social isolation, we may not be able to be close, but we can still be writing love letters.