

## Lake Eyre Yacht Club, Maree

*Jude Aquilina*

In this arid town, up past the Afghan mosque,  
beyond Tom Kruse's faded mail truck and the  
rusty trains that ran out of track, the double-  
storey yacht club looms, strange as a playground  
in a nursing home, as a surfboard with wheels.  
What dreamer thought of building it here, so far  
from the nearest coast?

Optimism is the cousin of many failures, yet the  
yachties scoff at sceptics when squadrons of  
pelicans cast their crosses on red earth, when the  
channel country's veins open up and bleed green  
across the plains. It might be years between  
raised sails but, like moths, to the blinding white  
of salt, masts shoot up over the lake, sailcloth  
flutters as cobwebs and dust are blown away.

The inland sea ripples again with whipped foam.  
A decade or more between high tides, yet fish  
uncannily return and Cessnas circle like raptors  
eyeing off a banquet of photographic rarities.  
And the sailors from the Lake Eyre Yacht Club,  
the heat-proofed, desert-tempered men and  
women race and skate with the wind across the  
lake like children after the first snow.

**Jude Aquilina** lives in Milang and has published and edited a number of books, including *Knifing the Ice*, *WomanSpeak* (with Louise Nicholas) and *Tadpoles in the Torrens*. Jude was awarded the 2018 Barbara Hanrahan Fellowship and is currently completing a collection of poems based on Outback South Australia.