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## Stirling's Garden

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## **Stirling's Garden** *by Nandi Chinna*

*By the formation of gardens and by leaving stock, I performed Acts of Occupation upon which at any time a just claim to the Territory might be founded and maintained.*

-James Stirling, report to Admiralty, 31st August 1827

It is the month of March,  
too early for autumn rains  
in Swan River country.

Forged metal slices river loam  
like a knife through dark cake.  
Picks and spades tear holes,  
scrape trenches and mounds,  
and into this mixture is sown  
the simple act of occupation,  
the seeds of peas, radishes, and cabbages  
the soft stones of precious potatoes  
and carefully wrapped cuttings  
of English peach trees.

Homesick in unfamiliar soil  
the seeds seek the things they know  
clouds, humus, water,  
and in the absence of these  
split open and abort  
their contents onto the hot ground.

The green of a garden is inscribed on a map  
but is indifferent to cartography;  
lost amongst a tangle of wild grasses,  
the colonised have eaten the invaders

Nandi Chinna was born in Adelaide in 1964. Her poetry has been widely published in journals and anthologies. Her first collection *Our Only Guide is Our Homesickness* was published by Five Islands Press in 2007. She is currently a PhD candidate at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia, for which she is writing poetry about wetlands and walking.