

'Cardboard Incarceration' by Jeanine Leane | States of Poetry ACT - Series One

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Jeanine Leane (/poetry/states-of-poetry/states-of-poetry-act/author/5543-jeanineleane)

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Jeanine Leane (/poetry/states-of-poetry/states-of-poetry-act/author/5543-jeanineleane)

Jeanine Leane is a Wiradjuri scholar from south-west New South Wales. She currently holds a Discovery Indigenous Fellowship at the

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By this contributor

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This cardboard prison they call an archive
is cold, airless and silent as death.
Floor to ceiling boxes contain voices
no longer heard yet still wailing within
and faces no longer seen yet still missing in a
jail of captured snippets, images and memories
like the severed heads and bleached bones of
dismembered bodies neatly locked away in the vaults
of museums and universities of the world
in the name of science or history or anthropology or
something else so important at the time that
justified the collection of bits and pieces of another –
the Other.
Reams of records tell how you measured

our heads with every western yardstick –
examined us through your voyeuristic lens,
scrutinised our children's fingernails under
microscopes and found them remarkably pale –
looked inside women's vaginas where
that rosebud is pink as pink is pink
despite the otherwise apparent differences
between black and white such as
intellect, industry and capacity to settle.
We are the inmates incarcerated within these
cardboard cells where every neatly dotted 'i',
and symmetrically crossed 't' screams out:
*Read this Black angst against
these white pages.*

Jeanine Leane

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