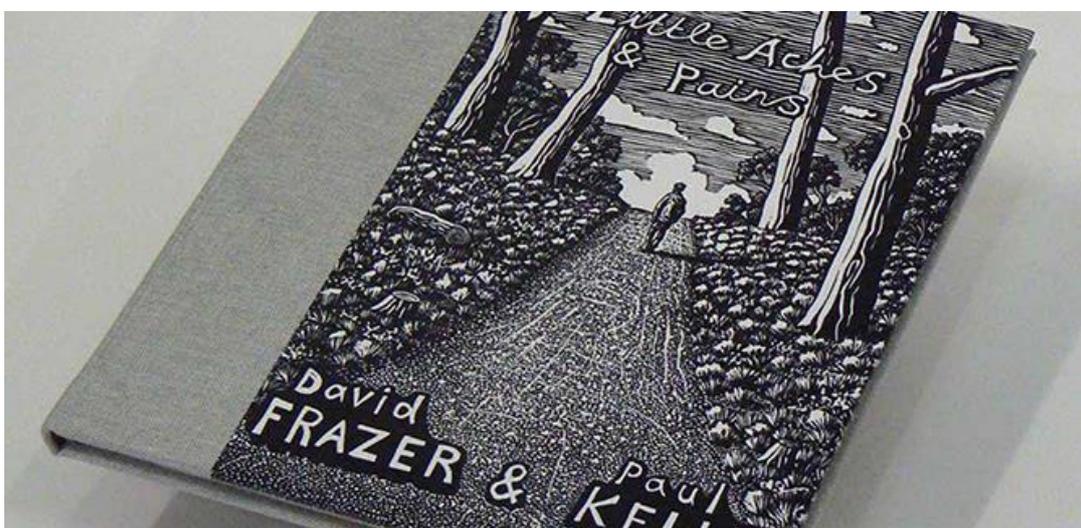


# Little Aches & Pains: by David Frazer & Paul Kelly

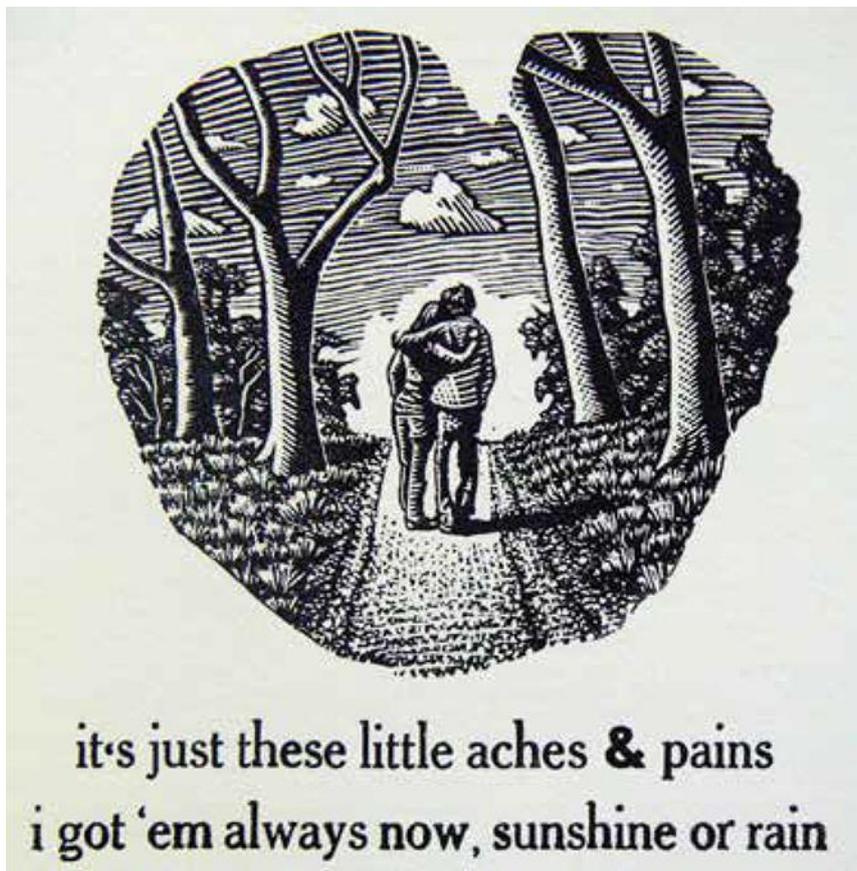


*'That which does not kill us makes us stronger'*

**I've always been captivated with ideas around scratching, cutting, digging.** Any kind of mark making for that matter. Luckily I'm in Castlemaine, which has a solid Colonialist history that involved scratching and digging on a daily basis. Not really the kind of digger I'm attracted to as a rule, but nonetheless, my current location certainly evokes depth on a variety of levels; layers of local history, industry, art making, literature, hot rod building, sustainable living; not unlike the layers of rock we hacked into all those years ago. Everything about this place has a dark filmic tone; everyone has a story to tell.

Visual storytellers are among my favourite kind. When I heard that local artist David Frazer had teamed up with Paul Kelly to tell a tale through the traditional and laborious process of wood block printing, I made the call and knocked on his studio door.

It's a new collaboration, quite simple really; Kelly provided the words of his song *Little Aches & Pains* from his 2012 Spring and Fall album and Frazer created the wood blocked imagery; together it became a high-end hand-printed artist book. It's often these simple relationships that work best in the world of art making, where roles are clearly defined, bringing ease to the process and freeing up time to focus on the work itself.

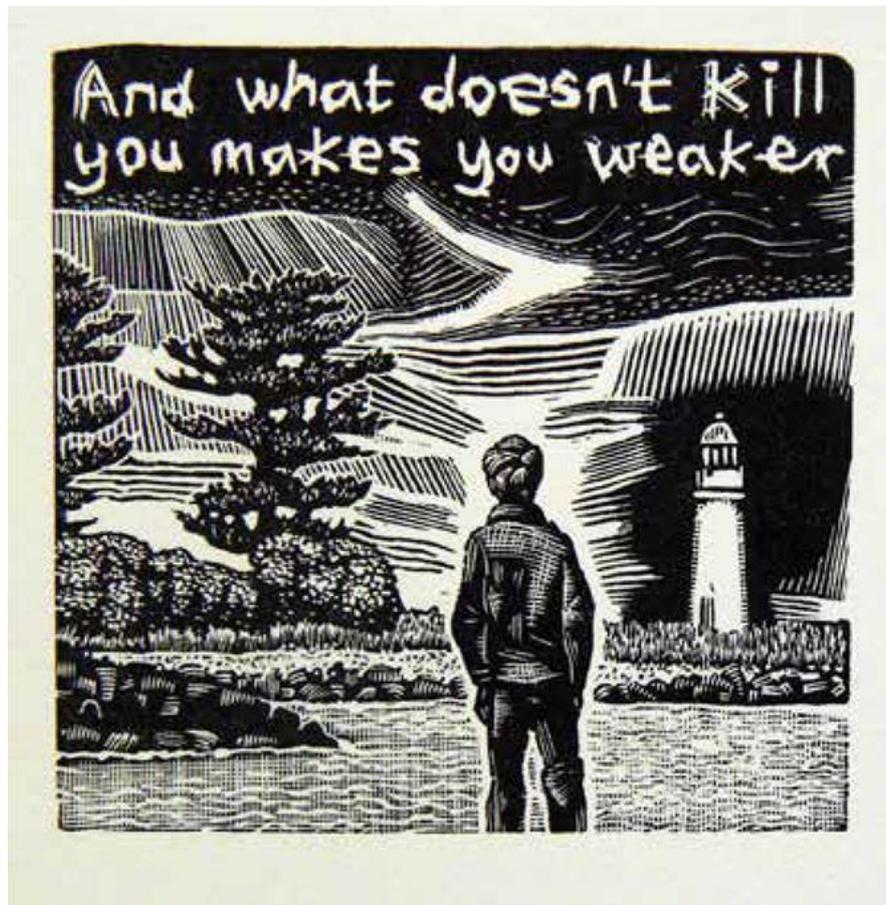




David Frazer has an 18-year history of creating woodcuts for his artist books and formed Unstable Press as the publishing vehicle. His personal history, like most of us, is a combination of both stability and instability — being the son of a school teacher, he was always seen as a bit of a blow-in, and grew up in the Wimmera, that farming area in Western Victoria. His visible markers were Mallee scrubland and desolate plains, with the distant Great Dividing Range as a backdrop. It's these flat, endless, wide open spaces that drew Frazer to concentrate on elements of landscape in his work. Landscape was his driest companion, and becomes the remote background for his archetypal melancholic misfit. There's a deep love of his environment but also the desperate need to escape.

Mark making symbolises history, and suggests the possibility of our destiny, the measure of our life. It can be in the form of the written word, the song, or embodied within visual art. When Frazer first discovered wood engraving, he immediately felt that it was the closest thing to his companion love of songwriting, and the act of putting all of these prints together to make a book added to the song-like quality he was looking for. It's become his personal take on songlines.

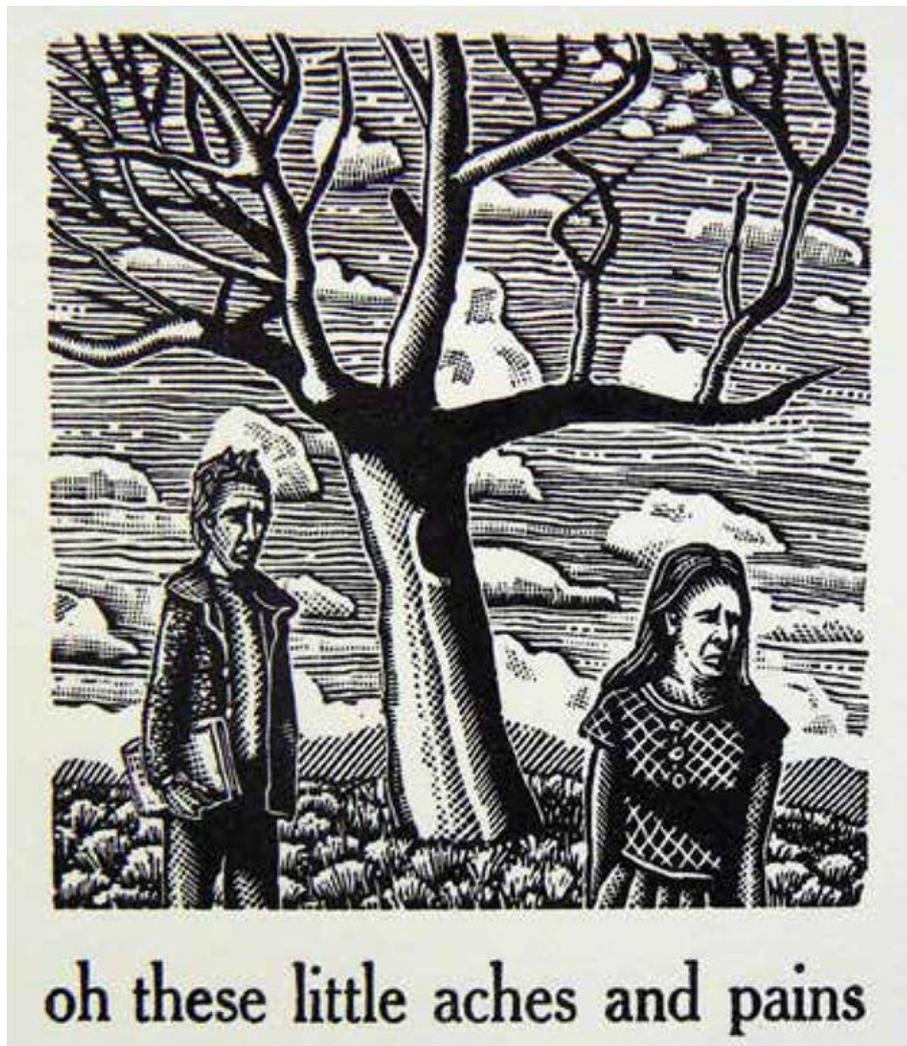
In *Little Aches & Pains*, Frazer begins to scratch and cut raw figures into English boxwood, and through the words of Paul Kelly, brings his other thematic into play: the emotional terrain of the human condition. It's a beautiful story of love and loss, full of quirky paraphrases of clichéd expressions ('what doesn't kill you makes you weaker'). It's likely that Nietzsche had no idea he would inspire artists across the globe when he coined the phrase 'That which does not kill us makes us stronger' whilst penning *Twilight Of The Idols* (1889). Or maybe he did.



There's an intimate quality to Frazer's work that reflects our close relationships perfectly, in both word and image. The scale of the work enforces a private viewing. "Wood engravings are very intimate, that's what I love about them, you've got to get up close to them, you have to read them. They're very suitable to narrative and storytelling, which I particularly like," says David.

"There's a lot of yearning involved," he says. In common with Kelly's songs, David Frazer composes in various codes of isolation, loss and melancholic love of landscape and humanity. His work almost always exists on the fringes of darkness, the places we consciously try to stay away from, where we struggle to find the beauty. His subjects yearn to escape or yearn for the past. The heart he draws is disorientated in shape, leaning more towards a topographical study, showing us the terrain we travel. The book invites thinking around environment, whilst also drawing you into close forms of communication and connectivity. It's a beautiful contrast. The story has a certain edge to it, lots of conflicting thoughts and deterioration. You want to be alone, yet there is a yearning to connect with people. The intense desire for the landscape whilst being desperate to be free of it. The desire to be famous coupled with the fear of success. Craving a happy home life at the same time that you want to burn it down and run away. These contrasts create an energy that's apparent in all of David's art; it's this brooding tension that gives it a masterful depth of quality.

This book and the many forms of printmaking and painting by David Frazer is reflective of deep thinking and high technical proficiency. Talent pours out through the cracks of the murky places he likes to travel. Frazer is an artist who doesn't need to say a word; his work says it all for him.



*Little Aches & Pains* is David Frazer's seventh artist book and was launched mid-July as part of the solo exhibition HUG, at [fortyfivedownstairs](http://fortyfivedownstairs.com), Melbourne. It's a hand-made book of only 20 limited editions. The National Library of Australia, State Libraries of New South Wales and Victoria, and Monash and Melbourne universities have already purchased copies. David's printmaking has won him major art prizes, including one at the International Print Biennial in Guanlan, China. He's had honourable mentions in Taiwan and has exhibited all over Australia, UK, Europe and Asia, including the 5th Beijing International Art Biennale at the National Museum of China. You can see and purchase this book and other work via his website – [dfrazer.com](http://dfrazer.com)

**Klare Lanson** is a writer, poet, performance maker, and sound artist, and currently presents *Turn Left at the Baco* every Saturday night on Castlemaine's community radio [MAINfm](http://MAINfm.com). Her current project is called [#wanderingcloud](https://twitter.com/wanderingcloud)