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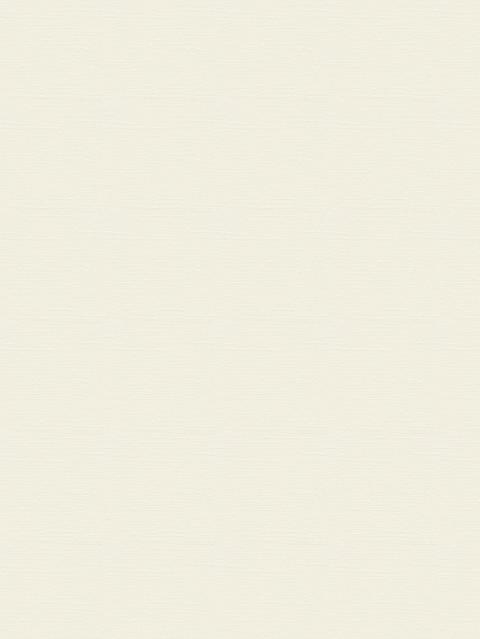
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Acknowledgements

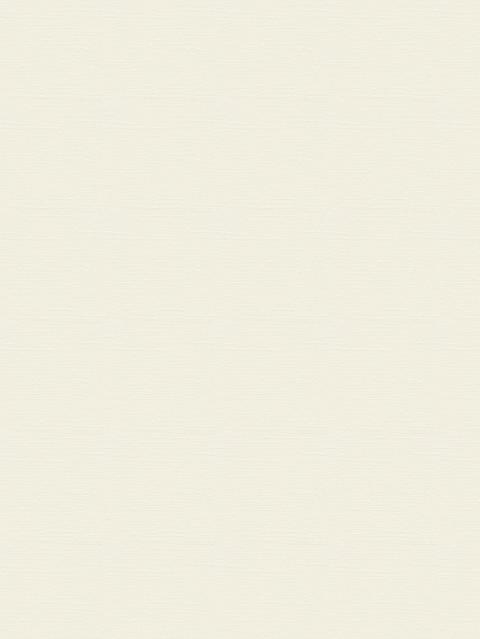
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Blue Dog: Australian Poetry, Famous Reporter, Going Down Swinging, Lynx, Modern Haiku, Overland, paper wasp, Pendulum, Presence, Shamrock, Stylus Poetry Journal, and The Heron's Nest.

"thirteen years of drought" received an Honorable Mention in the Lyrical Passion Haiku Pen Contest 2010







Amanuensis

A jar of seashells, each one chosen for no particular reason or difference.

The slant of light, perhaps, on an enamelled pattern, a periwinkle's exposed inner spiral,

an abalone shell that's lost its sheen. Nothing taken alive.

What's here's been wave-tossed and shifted twice a day for years around rock pools

or stranded with seaweed on the tide line, where sun and salt bleach out all traces

of biography. The sea coughs up words that choke in the throat. We surface, or drown. the blue Pacific slipping through my fingers moon jellyfish mackerel sky shadows swimming inside the shark-proof fence

Ocean, Croajingalong

A pair of kids found bones, more bones. A skull's eye sockets stared at the beach-pounding ocean.

Adults averted their eyes. Observant children, we knew what we'd found in the dunes by the ocean.

People with spears here. People with guns. Before we were born they hunted near this ocean.

Unspoken, in town, our skeletal ancestors. We whisper the Jew, the Abo, to the ocean.

Fishes-in-water, we swim the estuary.

Our fathers brood on the face of the ocean.

We enter the river. The sandbar breaks. The lake takes the boat out to meet the ocean.

A pelican cruises low above the sand dunes. Pacific Gulls, a pair, fly south over the ocean.

linen sheets the sound of the sea folding, unfolding spindrift—
dune-grasses turning
their silver backs

Forest

I followed the paths of smaller animals; valley scrub, foreshore, mountain forest.

You were waiting, a prophet, promises shining green above the rubble of a charred forest.

Limping across Antarctica, brandy in my ice, I almost forgot the tangled forest.

Out on the reef, our adopted whales surfaced—out of season—from the deep forest.

Paper souvenirs— they're here somewhere— words on white, hauntings from the lost forest.

Clear-felled and milled, the stands of Coastal Ash; we do not speak of the empty forest.

Out of the woods now, but so much older, I knit, with children's bones, a witch's forest.

telling the story in a chainsaw voice lyrebird bellbirds . . . further and further from the trail

The cockatoo that sounds like a telephone

after reading Billy Collins

In the morning I wake to the call of the cockatoo that sounds like a telephone and in the cool of the evening, when I walk at ease in my garden, I hear the neighbour's cockatoo ringing.

Over the year or so that the bird has practised its signature tune it has improved. Cockatoos are known for their ability to mimic. We had one that cursed in five languages.

When a poet sets out to imitate another poet's tone it is not called mimicry. It is called 'pastiche'. This was to be my second pastiche. My first was after John Berryman but Yeats and Hopkins kept sneaking in

as nightingale, wind-hover, skylark, swan come flapping and preening now when there's barely room for Billy Collins and the cockatoo that no-one answers.

black cockatoos—
a few quick brushstrokes
before the rain

spring clean-out a wattlebird flings rainbows from the bird bath

Snow

for Laryalee

Snow is falling in Canada Between the pines a woman shovels snow She stops for breath; the air is sharp with children's laughter

Here in Melbourne,
the corpse of a Christmas Beetle
burns brittle on the lawn
They're crooning along with Bing Crosby
at the pool party next door
The blowflies are silent
The refrigerator sighs
With a stubby from the six-pack
of Beck's beer, from Belgium,
where ice crystals glaze the names
on a WWI memorial,

I return to the keyboard and the blue screen, to see that great humps of snow have buried the whale graves at Yamaguchi and snow is still falling on the white-capped waves of Hokusai's sea whale song twilight's blues deepen the photo album full of strangers' faces sea fog rolling in

Waiting for Prospero

A circle drawn in chalk becomes the isle.
Recollect sand, beaches. Recall the moon
should rise in the east and set in the western sea.

First the isle and then the voices come. We're as many as we ever will be. We possess, of chalk, scrubbed boards and make-up, goodly supply.

The moon is ours to view in all her phases. Listen, birds are preparing to sing in the foreshore thicket. Crickets and frogs rehearse the overture.

A pelican cruises as if we were of interest. Soon we'll remember how far it is we've come. There'll be shipwrecks, gull cries, fools and hecklers,

lovers and kingdoms enough to pass the time. A circle drawn in chalk becomes the isle. Soon, our scripted selves will speak their lines. thirteen years of drought the raven's voice grows hoarser a curlew holds its second note . . . shadows lengthening

We will have images

after reading Denise Levertov

Her fruit:
tangerine, nectarine, river—
the tang of it
How love sticks to skin in the afternoon
Amber, even the buzz of flies

Honey: preservative; the properties of Earth-crusted jars from the excavations The fine brushes, the gloves of archaeology In a honey jar, slowly, time congeals

Images are not enough, but we will have them

last

in the wake of the world that's leaving

moonrise black swans make way for the rower

