

**Better**

Now *that's* an ocean! The roar and grumble of broad waves against the outlet of the southwest passage near the island, eating incrementally into the southern coastline, pounding in from the Southern Ocean, whitewashing the beachfront and the slatey green lesser water forms, where kelp plants grow, tumble-heaped here onto the volcanic rocks that pile into headlands, abutting the slime-green shallows.

Their thick leaves splash as the wave wake moves up, along its way, past where I'm wedged, vertically, against a rock in the late afternoon light.

And in this all-encompassing ocean sound and feeling, the whole earth has taken on a certain edgy tilt about it, as if the planet has slipped slightly to one side, and a new age has begun, in the pale blue different sky of a sci-fi; but, oh no! it's only the effect of an electric wire, strung wide across the space, rendering a changed horizon, snaking on away up the hill.

At their zenith, these wave mountains today are formidable, seeming able to challenge the height of the land, a *Novae Hollandiae* indeed.

I've passed a large wormwood clump, its flowers staunch but limp and dirty, in pale yellow bunches against the silver leaves. I've slaked my thirst on purple salt-succulent-bush berries that turn the spit a winey red, and leave a saline after-taste. I've been pacified by the stillness of flat eastern bay water. I've seen a giant manta ray, as wide or wider than my arms extend, winging its way slowly, rippling like an eel, to skull its way in there under the wharf, looking up at me with round eyes, its strong tube-like tail accompanied by a fluting tail fin, and the sun-damaged back of its older age, hiding now in the shade. I've been spoken to by ducks, assertively, as they paddle the gangrenous waters of Sandy Cove Reserve: "a salt marsh of special scientific significance". I've been battered by the wind, surviving the day intact in my leopard-spotted head-scarf, with a 30+ sunscreened-face, and dragged myself across these quarried orange-lichened rocks, to this place.

But it's the wind coming in off the big breakers that finally has filled my lungs, the smell of the kelp that brings a sense of relief to my meanderings, and the curling lips of the pale green masses of water breaking in a dense rumble, a washing in of soundfulness, the walls and mountains of the aqua stuff, waving spume or raising flags of foam, that induce this feeling that I'm now truly here (albeit in the strangeness of a new world configuration), and have now been here all day...  
And maybe I am,  
at last, in fact,  
medusa-ish, and homeopathically,  
when all is said and done,  
better by the ocean.

**Champagne**

It melts in the mouth, fuzzily.  
It has a pale green or light glassy pink colour.  
It makes you feel happy.  
It mixes well with eggplant dip,  
    and friendships.  
It irons out whatever anxieties, or insecurities,  
    may've accumulated during a stressful day.  
It makes the eyes moist and bright  
    and lends a generosity of speech.  
It celebrates special occasions, like weddings, and christenings,  
    and first-book launches.  
It comes in tall thin glasses.  
It confers a flush of success,  
    or for some, rose-colored glasses.  
It makes a reticent woman affectionate,  
    and turns a talkative woman daring.  
It is champagne.

**An inverted cup of moon juice**

The moon is upside down,  
has emptied its cup  
above the western horizon...  
I've caught snatches of it  
through the clustered ravel of aged tree branches  
as we glide through  
the mountain scene-scape.

And what's under the white moon,  
where it is, there, upended over the earth,  
and what pours, and then drips,  
from that emptied moon bowl?  
And where does it go?  
And what for?

Does the powder of the silver moon flow out,  
leaving a trail of fine dust that moths can follow,  
or the dust itself follow pinprick light trails that lead to cocoons,  
to seal or unseal them, or does it suspend moths in flight  
if even once they've bathed in it?  
Or, entwined, interstitial-like, in spider's silk,  
does it moor and ensure  
such sustaining bridges?

Or does some invisible fluid,  
a space gel or the juice of constellations,  
or some other flux of gravity, a certain *gravitas*,  
land in drops and splash upon us, or on the earth,  
and make us moony,  
melancholy, moody,  
and waterlogged  
with lunar emotion  
and meanings?

### **Clearing weeds in the driveway**

I'm standing under the jacaranda  
dropping flowers, clearing weeds, when the memories  
of my grandparents' place come in.

Always there are  
recurrent glimpses of the garden, and the darkness  
of lush old-fashioned timbers, silky-oak and cedar,  
wall-paneled, floor-boarded, furnished, in rooms  
shaded by trees.

My grandmother is usually on her feet,  
shuffling about the house, despite crippling arthritis,  
or maneuvering her way down the path with the aid of  
a walking frame, to issue orders

– where my brother once  
wielded both a false plastic bosom, and a whipper-  
schnipper, for the camera –

for the morning glory to be  
pulled from her suburban jungle trees.

She'd learnt the art  
of jungling, in a growing city's west side, from a fellow  
enthusiast, the guy who created the botanic garden  
at Springbrook mountain, site of her remote 1930s  
honeymoon, accessed on the back of big black horses,  
surefootedly mounting the steep hills, when there  
were no roads.

Recently I recalled the row of pert  
stucco-brush pastel-bright gerberas along the fence-  
line of her neighbors' property, competing with  
her wild profusion of azaleas.

I still imagine that family,  
their stymied personalities – attributed bitterly by  
my mother – recycling their monotonous way through  
the unfolding decades; how had they even emerged  
into the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

And I envision the twin cement-  
render facades, neatly bookending their front steps,  
and that short-mown lawn grass, yellow in the long  
heat of the summers.

But now, I'm sawing fig branches,  
heavy with inedible fruit, in an overgrown canopy  
of driveway – as the fire-danger rating creeps  
to 'extreme' – and sweeping dead heaps of dry tangled  
jasmine vine, and crunchy-crisp fallen leaves from  
loquat trees, on the path beside the house.

I find myself  
engaged in an internal debate, concerning  
what my extremely neat neighbors  
must think of me.

**How romantic is the ocean-washed light of the harbour**

I'm reading a dream of a boy snorkeling  
in a whitewashed sundrenched denim-blue  
off-the-rocks sea, tilted and glassy  
in the brightness, until the eyes blur  
by the light of a low-watt enviro helix  
and the glasses come out  
of their open-and-shut case.

The image of the ocean remains after, recurs,  
a negative of white gold shadowed in a medium  
of powder-black oxide, seeing the donut holes,  
the bits left out, sun slats through a darkshade  
drawing room, like a cut paper doily, and a fingertip  
drawn along the raised pressed edge of texture  
left by a stamping steel factory cutter.

You sail under the harbour bridge  
in the rainbow ship,  
waving  
as I'm driving over.

Now later I am dreaming  
of togetherness, in a sun-drowsy heat, all lacy  
all velamentous, and bridal,  
in the cotton-soft of sheet.

So sails up, friend of old, and take me out  
on that navigable expanse across the bay,  
with the water layered like scales and  
over  
the wakes, the slate-grey bay  
where the block apartments line the land-side of islands ...  
and slip one hand around my waist  
there,  
to the small of my back, and see ...  
if we make it over I'd still like  
to find that cavey place  
that resembles  
that same sunshot  
Mexican beach  
and that same vivid  
whitewashed  
blue painted  
Brett Whitely-walled sea.