

Still life with a vase: One swoll sunlit moment

there's a calm just lately that I can reconstitute or recapture in shards,
like one magnified moment, stopped, *stopped hard – like a broken heart of my
ancestor, her husband drowned, leaving eight kids for the balance of a long
lifetime* paused *stuck* caught there in the golden swolled
round summerlight of a midday, that's treacled from a hot sky, to fold
against the timber-boned inside of a working class backyard fence.

there a three-branched sapling, a *Pittosporum* weed, that lounges at
the base of a cypress trunk, is standing, half-lying, on the bare earth.

the neighbours have fallen
silent. some kind of miracle. later I realised
that I take glimpses like this out of my life, in stillness, cut out of a
fractured sense of atmosphere *piecing together the things that are important
to me, myself* as if self-medicating,
meditatively.

If I could hold this stillness, just one ordinary moment at a time, in
a series of unremarkable days, in the humble visual life-aspect seen by a
woman, framed by a kitchen window, the tv the soundwaves the news all voices
faded to a nothing, hands in warm water perhaps standing at a sink, in
the home of a solo mother, whose kids have grown up and now are gone,
giving in looking across

a restrictive enclosure, the backyard of another sole mother whose kids

likewise have left *feeling the malaise of the summer heat waiting for the
return of the smooth-topped clouds of the cold front across the field*

– like a simple unassuming 'postcard from the edge' –
that unkempt lawn of weeds in a limpid spectral green, the huge pile left there
in the drive, of garden cuttings, unprocessed, greying in the steady light,

feet just standing, a hibiscus
in flower, the transient soft purple paper petals dropping to earth each day,
friend to a mallow bush, visiting with a bird fold up this one
moment, into a pocket perhaps, then take it back out, unpack it

later – I realise this is like

the detail with which
my memory works best.

Summer

A pair

of red-tog

kid bums

cruise past

I'm agape

me in a blue

at this

spiral

sight sudden

water slide

in the bright

Them, sliding

light of the day

past directly

and I laugh

above me, feels

like life

And

as it's

I remember early

supposed to be

days, working

with young kids:

When ten of them

one day

came down

with me

in the big

Because the other

water slide

adults were

too bored; none of them

wanted to

So that was fine

go in

til we landed

in the deep pool

at the bottom

But with the ten

We'd all laughed

of them

on top of me, floundering

some not able to swim

Push the bundle

I could

of them up okay, but

– a moment's fear –

I nearly drowned,

myself

The smaller scissors

In the kitchen, with the smaller scissors
I snip a black cotton thread, wiry and waxy,
that protrudes from below
the plum-painted wooden window sill,
day-dreaming a scenario where
if I pulled hard on this tiny
wiggly starchy string
it could cause
a momentary explosion,
sudden, with a cracking 'pop'
like a christmas novelty,
that could undo all the makings
of the building of the house.
It could bring the walls and windows down,
collapse the ceilings and the roof,
create a send-off for the tree
that leans on the western guttering,
brokenly expose the floorboards,
and the dusty dirt beneath,
exhume the empty papery-skin
corpse of a long-dead rat,
in the wall cavity,
and leave me standing,
somehow, uncertain how,
miraculously unscathed,
dusted with plaster leavings
in a ballast-strewn chaos of rubble.

A short-tailed shearwater colony, Griffiths Island.

In the gathering darkness
can be felt, sensed, almost before seeing, the silent reconnoitre and landing
of the sudden clouds of short-tailed shearwaters, the mutton birds,
appearing out of an empty sky.

The only sound I hear is when they fly very close
to where I'm standing,
on a wooden platform.

It's almost sacred, such quiescence,
the containment of peace amid
the constant movement.

And they keep coming, in out of the sea, so many,
out of the darker and darker evening-into-night,
like bat-birds, circling, silently.

Then a sudden squark, aloud and crazy on a hill, only a scant
few hundred yards away! Has one been caught by a fox? Are the biological scientists
trapping them – to put bands, for monitoring, on their legs?

No, it seems, as a ruckus sets up, beginning here and there
among the low salt-succulent bushes that provide
shelter for nesting holes, as one large baby bird awakens to feed,
another chick is coaxed by its parent to joyful greetings, and two birds
begin a mating love ritual, with a growing excitement
of sexualised intensity and desire, grating and humming, clawing and
crawling together.

And these sounds begin to possess the whole island, with
the ratcheting, screeching, rasping-gasping sheer
frivolity of coming home!

And some have learned to laugh, as the darkness encloses me and them,
in a manner reminiscent of 'kookaburras', or barking wattle birds.

To my astonishment, two magpies,
that sat waiting on a nearby pair of posts near the viewing deck
for the coming in of the shearwaters,
are as curious and satisfied by this phenomenon as any human. Now from
the nearest Norfolk Island pine – where they've roosted before a sleepy night –
they comment sagely in 'magpie-ese' about this nightly
celebratory,
gutturally-glad, throaty vibratory
homecoming event
of the short-tailed shearwaters.

Against the yellow grass

Queen Anne's lace flower crowns are white pigment blobs decorative and then
serially upended in the sunlight blinking on-off on-off. Tossing this way and that
in a hot breeze they project from dry yellowed grass in the summer haze lifting
the steep embankment at the highway-side and pinning it structurally to the sky.

The boned spines of their undersides are halves of sea urchins skeletal bristled.
Their diameters unwilling are curved shrunken against the baking hot day.
Reflecting the ground they catch an orange light are mushroom-pink
spots in the painting accidentals where they should be green.

A clutch of borrowed mini-Renoir parasols or Japanese paper orbs
that could have been worked in tiny stubble by a studious Van Gogh
they tatter instead in the wind of an Australian colonial-era depiction
basking in clear bands of colour in the over-hot southern summer.

They're a starched crochet of strewn doilies first wrought by an Irish bobbin
but now a floral motif *in vivo in situ* an embroidered ephemera
loosed from any socialite connections of European origins.

The painterly Heideesque image of them dragged by the breeze is grounded against
a universal midday blue a canvas on which an earthly Nature has brush-stroked in a
textured grassy fill beneath the wall-like steepness of a Tom Roberts' rifted hill the
gold of Arthur Streeton's Eaglemont his backdrop eye-stretch to a distant river
valley

And these jaunty invert-umbrella forms increase in number with the passing weeks
their movements tethered. They are small kites jerking in the scudding parched
wind gusts evading the emanating heat.

Soon all along the margins of the hill's high shoulder road they flank the gutters
as standing characters or like buoys buoyant bobbing in a straw-green sea
while further down the gully and along the treed tracks they frizz up foamy white
from a beautiful wash of emerald clean.