

*The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics*

Where the Sea Stands Still

Go straight along King Street  
Turn right at Enmore Road  
Number 14 Cambridge Street  
The sea's tongue licks into the wall oven  
An old house reveals  
Innumerable places for spying on us

We have been ground down Further pauperized by pilfering  
Shadows just appear at the address

Unfamiliar words are curses  
Inbred neighbours muddle along  
Dead pigeons regurgitate generations of town scenery  
Glass Inlaid into eyes  
Sky Crossing railway tracks arrogantly preserves colour blindness  
Beautifully printed maps of the ruins of each person  
Must embrace the sea  
All non-existence Vanishing further  
Is a poem Leading us back down to homes nowhere  
And everywhere Thoroughly dismantled lives

Transformation of Fossils

Who has used lime to bleach these once praised lives  
Who has unearthed rocks from the depths of the blue horsetail  
waterweeds  
Magnified The bird of the first ancestor drops off  
Whereupon all the winged creatures flying here are thrown into  
chaos  
Glass of museums more terrifying than the sea  
An old man's vision Cannot leave  
The smouldering hostility hidden in the trilobite's eyes

Bloodless procreation From today the snake casts off yesterday  
Death of a blade of grass wounding a rock with ease  
Like a word without an owner Depending on a skeleton for an  
existence

A musical instrument shrinks a room to delete distance for  
Two hearts All to be seen is emptiness  
More coldly melting in the wind  
A city's face discerning in remote antiquity the topography of Death

Dying more deeply  
Whose claws make careless marks on the paper Clumsily like  
hands  
Who has become old Squirming years of age in packaging  
More short-sighted than a calendar Living fossils from too close  
made into mankind  
What takes flight sounds like farewell  
Huge like a dinosaur and sensual Outside the museum window  
A small crawling green lizard appears

### Fish

Poetry written for a fish may also be written for a person  
A woman Likes to decorate her house with water  
The water in spring is the fish's birthday

So water in spring is especially small  
As small as a newborn girl

With the nature of water the girl at maturity must learn to breathe  
with her gills

Finger part the naked sunbeams of morning  
Shores dashed in the dark night Recede deep into the skin  
Swirl into a worshipped cavern  
Until the whole body glows Like translucent pebbles  
Rubbing the spring water's velvet surface

Nothing changes These names created every minute  
Hang underwater in the streaming sunlight  
Each of these created minutes Live and die in intense blue  
Fish confronting the tearful world does not weep

Poetry Written for stars Birds Useless feet  
Its only day  
The perception of birth in the transformation of the myriad things

Yang Lian  
Translated by Mabel Lee