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
'Hands On': Poetry

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