

# Red Painting

Eventually,  
I find you in the cellar  
sixteen years later,  
a small canvas  
in a rough wooden frame,  
sanded by student hands  
to meet a long-forgotten deadline.

In memory you filled a wall,  
a space, a vacuum,  
grew huger every year  
with the raw energy  
of hotwired, overlaid strokes.

Black and scarlet tempest,  
tornado of possibility,  
my future was set  
in your chiaroscuro waves:  
an apocalypse certain of redemption.

## Plettenberg Bay Sunrise

Bodies bony as briar,  
they follow the rig from the estuary,  
cormorants, gannets and gulls,  
cries contending the auction,  
open beaks catching the surf's spray.  
No singing.  
Panting, their breath comes icy;  
bellows, their wings dare not die.  
They push for the front and the prize.  
They dive. They spear. They swallow.  
They shake out their salty tarpaulins  
against the wind.

## Tea in a glass

Zeida made tea in a glass  
with a Russian silver holder;  
swirled the leaves  
in an already warmed pot;  
used a strainer to prevent strays;  
sliced pungent lemon  
to lighten cinnamon water  
to palest saffron;  
added delectable honey  
with a long-handled spoon;  
lumped sugar in his cheek;  
suctioned sweet liquid  
through his lips  
and sighed,  
*Ay a maichel.*  
What a miracle!  
Another world  
from the herring brine  
of home.

## Locket

It lies broken  
where the gravel bit into its brightness,  
where her name was engraved;  
where she polished it over and over,  
lifting her soft skirt  
to where it pressed  
against her warmth;  
where she clicked its clasp  
closed and open.  
where she left  
tiny teeth marks, little love bites.  
Safe, it hung on her golden chain,  
clasping silken hair, sepia smile,  
sweet skin.

Now her mouth no longer closes and opens.  
Now she no longer sees sky.  
Where the gravel bit into her brightness,  
she lies broken.