

## The coming Summer

In childhood I didn't celebrate  
the coming of Winter with grand Rituals;  
I patiently awaited the coolness  
of the Breeze, the onset of the rain  
glutting every gutter, the coastal  
wind swimming in my ears

daring to peer over clifftops into  
the Pacific's heaving mass stretched far  
beyond where human eyes distinguished  
that final speck of a far-off freighter;  
Before returning through mud,  
rough heathland,  
and the sonorous dirge of seabirds.

I never wished for Summer, never  
welcomed her warmth or yearned for the final,  
ambrosial oozings of her days  
slowly melting into night; there was no  
awful, desperate darkness to drive away -  
just a heat I could not exorcise,  
cursing me with jammy blood bursting  
from the broken dam of my nose, damp clothes  
fast against my skin, and a lethargy  
which scorned my feeble attempts at play.

In childhood, Summer was here when the sky  
deepened to a sanguine red; when smoke  
covered my clothes and choked me before  
the lunch bell had rung; when we gathered  
precious items on the table  
filling a metal strongbox with passports,  
heirlooms of our dead, and legal papers.

In childhood, Summer ushered in Fire and  
Fire ushered a silent knowledge I could not  
make peace with - that this year might be the one  
when our home is finally taken.

## A return

Odyssey returns, a vagabond  
blown in with the breeze, with one pair of boots  
(Cleaved soles glued in a vain attempt to keep  
the sodden earth from seeping through each crack),  
And an unfamiliar and calloused frame  
rubbing against a comfy city.

Specters risen from too-shallow graves  
haunt all my usual places during  
a biblical deluge plaguing Sydney  
(which I recall isn't designed for rain);  
it cannot hold or release, easily  
overcome, overwhelmed, now a floodplane  
for sowing new memories; a churning  
mass of bracken waves and

I have been dragged in with the tide.  
I'll wash out before the Moon becomes full.

I see each friend exactly once; I'm a band  
in town for one night and one night only, playing  
to an audience of one who cannot choose  
but hear each recount of a three-year history;  
until a mingled guilt and pride burst up my gullet,  
so for a moment I pretend -  
Pretend the sins of my  
unceremonious departure and resurrection washed away -  
or just forgiven for an hour.

I am close enough to reach out  
and touch those I love; to eke out  
tender moments between shared traumas  
of lockdown life and a world between us.  
I'm aware how full my heart is; I question  
why I left, and - joyful, candid, weepy -  
affirm my regrets number zero.

## To Whimsy

Today, it feels, my life's Whimsy has expired,  
a too-soon-used supply, for one who's  
ceased to be wise, or pure, or both.

Every stream nursed me in youth;  
every bough cradled me, each ancient  
stone upheld me, and every breeze sped  
me onward to confront my destiny.

Now, I alone min'ster to shades of poets past,  
dear to me as my own kin, reminding  
me -  
nothing can inspire us equally, twice.

That hallowed memories are not ripe fruits  
for my creative juicing, not beloved  
notebooks plucked off a shelf to re-discover  
some vintage verse aged to perfection,  
but tokens; a fane to past Whimsy and ruder  
powers heedless of my suppliance; a  
ramshackle, moss-strewn recess of my mind

where (safe from time's decay) I recall the  
sacred dead's promis'd relics.

The fever of a Roman Summer, standing  
where Keats lay dying, staring through pottery  
Re-constructing Shelley's jawbone - or when first I  
slaked my thirst at Brontë Falls, before gazing  
in quiet wonder from atop the Withens.

On the days I cannot stomach the thought of it,  
I tell myself - as a prayer, a myth,  
an incantation repeated until it becomes truth -  
that somewhere, strewn lankly under willow boughs,  
or atop heather (seeing sparks before his  
eyes) the Whimsy of that young poet yet resides within me.