



Hannah Fox

*Undertone*





*Undertone*

Once,  
grieving, I went to the river.  
    There, among the shimmering gums  
    a flock of cockatoos shrieked overhead  
plucking the ache from my heart  
like feathers from a cushion.  
For a few minutes I could breathe.

Another time,  
a lost duckling, mistook me for  
    its mother, or some mother-like thing  
    and, seeking warmth, hopped onto my lap  
    crawled under my shirt  
    and stayed there, trembling –  
a miracle of softness  
and trust.

Again,  
I went there, perhaps you did too  
in those months, years, when we sheltered in place  
delighting in fresh tracks through the undergrowth  
    rope swings in trees and pawprints  
    muddying the ground.  
    The birds, raucous and shrill,  
    sang us home.

    What if I said this conversation started long ago  
    between the bark and leaves  
    the soil and our souls.  
When we let ourselves quieten, we feel it  
the parts of us left to dwell there  
invisible things  
among the shed bark  
and spiderwebs  
    composting into the soil  
into the bones of the place –  
whispered in undertones.

Suse Thatcher

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