

Drought and Flood

*I love a sunburnt country,
A land of...droughts and flooding rains.
(Dorothea Mackellar)*

Drought

Out of the charged sky red with dust
drops ping on the tin and iron roof,
yellow-tailed black cockatoos
rend the sky apart,
they helter-skelter up the dry creek bed
screeching something about rain.

Cattle coalesce along the fence-line,
they lie down in hollows
beneath pockets of bitten trees,
beneath an upside-down sea
of bruised nimbus.

In the back-lit paddock
the old collie yaps at the menacing sky,
dust puffs on the cracked earth of the dam,
on its rim a stray calf's head
is loud with flies...

The windstorm passes –
dry leaves and litter
are scattered against the homestead door
like uncollected letters,
like the bills left unopened
on the veranda floor.

Flooded River

From the homestead's veranda
I watch her under the sieved moonlight,
her skin silken and dully silver.

Incredibly, after three days she dozes
but does not sleep.

I could almost reach out,
run my fingers through her tresses,
listen to her runnelled sighs.

But she betrays such closeness:
just this morning, miles downstream,
they pulled from her grasp the muddy boot
of our neighbour's missing child.