

Taking on the Auspices

Author

Frank, Jane

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TAKING THE AUSPICES

I have walked to high ground
where the view is clear to the horizon
both ways

There is no storm in sight —
no clapping of thunder or blitzes of light

But I wait for other signs:

the clouds are fish-scaled
out towards Mount Coot-tha
where the TV towers have begun
to blink — last flakes of blue peeling
through the gaps

and there are a profusion
of pine cones
heaped at the base of this tree,

early stars pinned
on the bias,

crickets chirruping slowly
in the cooling air,

the dog pensive: lying down,
eyes locked with mine

I cannot read the pattern of birds
in the sky —
there are none —

but bats begin their flight
from the mangroves along the creek below,
sail their silent flotilla
backed by the river towards the south-west

I still cannot make up my mind,

cast lots using dry
cassia twigs

then toss them free
from my lookout templa
thumbs pressed each side to where
four parts of my skull
join together,

watch and wait for the similitude
of day crossing to night

I don't sneeze or stumble
walking home
though a grey cat flits
across a darkening garden

but when I reach my gate, sunset's
last colour is red —
I stay as it narrows to a fine
steady line

of forgiveness