

A blurred photograph of a blue car in motion, with green foliage in the background. The image has a motion blur effect, suggesting the car is moving quickly. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, black font with a red outline.

**ron dowl**

**the rains  
that fall around here**



THE RAINS THAT FALL AROUND HERE

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THE RAINS THAT FALL AROUND HERE

*Devotional Poems*



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## SOMETHING IN A DRAWER

like something i've put in the small drawer  
of a dresser  
(slid the drawer in  
while i was unawares) –

and now cannot find  
nor know what it was –

like something that a tribe  
buried in the land

and then the farming folk  
(generations later)  
made plots and grazed sheep  
changing it all –

something i want to get back to  
like last summer  
when sulphur crested cockatoos  
screeched garrulously

at the window in full flight –

or years before when lorikeets  
flocked cacophonous  
to a dead tree at dusk –

until they cut it down  
for fear it would fall –

or like eros making a flying intervention  
dramatic but needed –

something about dark sleep in that drawer  
a sadness each day that i can't get to

## VALLEY, WIND

it's moonless tonight  
yet walking this dark hillside

pale casts  
light our way —

let's take the rim  
high over huddled houses

their yellow glimmers  
signalling

feel the upward breath  
rolling the haystacks

tugging  
at the manes of stallions

## AFTER A WEEK OF RAIN

lies awake at a dark hour  
hears the hushed sentence  
falling on the trees  
falling in the street

hears below the window  
muffled voices  
conducting an exchange, indistinct  
weaving into the falling –

the unseen pair becoming  
people of the rain  
voices of the rain discussing secrets

empty  
her breathing low beside him  
there are seas that cannot speak this

how the river of exquisite words  
could eradicate all his books  
if he could record them

## THE WAY WE WALKED

we could feel it in our bodies,  
had already slipped into our mythology –

the gravel path, the darkening sky  
the swamphen strutting on the lilies –

how the green leaves gorged the lagoon  
how rain fell upon them, drumming

how we listened to the beats  
saw flashes in the west

saw the swamphen, purple  
moving over the extent

## ON THE CANBERRA LAND AXIS

dispossession strikes a chord with me –

you want to make this place  
eucalyptic

have set your gunyas  
here on the levelled lawns

let in long summer evenings  
the smokes of your dreamings  
mingle with the scents of roses –

me, going from door to door  
looking for what's been lacking –

returning, in the end  
to the little timbers  
the jetty, watching the meteorite

that falls and boils its way  
into the churning sea

## SCENE

looks into the deep  
of her nut brown eyes

close to her amber face  
saying say it's so  
it's still our land

this land where once  
we built a house –

land now grassed like carpet  
upon which small dogs scamper

over the old foundations  
and the lush garden plots

under the wooded hillside  
rising rich and green

like the hillside we grew up by  
the one to which we said  
we would always return

## ORDER OF THE BIRD

hearing the sharp notes  
of a single bird

on a warm night  
through the open window

they pause  
in their preparations for sleep

to consider  
this moment of eloquence  
and how it might relate

to the fracture of yellow moon  
that hangs in the west

to the promise of spring

to an order of life in the city  
of which they admit  
they know nothing



## SURGES ON THE OTHER SHORE

now that i have been there  
i can tell you

can tell you of the other shore  
(you who stand on the gantries,  
silhouettes against the sun) –

facts i will recount in greater length  
at some more comfortable time

for now my stomach turns  
muscles shake with exhaustion  
salt water burns in my mouth  
and there is still so far to return  
across this treacherous  
strait of brooding waves –

but i will say this, that when i got there  
when i got to the other shore  
there were unexpected surges  
that took me into caverns

filled with the sea and  
relentlessly pumping

they overpowered me  
the surges on the other shore

## THE RAINS THAT FALL AROUND HERE

past the fork in the dust white road  
beyond the shacks where i live –

(they squat without eaves in the dark green bush  
and glisten when the deluges come)

you nose the comfortable sedan  
tyres crunching in the gravel  
onto the lesser-known path

and, your arm resting through the open window  
we speak –

of the rains that fall around here  
of the rocks that cut though the soils  
of the crystal cataracts in the ridges

and of this meandering way  
nicely slicing the wilds

## THE SEA EAGLE

regularly the sea eagle  
circling in the humid air  
returned to the shifting boat  
and was noted by the hands

working the wooden decks  
on a sea milky with brine

reminiscing of a time  
when they had fashioned  
coloured kites

had deployed them to  
catch the upper stream

had sped across the surface  
the kite tethers and their muscles  
taut with pride  
transfiguring the estuary  
into an arena

and remembering when

they'd lived on land  
in houses of brick

and had survived a thunderous deluge  
by which even the best of these houses  
had become as though  
huts of sticks

and cold rain had fallen in every room  
so that, gathering their  
small dogs and possessions  
they had left

uncertain whether behind them  
were their families –  
to work on the creaking planks  
on the briny sea

the ship now almost always  
becalmed in steamy air

and the sea eagle, the sea eagle  
returning and then leaving  
with monotony

## WICCA

perhaps one night  
they will take you from your home  
to a place out of doors and  
in darkness on bare ground  
before a pitch painted shed  
begin to tell you who you are –

and realise something  
for which even they  
were not yet ready –

that it's only  
*that* in the black shed

(its closed door hiding a mystery  
terrifying even to them)

of which you are worthy

## INCARNATION

lithe, moving like water  
limb sure, deliberate  
the figure looses the leopard –

a heavy throb of tail  
paws testing the soil

absorbing itself  
breathing  
into the green shadowed undergrowth

sleek, vigilant –  
the cat out of the bag

## UNDER YOUR WING

when your heavy ochre wing  
lifted, revealing an underside  
that had the  
whiteness and softness of clouds

and took me under

i remembered  
when you appeared as magnesium  
burning in the night  
spewed from the earth



## ON THE ISLAND

in skirmishes with the dark ones  
their jet bodies electric, razorish  
we suffered, and tried many strategies –

ambushed by lithe bodies  
we returned combat on the roadsides  
fled in fear, hearts pounding, to the docks  
and journeyed to the far side  
by a peripheral track through gnarled vines  
hugging the rocky shore –

to find them *there* even  
insurgents from a bleak sea  
scrambling at us through the bush

and realised the inevitability  
of a trek to the pungent centre  
where, the jungle dripping on us  
we entered through a hewn gate  
and in the heat herded pachyderms  
plump and young

which we rode through the primeval tangles  
in single file, processional  
back to our now less-troubled coasts

## THE FEAST

and when the talk  
out on the plain  
in the dense night  
is done

they invite you  
to the place of the feast  
where a rug of  
gentle flames

sprouting eye-blue  
from the soil  
caresses an airy mix  
to perfection

and they offer you  
crusted medallions  
now made gold  
by the fire

## TURANGI

grass stalks shiver at the fence  
the mown lawn stretches away  
a skylark calls  
the breeze shifts needles in the pine –

it's one more  
in a life of countless mornings

and at tokaanu  
the dark mud pops, taunts  
that the earth might still be juvenile

and once he felt a warmth between the eyebrows

and heard a voice that said  
keep going

UN -

budded germinated  
emanated emerged

sprung risen grown

commenced proceeded  
sprouted appeared

started happened dawned

## SUMMER, OHAKUNE MOUNTAIN ROAD

in the miro the blackbird  
in the beeches cold rain

in the mist ruapehu –  
black/white origami

and the tarred road  
glistening and slippery  
carved over twenty years  
to dangerous elbows

terminates  
beyond the tree line –

an empty conclusion  
rock strewn

## LAKE TAUPO

yesterday dark squalls  
traced your surface  
touched silently  
by tall moving rains –

this morning  
in the darkness  
a heavy drenching persists

and from the cottage  
on the cliff top  
we think of you

deep, untouched

and anticipate daybreak  
cicadas  
small bush birds

and you a brightness  
flint-like or eye grey

## ON THE VERANDA

flat bright grape leaves  
shift in the air –

there's the idea  
of a presence

something that knows  
the still night and the lake



## THE GATE, AJAR

out at the point where the big house settles –

surveys the perfect estuary  
and the white gums glistening in the sun –

out at that point  
the man falters  
tumbles from the headland

falls through heavy brush  
landing bruised and alive  
by a derelict engine  
bearing cast letters –

spelling a phrase of wisdom, incomprehensible –

and sees below the gate swung ajar

and the deeply trodden  
dusty path

by which he walks

to the place of cave dwellers  
down by the estuary

who craft their earthen masks  
and display them

proudly,  
in well-lit caves

## MUDRA

to understand in an instant

I am deep structure

to form a grid with open hands

one laid on the other

as mudra to my mother

my matrix

to the moment of collapsing

a construction

if only for that

a moment

## SPIRALAND

he has spent too long  
in the sad lands of bare hills  
and wants the heart of spiraland

today he chances upon its opening –

strong stone walls  
arcng away into the hill  
majestic and silent

and thrills to its dark breath

standing at the ancient mouth  
in a bludgeon of summer heat  
he looks at the hill

sees as though for the first time  
its dusty surface  
its smooth contours vaguely  
yet unmistakably  
married to the coiled internal form

and wonders on the etiquette of entry

on how one travels

the subterranean way to its core

## PALE LOAM

a scaffold  
carefully constructed

collapses,

reveals mark  
scent

a pale loam  
tasting of me

