

Broken/Open

JILL JONES is a Sydney poet. She won the Mary Gilmore Award in 1993 for her first book, *The Mask and the Jagged Star*. *The Book of Possibilities*, her third book, was shortlisted for the National Book Council, The Age Book of the Year and Adelaide Festival Awards. Her fourth book, *Screens Jets Heaven: New & Selected Poems*, won the Kenneth Slessor Poetry Prize in 2003.

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JILL JONES



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Water, is taught by thirst . . .

-EMILY DICKINSON

For Annette

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birds/updraft

the lake
will always be spoken
above shadows

shape : unshape

Winged

it is the centre of a word
that is unimaginable, almost
as it flutters out with the birds
indifferent over the lake

as closed in the eye
or as far as the mountain
brittle as a principle or a crust
in the hand

it is raised up but not grasping
the sides of the hours
it is suspended, it is surface
as though carried by water

or wind moves the parts of language
less calculable than the tides
not boxed or protected
once they leave the soft throat

the twist of autumn trees
lets down the light, trust
in the chill, naked and right
that winter will always be spoken

if it is tender as thinking inside today
and surrounding form—*klee klee*
little curlew will sing elsewhere than memory
raising sky with soundings/silences

but it is a kind of peace time
and also a form of force that emerges
such as words that rhyme
or shuffle softly near the tree

a head operates in its clay
and thinks about the wings
it cannot elevate to understanding
here against the fickle light

to be based on what is left
as though still unwritten
a statement that suddenly swerves
and disappears

it has moved beyond confidence
and shed that blunt examination
even though birds pick over the ground
that is written

Facing the Harbour

Skeleton fork fern—Psilotum nudum

Without roots and prefiguring
the shaping of ferns
bronze bright in the sun cleft
along a wet fault line
viewed as if undiscovered
by traffic shouting underneath.
Growing is not clinging
abiding, travelling daylight.

Before our classifications
the transformations of light
catch on stony strata—
plumb, fugitive
lush walls and gullies
dream of a gondwana
holding in rock's pushed layers
a wash and bloom of oxides.

The government of seasons
millennia, displacements
the tributaries and falls, variances
land and sea before time stolen
for power, where words fly up.
Harbour hauls and surface trades
with wind wing and sail out there.
Here the wall, crevice anchorage
after, and now
in this messed up
abiding
daylight still holding.

Heat in a Room

January soaks the hill with white sky
grass writes into blood and a river of heat sings

Music loads the morning with legends
an afterimage of crowds reaching into a room

Small dried packages of territory remain unturned
there is whispering outside under the redemption of intervals

Just as silence deciphers light
exchange rates cycle gently through conversations

And days draft me, breathing extinction
my skin a chassis of orange

As for the car, it shimmers into the raging sunset
then sort of erupts

(a kind of persistent hope that nobody gets caught)

The night's hangers are loose in the closet
sleep is a projection, part of the weightlessness

It is impending—a delicate sense of the flange
it seems as though the room is small.

The Dissolve

Have you admitted something is catching
on the gate?

Is it the way a wind blows
out of the mouth of spring
the crackle and crisp touching up
of a skinny evening?

How the flowers move above their shadows
black leaves, green hearts
lines of worms and bugs written on leaves.
But you cannot exhaust your head
or put it down
heavily.

Though the city makes you tender
at times it seems you were never
part of it—here.
Elsewhere nothing seems true
but loose as a whisper, part of the dissolve.
With a glance of the hand
you are heaping the forgotten
rather than attending to the laying down.
Currawongs from a day's mist blanket
remind you, echoed as a lone girl
while all this obstructed rippling
is slowed down to drift in the passing cold.

Tell me how it's undone—
moving between the birds, the cracking trees
over a fence as I taste wind furl
past ghost lips, the never blue light
my house, my intersection—

to arrange the chill then light up the knots
to experience the labour
that now unshapes me.