

EVERYTHING MUST GO Meredith Wattison

‘Nor is this all. A thing which we saw, a book which we read at a certain period does not merely remain for ever conjoined to what existed then around us; it remains also faithfully united to what we ourselves then were and thereafter it can be handled only by the sensibility, the personality that were then ours.’

Marcel Proust, *Time Regained*

1. DRUMMING

Culling my bookshelves

I sit on a drummer’s stool,

the perfect height

as I come to the orange Penguins;

I reread them through my hands.

Charities declined them; no space.

My hardline – to keep (two), to environmentally throw

(a battered, bittered few), to sell (most) to Berkelouw.

Leo and Henry gently sort as I have to walk away,

find a pensive corner (where capacity extends to six)

in a dim café, a small sanitised table, sweet coffee. Sold and bought.

Three IKEA bags full. (repeat next week)

2. I THINK OF PROUST’S PAN OF MILK’S MAGNOLIAS/SAILS

It’s been like walking into

an arcade with fire alarms blaring,

a firetruck outside, idling, garbling, flashing,

a new café being fitted out has thrown off sparks.

Helen wrote that my COVID plan (to read all of Proust)

was ‘the perfect solution’ (she has endured the death of a dog and accepted another)

and Judith has returned to the piano

for three hours a day. I walk my dog at dawn

for the shifting twilight, that strange fading indigo,

the nil, its cancelling reveal, our tender,

freeform orbit. I want this poem to barely touch the page.

3. D.H. LAWRENCE'S HAT BLEW INTO THE SEA HERE IN 1922

His beach at Thirroul has collapsed under recent pounding waves,
it is mesh fenced. A man slips through to see, I call out,
he says, 'I'm only going this far'.

I sit along the coast on an almost empty beach; it is cold,
a naked little girl, joyously defiant runs/skips past me, she wears
sunglasses, each lens a plastic daisy, we say hi, her sister follows.

That stale question,

'What would you say to your child-self?', is answered.

Her little brother carried by her mother
looks like Ed Sheeran, her father lingers
wringing their clothes.