

Galahs in Winter

In the carpark
settling myself into the car's
tiny complete world, I reach up
for the seat-belt and glimpse
across the gape of wet asphalt
her reaching up simultaneously
for the seat-belt. Her efficient woman's
hand flicked back at the wrist,
swift finger and thumb snatch
the metal clip and instantly
the slick black strip unrolls
across her heart. Anchor: clunk (I imagine,
for cabined in our steel shells
with preparatory bluster of engines
things seen without are soundless
as pre-talking moves, infinitely
elaborate mimes.) Done: only a couple
of seconds, she's in, ready. Supreme,
she commands her machine, erect,
from where I sit, in Egyptian profile,
and as nobly unreachable: cars
enstrand us. She is
gone. Why I

don't go too I don't know.
She's driven off with my will
and something to do with me is left
in an immobile gape of asphalt.
The sideways winter sun slinks in somehow
under a sky black-loaded with icy rain
and is fulgent opal-green on the gums.
It's worth sitting here for
in my bucket-seat. It'd be nice
to think you could get in like that
under the blackness of death. The least
things had now are better than then's
ubiquitous future. Look!
Fast decorative galahs: twirl
down the window, they squeak and whistle and whirl.
They are definite about what they want
(in their tasteful grey and pink)
but since I am ignorant of their speech,
what is it they want?
I can't abate my ache either,
mr. and ms. galah: I watch

as you settle and pick beneath the trees
of this undigested continent.

HUGH UNDERHILL