

## Homecoming

(in five parts)

I

I sail myself towards existence, carried in the current,  
cilia coax me forward towards  
my significant other.

We pool resources  
merge our data  
fuse inside a tiny pool.

We were once tadpoles, we were once eggs.

We kickstart ourselves  
nuzzled by lush linings our mother prepared for us unknowingly  
to incubate  
to be fresh born as one  
an infant human  
unversed, untutored, flawless  
unscathed, untamed.

A pristine advocate of joy unrestrained.

For months I wallow in my waters  
amphibian, wriggling like a newt  
breathing through a surrogate.

I languish in a lake.

Nutrients  
antibodies  
hormones

turn a fable into tangible fate, as I turn & turn again.

Fidgety as an octopus  
secretive as a snail.

When the waters break my reverie upends  
I am decanted  
stranded on dry land  
wrinkled as a sea lettuce  
spartan as a clam.  
Loathe to imbibe the arid atmosphere  
until I can't deny the pleas my blood sends.

Removed from my abiding help  
  
the stark loneliness of breathing for myself.

I am young enough to remember muffled symphonies  
the hug of water pressure  
the discovery of knees,  
& feet, oh to be webbed,  
to exchange limbs for fins  
to slip from clasping palms  
to chase the waves right to the sea  
to be, as once I was, afloat, oceanic, wet behind the ears,  
to be a liquid being  
rescued from sharp corners, gravity, concrete,  
to drift like jellyfish, to weave through forests of kelp  
to live under the watershed, listening to Blue Whales sing the perspicacity  
of gentleness.

That is an Ark I wish to board.

## II

Four billion years ago let's say  
microbial primitives were honed in deep-sea hydrothermal vents,  
a cradle as inhospitable as they come.

Life is inventive

reams of forms & content sprouted from those humble crumbs

tails, heads, tongues

antennae, claws, snouts,

bills, spines, wings

beaks, fingers, ears, eyes, fur, paws, antlers, hooves, skin, scales, whiskers, shells, mandibles,

carapaces, nerves & cartilage

The entirety of this biosphere

fluid brains & rivers of veins.

## III

Legend tells of an apocalypse

chronicled in the archives of our clay, fine-grained, boundaries

whispered through the fringes of our rushes, reeds & swords of yellow flags.

Once, it was dank, once, it was dark & even weeds were drowning

sediment choked invertebrates

the water clogged with debris

our stagnant water, was stagnant truly

hunters couldn't see through grime, leaves decomposed to slime

there was nowhere to hide

there was no way to survive.

It was a quagmire of adversity.

Over generations this system died  
its star obscured, as arboreals thrived on its banks  
too many branches overhanging  
red wavelengths jammed  
aquatic chlorophyll degrades.

Industry, pesticides, disuse, chemical fertilisers, fly-tipping, invasive species, disease.

Light shrank above us, like fading hope  
the sponges & the skaters & the snails & the swimmers & the spawn began to sink  
into acceptance of their turgid fate.

Those enabled fled from suffocation  
visitors were few  
the myriad range of species dwindled down to two.

For empty years nothing filled our depths  
we were bloated by obscurity & death.

Gone were the songs of foraging & mirth  
burst bubbles dwindled

clicks, chirps, munching, pops, squeaks, crackles, knocking, drips, thuds, ticking, trickling,  
chuffing, whistles, creaking, croaking, gurgling rhythms  
fell silent.

Then salvation came & brought us open air  
seeds, long fallow, grew.

Homecomings abounded  
the snail, the boatman, the dragonfly.  
Our resurrected populace resounded.

As a youth I scrape algae from stones  
cleaning the pond, our home,

feeding my needs.

I waft feathery gills like fans,  
their pulsing busyness pronounce  
I am a nymph with purpose.

Mermaid shimmy my way through puberty.

In time, I find the waterline  
& shed my old life.

My maiden flight,  
the spinners glistening.  
Compound eyes  
wings with grids, diaphanous  
elegant legs elongated  
subimago, mayfly. Oh, how long I've waited.

Soon we will swarm, take our chance at romance  
launch into air currents & dance.

Gravid, our females descend to the old homestead  
balletic, release their eggs,  
dip by meticulous dip, en pointe.

Each life stage is hazardous for me  
as quarry for bats, hornets, dragonflies, spiders, water beetles, mallards, snails, frogs & coots.  
Energy transfers proliferate.  
Now a race to the sheltering willow moss  
Now a prayer to cross the threshold of the surface.  
I dart away from mouths who love my taste

& I revel, in the plenitude, of the chase.

#### IV

The scientists  
form communities of opportunities  
upon which biology spins.  
Movement gurgles up  
stirring bygone dynamics.  
Subterranean tides turn  
soaking in the hallowed rays.

Rain or ice  
their boat launches providence, talents, deliverance, solidarity,  
Secchi disks, thermometers, specimen buckets, probes, microphones, nets.  
Eco-detectives.

Holly leaf naiad, oculus minutus, crucian carp  
treasured discoveries  
lifting Ivy Duckweed aloft like trophies.

Leaves release oxygen to fluid channels  
gills breathe  
swifts dip their beaks to sip.

Humans being aquatic.  
Returning to their origins.  
Propagating progress.

V

As oceans reclaim continents

my home

teeters

on the edge

of extinction

Along the coast, houses condemned, emptied, bulldozed

evicted families huddled with neighbours

in shock despite the portents.

Spring equinox tides approach, hungrier each year.

We cannot halt the patterns of this planet

we cannot stay the will of worlds.

The gap from my four walls to cliff-edge narrows.

My pillow rests, seven metres from a plummet to the beach.

I joke with Tesco drivers – *I wear armbands to bed.*

In truth, this is no joke, rising levels, bleached coral reefs.

Our pond is tangled & wounded.

We are as one.

We are one baseline species

flourishing or dying to the level of reservoirs, water tables, riverbeds & estuaries.

The Arctic & Antarctic may be poles apart  
unheeded, disregarded, distant,  
unseen by us  
we still share their critical status.

We are one biomass  
no matter how much technology we amass.

Pulled in sickness & in health, by successes & mistakes along our paths.

The future seems waterlogged, drenched in sorrow, tears of the displaced, the pangs of  
famine.

Once  
we were ordained with indigenous balance.

Were they uneducated  
those who explored dreamtime  
those who followed shamans' maps?

Forsaken,  
innate knowledge  
exchanged for coal  
progress, goals,  
no pause for thought.

So fast, we left the dream  
ignored the riptides, the tsunamis, the Gulf Stream.  
The Aboriginals, the Inuit, the Cree prized wisdom, more than politics.

Let us not become a tribe with data rich lives, yet hollow minds.



I covet

the intelligence of the unborn child

soaked in their beginnings

belief curled inside their bodies

yearning to arrive, enjoy, give

wanting nothing more than an oak tree, a green hill, a rock pool

an acorn, an otter, owls,

swallows, rabbits, anemones

stickleback, dandelions, daisies

grass, chestnuts, eels, peacocks, ladybirds

toads, foxes, stoats, ducks, meadow sweet

doves, sea horses, eagles, goldfinch, voles, tulips, hedgehogs, apples, belugas, starfish, squirrels, worms, snowdrops, sharks, sea urchin, lavender, scorpions, roses, kingfishers, forget-me-not, rhubarb, red admirals, raspberries, rats, foxgloves, rainbows, pythons, tigers, primrose, baboons, elephants, giraffes, prawns, lions, plums, adders, lizards, goats, chimpanzees, plankton, plovers, crocodiles, pine martins, pike, pigs, periwinkle, pebbles, jaguars, macaws, pears, acorns, mice, sloths, piranhas, river dolphins, osprey, oysters, orchids, squid, salamanders, pumas, ocelots, vultures, iguanas, turtles, emus, gorillas, parrots, obsidian, bluebells, primrose, woodpeckers, common shrew, leopards, anaconda, armadillos, zebras, panthers, cockatoos, moths, dormouse, honeysuckle, robins, lapwings, antelopes, deer, hyenas, rhinoceros, penguins, nightjars, caterpillars, wolves, camels, lemurs, brooks, nettles, moss, bees, heather, merlins, moorhens, geese, mistletoe, minnows, millipedes, falcons, pandas, koalas, polar bears, clams, lobsters, cuttlefish, maples, limpets, roses, lichen, laurel, crickets, grasshoppers, ostrich, coyote, rattlesnakes, gazelles, doves, sparrows, tarantulas, hummingbirds, larks, lacewings, horses, hares, kangaroos, Tasmanian devils, platypus, wolves, bison, capuchins, marmosets, porcupines, skunks, geckos, stingrays, gnats, meerkats, elks, badgers, flamingos, donkeys, dew, crows, cormorants, clover

*Sarah Cameron*