

# DIMITRIS TSALOUMAS

## THE COCKATOO MY NEIGHBOUR

Latticed verandah high on stilts  
a whisper's throw from my one window  
in distant Brisbane,  
jasmine and carmine splotch  
of bougainvillea over the burning wall,  
you hold the bird of my obsession,  
the manic cockatoo

when I sat  
on days of rest to spin the argument  
that taught her the waste in wintry love  
and he would listen beadily then go to work  
on the long rusty nails in your timbers  
(though with thoughtful moderation,  
a few at a time)  
or tear bandage strips of gauze as if  
for an emergency, then clutch two bars  
and stare.

Which was neither bland  
nor dissonant, for I lived as I live  
by nature's wise conjunctions.  
But as I make to chronicle now  
in measured tranquillity  
that triumph of miles and plains ago  
this bird assumes the vanquished passion,  
comes blaring forth with strident tools  
and pulls at nails with rage,  
tears flags and strips off canvas sheets  
now red now yellow now red again  
with such maniacal method, that I start  
to sway, then pitch and roll, and drunkenly

command my flailing hands to seize  
and make fast the head that flips away  
with car-yard bunting in the breeze.

## JENNIFER WOODHOUSE

### MELTÉMI

Day gleams dull and still,  
an aquarelle of the Aegean;  
the coasts of Anatolia  
are lilac shadows merely;  
the spectre of an argosy  
steers for an ancient Koan harbour,  
crewed by a company of silences.

Last night the *meltémi*  
gave tongue to nightmare,  
eddying with ghastly cries  
of drowning men;  
taunting the watch with questions  
of the mermaid, silver-sinister,  
until one said he saw her face  
and flung himself to join her,  
leaving his friend bedevilled,  
inarticulate . . .

Glimpsing at noon the drypoint  
certainty of port and pier, the sailors  
will not recognise their wives.

The *meltémi* is a seasonal summer wind in the Mediterranean.