

## Substance

Sometimes china she belongs on the secure span of mantelpiece over solid brick  
and tile against the wall  
or craves the shut glass of a cabinet, tucked back in triangular dark unseen  
unless someone bends and reaches.

Instead she is perched absurdly on the coffee table while children and dog  
tumble and yell, hurting  
themselves and each other in their rage to find out muscle and light and  
strength and control and brain and interaction and domination.

Hurts that no china figurine can prevent or mend, while at a hundred  
near-misses she compacts her stillness to its lowest-centred balance  
waiting for the next thoughtless nearness to miss missing and become a  
casual hit;

for herself to become a crunch of fragments underfoot in the own lives to which  
they are of course entitled.

Lattertimes stone she stands integral on the side of the birdbath, an outstretched  
hand offering refreshment to the thirsty and the dusty.

Equally unaffected by weather wattlebirds dive and shower and take nectar  
from the feeder above, striated feathers clear striped by a linger of damp.

Higher yet a blackbird sings in an endless spring, cockblack on the rooftop.  
She knows his lyric and his busy wife; brown and black sip here together  
at evening.

She knows where their nest is hidden each year among the camellias.  
She knows the neighbour's cat seeking and the soft shaping of fur and claw  
through foliage.

She has learnt to make no judgement between them, holding herself in her own  
familiarity, warmed by sun, collecting and freed from debris according  
to the wind.

Sometimes she is required instantly to be human  
a bright loving woman among her independent offspring  
to fill a lull in their pre-occupations.