

A N G E L A   L E I G H T O N

*Over*

Here where the slip to lightness starts to start,  
and sea scrambles the line of its retreat,  
cliffs stand back, big steps from this to that,  
a crossing where we will not find our feet,

I catch the highlight of an otter's back,  
slick along the water's shifted hairdo,  
taking the shape of the sea, diving in loops,  
a pliant clasp, hooked on all that blue.

## *Seconds*

Odds 'n Ends, Bits 'n Bobs, Rag Bone—  
my ball-and-chained self and shadow stop  
short in bargain sunshine, down a knockdown street  
of leaning fridges, suites, used beds, sunk chairs,  
to say *ballo* again to Jake's macaw,  
perched just inches short of the open sky.

I say *ballo* in English. He looks sharp,  
sideways, blinks a glaringly obvious eye.  
A costume face flashes its maquillage,  
crosspatch, pagliaccio, eyelined like a mask.  
He flaps unhandy wings and feels for sky.  
Those feathers sift a sunset, sift, revise.

Then quickly upside down (I am Antarctic),  
four wrinkled toes hook. He cocks  
a look, shifts, adjusts, then turns art deco,  
stiff as the florid handle of a jug, painted  
curio staring from below. *Hallo* I cadge,  
and second-guess the thing he sees I am.

He's doubtful, climbs upright, hops his chain.  
Then open-mouthed, unrolls a hinging tongue,  
shy, glossy mollusc shivering back,  
and gags, and gags, unwraps a mouthful, something  
hard-won, brought to light, precise *bon mot*:  
*Fuck Off*, the bird calls, wondering still, aloud.