VIEW FROM FLINDERS

Selwyn Pritchard

Leaning over the shore in mist
under the eponymous hero's obelisk
nearly two centuries after he boated in
and out, leaving this litter of names,
white silence is complete
                except for
musk lorrikeet beaking about,
speaking in tongues.

They hang like green fruit
among red gum blooms, so tame, so
trusting, that I feel a kind of shame.
They have no sense of net profits,
squawk at some funnier joke.

Down below muffled boots thump
where the pier smacks soft-focus gleams.
I flinch at the sudden roar:
twin diesels, twin-hulled abalone boats,
million-dollar rigs, must take risks—

They'll come banging back, slide
on their tractored floats, rumble away,
flesh ready to freeze and fly to Tokyo,
shells' iridescence paving the bay.

In the macrocarpa under the cliff
a heron unwraps its grey cloak,
flops into future and past,
trails long legs over unremarked Chinese graves
beneath the carpark's seal
and forgotten, barefoot tracks—

Soon there will be the bland blue
poster view of the Dividing Range;
the islands; the mirror sky and mimic sea.