

## Two Poems

### 1. Skywriting

The silver nib of the plane trails off,  
leaving *Ma* like a ghost-print  
of hand-writing on a sky dark blue  
as carbon paper. When it returns,  
it lights the stems and barbless hooks

of a pair of *r*'s. It seems the pilot  
might be a fan of 100,000 point  
Arial or Century Gothic – anything  
sans serif, and with enough body  
to resist being blown away too quickly.

He's been watching the weather,  
waiting for a system of high pressure  
under which to work his signatures.  
He applies a zen approach to each flight,  
loving what he leaves even more

for its impermanence. Next comes the *y* –  
a vertical, audible smoking climb  
in two parts into what is fast becoming  
a clear picture. Then he lifts away  
and falls again, four times to make

of his trailing smoke the letter *M*,  
followed by a partial loop-the-loop,  
leaving *e* to come apart at the edges  
in a cross-current of erasing wind.  
Those watching are now wondering

who it is that's proposed, and who  
has been taken out for lunch and guided  
by their eyes into the sky.  
The next letter seems the most difficult  
of all, requiring a throttle-melting 3/4 roll,

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capped by a horizontal burst of speed  
to make a *G*. Another *e*, and names  
are being suggested. As if wanting to finish  
with the kind of flourish the grounded  
will never know, the pilot angles his plane

to catch a flint of sun on the down-  
ward wing, then crafts an immaculate *m*  
before flying off to better view his work.  
*It's a statement*, a woman says.  
*She'll never accept*. But the plane reappears

with a question mark forming in its wake,  
followed by another, minus the dot,  
which mirrors it – this forms a dissolving heart.  
*How could you refuse*, someone says.  
It's a statement and it gets no word of argument.

## 2. The Trawler

Like an old shed held together  
by wires and panels of light  
blue wood, a trawler  
is making its way upriver.

A man emerges  
to check on what he's found  
in the deep sleep  
of his long, productive night.

On deck, his fingers  
dripping water, he looks out  
to where a line of gulls  
are trailing like sun-

bleached prayer flags,  
feeding on what a lifted net  
releases to the tide: prawn  
husks and undersize fish

that glitter down to where  
nothing is wasted.  
Sometimes it seems  
he's been at it too long,

yet on mornings like these,  
when things come together,  
it's not about time or profit,  
risk or investment.

Light floods through  
the wheel-house window.  
The river widens  
into a working harbour,

with tugs and tankers,  
cranes and lines of men  
in hard hats in readiness  
for the loading to begin.

At the fisherman's co-op,  
on the filleting floor,  
an egret steps aside

to let him pass, its neck

like a neon tube on the blink.  
Someone is talking about  
the new moon's influence  
on mulloway. A forklift driver

swears the moon phase  
makes no difference,  
and is about to climb down  
and explain, when a man

wearing a chain-mail glove  
throws a mullet into the air.  
A white bird swallowing is enough  
to silence any conversation.

*Anthony Lawrence*