

THE OLD GRASSTREES

Thomas Shapcott (Aust)

Think of music. Think of music hunched
into a chord. The monody has hunched
into branches, slow, late. Think of sound
alone, before branches. Out there
in the place of the sky that stretches a long way
in the place of grass fidgeting
many notes one after another
out in that country of grasstrees
think back to music as one note.
Which note do you remember? And the next?
Think of the surprise of that first note,
the moment long before any grasstree remembers
you try to think of that. Nobody remembers one note.
When the grasstree breaks into a chord
and we try to remember the first sounding together
two notes, three notes,
that is when the place of grasstrees instructs us.
Before we were here
before we brought the names for sound
grasstrees hunched, making not listening
they were spreading the sky that stretches a long way
they were drinking the wind up
one note one note one note
they were coiling energy in layers
they were licking salt
and the moisture that sometimes comes with the wind.
Deep in their coils they were inventing the circle, music.
We came. We heard the remembering,
the surprise of that first note, and the next.
When we came in the place of grasstrees we marvelled
and leaned on our axes a moment.