

THE MUSICIAN (HE SAYS IT FEELS LIKE)

beating a sack with a lute, then a bigger lute,
and the sack may be empty of kittens
and emptier of stones, and it may be of linen
from a sweet little village in Spain
or it may be a neural net that hardly reckons,
and inside it may be the secret breaths
mapped beneath his citizen breaths,
and each blow may be a sound of mine
impaling in his mind-ear a bright
and pliant—unprotected—sound of his,
or maybe an old note and the one that follows—
grown wilder but more used to each other.

BLACK & WHITE POEM FOR MARIGOLD

on her first birthday

Hey Maggie—you're charismatic as a campfire.

We're all so sure. Your grandmother says
you're gonna be a biter just like your mother was,

who wasn't one once her mother bit back.

But you don't know yet of retaliation;
we thank your Dalmatian for this.

We thank your koala for reason unknown,
that old on-foot eccentric
(we're being perverse when we think we know

exactly what we desire') circling
your house to bludge saucepans of tap water—
hey Maggie you could crawl after him.

You don't instead. Your limbs are for gnomish
flutters, plucking sky, or supramotion:
for the moment it's you being sure.

One moment there was a grey kangaroo buck
(tall in the tea-tree dell, in the mad heat

the sun's silver tang at head-height

so he and I both received a woozy stay of gravity,
though I was leaning towards something
gone wrong with his brain not mine

as he staggered on the diagonal, his refined head
lax on a macho neck; we'd drunk all colour from the dell
(if a ghost is a place and my gaze is incompatible).

'Don't come to me,' I muttered. He tried a jump
which came out backwards. On a wisp of 4G
I searched 'unbalanced roo victoria'.

The dell enclosed the wait so as to make
his half-somersault perpetual.

The page loaded finally as he lay on his back:

Phalaris grass toxicity, permanent damage in macropods)
and the next moment the text came through:
you were breathing, at last without help in neonatal ICU.