

**THE LOCALS  
(Mole Creek)**

*A series of poems by Adrienne Eberhard*

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1.  
All day thrushes have tapped at the windows,  
a spoken hieroglyph, bird cuneiform,  
sharp rat-tat like typewriter keys or morsecode  
- mesmeric insistence! - we rush from room to room  
catching the quick roll of their eyes,  
beaks moving like hammers, the mushroom-grey  
of their chests, (we freed one yesterday, tried  
to calm its fast heart felt through the soft spray  
of breast feathers - it seemed a giant moth  
lumbering into walls, desperately  
seeking fluid air, flight's freedom, new breath),  
is this a desire for captivity,  
a bird-Narcissus preening in the glass,  
or noisy thanks ricocheting off our house?

2.  
When we shone the torchbeam at the vast  
sprawl of the gum stump and let it dance  
skywards, making the blackwood leaves  
glisten and swell in the evening rain, we  
spotted the ghost-grey of a tawny frogmouth.  
He sat solemn, silent - a damp branch - only  
the swivel of his head signalling his presence.  
We'd heard him every night, calling forlornly  
from the bush, and there he was, turning  
his tawny eyes towards us, our children  
absorbing him until their breath seemed stilled,  
like owl babies pretending absence.

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3.

The quiet sky is stormed  
as a crew of maniacs slews through air,  
dark wings veering,  
great gawps of sound rolling and dropping  
like shredded seedpods.  
They flock in the tall gums:  
a bikie gang, black, extravagant,  
leering and coughing,  
the sleek jet of their feathers  
hauling rain.

4.

A pair of kookaburras haunts this grassy space,  
alighting on branches, limestone outcrops,  
and often, the clothesline  
spinning slowly, turning their heads  
at the last minute, the way dancers do.

They are puffed, fat with fluff,  
warm as stones absorbing sun,  
the turquoise of their wing-  
feathers, brilliant  
and shocking as laughter.