

Assemblage

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it starts
with a tour of the house
 this is the kitchen
 this is your bedroom
 this is your cot
 this is the cat
this swaddling in a map your own possum-skin coat
 boundary-marked and wrapped tight
 containing your breath, your skin, your bones

you fit together your world
 this is your house
 this is your neighbourhood
 your suburb your city your state

you fit together your friends
 neighbourhood first kindergarten and school expand local maps
 this is Kelly's house
 this is Christie's
 John lives here

university splays your map wide
slots in public transport
 this tram for Phong's house
 a train and bus for Benny's

piece by piece you assemble it
ignorant of street-linkages until you drive
 this road runs into that
 here is the cinema
 here, the market
 turn here for the freeway
 tollway's that way

travel gives you more
 this city's in this country
 this lake drains into this sea
 here you tilt back your head and eat herrings this way
 there you eat snails

this is your puzzle

 this person fits here
 that person is there
 the city's neural pathways
 are grooves in your board
 each year the grooves fill more and more pieces
 disparate things come together and
 you glimpse the whole

but the city grows forges new linkages faster than you can keep up

it ends

with the puzzle set solid incomplete forgotten
 the world narrows
 to some plot of land some damp hole some box or urn
a crowd of wet faces and the missing pieces of your puzzle
 the pieces of their own puzzles clutched tight in their fists