

for Anne Donaldson November 18, 2024

'An Absolutely Ordinary Magpie'

After Wallace Stevens' '13 Ways' Harmonium 1917.

#1

Among the twenty blazing mountains,
The only moving thing
The eye of the magpie.

#2

I was of three minds
Like a gum
In which there are three maggies.

#3

The maggie whirled in the autumn winds.
T'was but a small part of the panto.

#4

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a magpie
Are one.

#5

Ido not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The maggie warbling
Or just after.

#6

Winter rain fills the long window
With drooping dew
The shadow of a magpie
Crosses back and forth.
The mood
tracing in the shadows
An indecipherable pause

#7

Oh, you men of Hill End
Conjuring your mellow birds
See now how Gymnorhina Tibikens
sidles round the feet
of the girls surrounding you

#8

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the magpie is involved in what I know.

#9

When Tibikens flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

#10

Seeing flights of magpies
Circling red lights
The bordellos of Echuca
Rock 'n' roll.
Raucous.

#11

He rides over Canberra
in a convertible.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his Chevrolet
For maggies.

#12

The river is moving.
The magpie must be flying.

#13

It was evening all afternoon.
It was raining
And it was gonna rain.
The blackbird sat
on the gumtree branch.

