

Story for performance #933
webcast from Sydney at 08:10PM, 09 Jan 08



Source: 'Navy threatened in Gulf', *Washington Post*
in *Sydney Morning Herald* online, 09/01/08.

Tags: [animals](#)

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I am lost. If you find me please call... and then there is a number. This is what I say, or a least this is what the words around me say. I don't speak, or squawk. For that matter I'm not really myself at all, I am just a picture of another bird. Still, it is a life, and it is mine for the moment. This me—the me in the picture—is not lost at all. I stare out at the passing traffic aware that I am stuck to the trunk of a tree. Some would say I'm only particles of ink knitted together, a clever replica of colour and feather, a mirror of expression, but this doesn't bother me. I may appear to have a fixed hold on life, but I still amplify with a look, fade in sun, and spoil with rain. It is true I grow old; I will disappear. Anything could happen to me. It is possible that my tree could catch fire and I will explode like the phoenix, sending flakes of ash into the air.

I don't mind being this ambassador ('copy' sounds so thin and empty). I dare to delight in being entirely surface. What good does it do to sit here longing for the life of my bodily counterpart? I was always there within him anyway, part of me just itching to peel away. And now look who has survived after all. Where has his good name gone? Abandoned, with home, with cage. I am still owned, still called George the Budgerigar. He could be dead for all I know. Or free, free of names and cages—but what life is that to the temperament of a house pet? Out there, in the wild of the suburbs? I have seen black crows hovering above the power lines; it does not bode well for a nameless thing. Oh, I know—some would eschew naming things altogether, disliking the confinement, the borders that a name marks. But such thoughts are foolish; names still circle, they edge toward the ear and bypass sound to torment the brain directly. The nameless thing is indecisive, perpetually in the crisis of potential. Yes, we must die in our names before we can claim life to hold us.

This might seem funny to you, dramatic, after all I'm just a small bird, without the acceptable pretensions of say an eagle or a peacock. But that I think should be no surprise—after all I cannot fly; occasionally the air that breezes past my face does cause me moments of regret that I was separated from that occupation. But the fact is I am centred in a white box, a hutch of paper surrounded by a few black scrawls, and I have no hope of flying away. There, it is out.

Sometimes someone walks past, reads me, and smiles. I think it must seem whimsical and childish to hope that I will ever be found. Even if someone saw

me, what would they do? What type of person would strain to catch me? No, the looks of these passers-by tell me I will never be restored. But I think they appreciate the effort all the same, I am to them a little emblem of hope on their way to work.

Jealousy? You wonder if the sight of other birds causes me jealously? I was like them once. What do I have to be jealous of—such airhead flapping, skulking and swooping? The stink of worm, the tedium of seed? I am pure thought. High and heavenly in another way.

Already I pale in the sunlight, transcending even ink. And now the gentle rain smudges me. My blue and white plumage sags, the yellow glows, my face dissolves slightly at the side, my beak blurs. My details—the instructions surrounding me turn elemental. I cannot pretend that I do not feel some anxiety at this transformation. In darker moments when the street sleeps, fear calls me to defy this disappearance.

I know I can no longer be distinguished properly as any particular object other than a white thing with a few patches on it. My blue holds slightly, but that is all. I begin to meditate on the life of my other, I see him now, free and nameless—he survives after all, perhaps I was wrong, I am not needed, no indecision is suffered. I begin to understand my irrelevance in the process. George is indeed a ridiculous name for a bird.

I know they call my name less and less. This thought comforts me somehow. Soon I will be free all together of this paper, though not around to realise it. I grow delirious; I feel I start to float, imagine that I have that capacity. In my lucid moments I realize it is the edges of me tearing away from the tree, the tape has gone. I enjoy this small mockery of flight, my swan song.

Now I'm only white; the sun has worked bleaching what remains of me. Today the sky is high, cloudless and cornflower blue; there is a wind that rattles me constantly. They have left me here a long time—have seen no point in maintaining me. I suppose I don't mind; it is too late to mind—I'm past all that now. Now I look forward to each gust, that it may embrace me entirely for one last flight.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Kathryn Ryan.