

Perspectives



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Footprints

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i.

Exulted upon hollows of salted air
is a gull. It dips and plummets into
gullies of pungent,
stinging sea-breeze, gliding and gleaming upon
raw sunlight. Its arched wings lap ethereal currents
as foam feathers the sand below.
Then, the air churns and buffets
its smudged white form. As clouds scud above,
gusts splay and puff its plumes. Its cry
scrapes the wind.
Scooping at the enfolding wafts, the gull
lofts upon rounded, smooth currents. It glides idly, an
elongated shadow stippling and speeding and shifting the
grains underfoot.
Indolently, it loosely relaxes orange webbed feet from its
underbelly.
They brush the air; silent
momentary
blurred silhouettes lightly imprinting the sand below.

ii.

Squabbling in the sand are a frilly toddler and a ball.
The child's plump arms try to cuddle the bulging sphere,
but it rolls and bumps down to the sea.
Wobbling and toppling in clumsy pursuit, the child

indents the beach with chubby footprints.
 Stealthy waves snatch the ball, and it bobs enchantingly on the
 foam,
 A drifting, blue and white striped buoy.
 Straw hat-swathed curls dip, and tender arms point out a
 raucous riot of seabirds.
 They bubble and boil in the sand. Gleefully, the toddler
 Rams himself into the flock, splashing the birds skyward.

iii.

Bare-limbed, a boy gleams palely as he trails and
 rakes sea-carved driftwood in his wake,
 scratching a wayward path. He follows those before him:
 The soles of two heavy boots rocking from left to right,
 indenting the sand like furrowed shell-fossils;
 Two naked feet, whose prints are formed from
 whorls and loops and arches of swirling, golden granules;
 One biting line of bicycle-rubber, clawing the dust like a
 grounded dingy;
 but most mysteriously,
 Wedges of webbed feet. As if waves of wind have
 reabsorbed their image, these clearly imprinted fans
 patter as expected (left right left right) before
 vanishing completely.
 Sometimes, only two impressions appear at one time before
 Dry, unknown tides and wash the gulls upwards and
 elsewhere.

iv.

Clusters of pink bodies congregate about
 greased butcher's paper. They devour segmented white flesh,
 threaded with the thin needles of bones, crusted in a batter of
 sand.
 Among strings of tussock-grass, a package flaps dully.

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Oily translucent fingerprints, like soft, mucous shellfish, smear
the folds. Their transparency reveals their identity.

A still red-rimmed eye

Directs a sharp, red beak to the sliced potato
brimming within.

The gull pecks open the paper and gorges

Until noticed. Then, it pinches

the packaging in its beak and lifts into the air,
shedding sails of paper and anchoring chips across the sand.

Having loosened pursuers, it

lands on the lightness of foam. Heavy currents have long since
swirled down the remaining contents. Chips are pressed
downwards by water, sinking alongside drink cans and bottles.
Ripped nets exchange these offerings for limp fish,
pulsing wetly on the sand.

v.

Overhead, a gull spirals.

His wings slap

frantically flap against the heavy air.

Below a child piles sand into a fortress.

A red bucket swallows shells. Strewn across the sand, among
the sprawl of flesh, are:

bottles of sunscreen and mineral water and cheap champagne;
steaming bathing suits; waxy surfboards; sandy towels; paper-
back books;

plastic spades; mushrooming umbrellas; tubes of zinc-cream;
banana chairs; frosted eskies; paper plates; fishing hooks.

Pickles and sliced beetroot are both purposefully and
inadvertently

Discarded from hamburgers. A lost wallet is heaped with sand,
a chest of buried treasure.

A single thong projects vertically out of the sand, a
footprint

directing upwards.

Tangles of strangled kelp are knotted and stranded in the dunes.
Overhead, a gull spirals.

vi.

Aligned with the beach
is a strip of preserved sand.
It is of the purest white
and along its path a girl walks.
She tosses her wet hair back and
it slaps her smooth skin.
She coyly catches the eye of a sauntering boy
and, for his benefit, continues to catwalk
in her bikini. Saltwater drips from her
legs as she bends down and traces a
Love heart in the setting concrete.
Several rectangles ahead, an ice-cream has
flopped on to the pavement; it dissolves viscously.
She delicately avoids its path and moves on,
her footsteps an unknown deviation for strangers to later
Ponder.

A gull swoops down and tugs at the cone.
It steps perplexedly about the wafer until
it secures it carefully within its beak. When it takes flight,
the concrete intakes a small, squelching suction-breath.
It is memorising these mysterious, snatched,
Detached prints.



Sonya Wellby wrote this in 2008 when she was in Year 12 at
Friends' School in Tasmania.