

SHEVAUN COOLEY

the bone the island

[11th February, 1945, 10:15pm: 11 miles due south of Cape Leeuwin, N Class Destroyer HMAS Nizam was hit broadside by a large wave. 10 men were swept overboard, and never found.]

1.

as when the meal is done and between
one sentence and the next you turn
and scrape away the leftovers

what was I saying, you say

2.

One wave is like another
until it is not; and men
asleep on deck are
lifted off asleep

and closed into the fist
of the wave

and then the list
is righted

and far below, one
of them – it might
be the youngest – tries
to say deep in the
draughting down:

I disagree

3.

[etymology]

seel: to roll as a ship at sea

: to close the eyes of a hawk
with thread drawn through
the lids, then fastened
over the head

4.

[Able Seaman Allen Wilfred Milich
10th February 1945
To his brother Min:]

It's as cold as buggary where
we are, when we go on
watch we are dressed like
Russian ski troopers; if we fell
overboard we'd go straight
to the bottom,
I'm sure

(but, brother what if
this gullyng downward is not
death. What if we
are the nothing that happened and keeps
happening.
I am
a something I don't
even
think

the unfathomable hundred
needles behind the eye

the thousand cicadas
of the ear
bursting out
of life)

5.

[etymology]
heel: to lean to one
side *especially of a boat
or ship*

: either of the projections
of a coffin bone & : a bone
of the foot below the ankle &
: part of the palm of the hand
nearest the wrist

6.

as when the albatross takes up the ballast
stone and heaves it downward to break open
a hard mollusc; then plucks up the stone
and begins again

it can't cry with a stone in its mouth
it will do this until the light dies