LOVE

At the age of eleven
I fell in love
with death.
I found a gecko
in a dark corner
of a room.
Its lifeless eyes open,
its small bulbous toes
splayed
as if about to leap away.

I wanted to keep it,
to hold on.
I wanted to preserve
its lively expression.
I placed it on my dresser
and watched
its stomach deflate,
its scaly skin dry and curl
and the almost-leap
slowly decay.
SLEEPING BEAUTY

Later, I found a crow,
it's feathers so black
they shone
with a blue tinge
in the bright sunshine.

It lay on its side
at the base of a jacaranda—
purple flowers scattered beneath—
as if it had fallen asleep,
=floated down serenely
from a branch above.

I stroked its sleek feathers
expecting it to wake,
flap strong wings and fly off,
but it slept on.

I returned later
with a shoebox—
a cardboard coffin—
and carried my sleeping beauty
home to accompany my
withering gecko.
THE COLLECTION

Three brown tree frogs,
two skinks,
one New Holland honeyeater,
one ant-eaten galah,
one dusty sparrow
and one fresh, cat-killed
red-belly black—
perfect,
except for
four small puncture marks.

A GLASS HOUSE

Father bought
a large glass aquarium
to house them,
to contain
the fusty fug of death.
BURIED TREASURE

I discovered a sheep’s skull half-buried in a paddock not far from the house.

I might never have noticed it but for a small murder of crows, feasting.

As I got closer, I could smell the rotting flesh and hear the hum of blowflies.

The crows yarked and flapped away.
Blowflies scattered and buzzed.

The exposed side was picked clean in places by birds and foxes.
White bone glinted in the bright day.

I tucked my nose and mouth under my jumper to avoid gagging
and sliced through a small piece of woolly skin and sinew until the skull came away.

The semi-buried side was damp with skin and patchy grey wool, and a withered eye.
ANNIE I

Annie was my best friend.
She was everything
I was not.

Her hair was the colour
of wheat at sunset,
her eyes as blue as a summer sky,
her lips the satin sheen of pink pearls,
her bone-white skin
never tanned.

She was pale and luminous,
a ghostly angel, but,
like me, she had a dark heart.