

CYNTHIA TROUP

Lost Aunt

*for Lesley Jean Ann Fenech
13 August 1943–11 June 2011*

Black of course simplifies—no choice,
yet stultifies—no light,
no light in, out, on.
Posters for surgery walls,
charts in anatomy books are surrounded by
white space, but the body's interior snaps
and hammers in wet darkness.
The mouth opens
and only then are teeth hard with being white.

Black is no longer obligatory at a funeral,
words of the service insist: We Are Here To Celebrate Her Life.
At a comfotless church she never entered, then
at the dry lip of a hole in a salt-
aired suburb she hadn't visited since childhood.
No-one asks if she really liked the sea.

Black teeth and merry eyes, white trembling hands
—brother, nieces, nephews,
how to unbury her true distinction?
Eccentricity gnaws hard at family dignity.
She chose, it's said, to live secluded,
medicated, poorly supervised in a dim room.
A room found afterwards
filled with unopened gifts:

soap, jewellery muddled in cotton wool,
clocks, brittle holy cards
and countless pamphlets about the mystics, that speak of course
about light in some form, then in no form,
simplest colourless blazing
light light,
for which, like every loss, there is no analogy.