

Fox Dreaming

One morning, delivering Quest
News to the suburbs, I saw a red fox

Crossing the road. At least, I think

So. The animal trots quick
And furtive through morning
Mist, leaves a memory as blurry
As bunyip. I didn't know

It was to be hated. I was new here,
Took it for a native, a messenger
Of the wild. Later, I learned better:

The fox is feral, an aristocratic
Killer from the old country, best

Poisoned or shot, forgotten. It
Kills the small marsupials
Of the land on which our cities

Foundered. The fox must go home,
Or pay for what its done. Truth
Is, though, we can't save them all—

Not without giving up

Our cats & dogs, and who
Would shoot them? The foxes,
Like the rabbits & the canetoads,
Can't go back. So sometimes

I call up the faint memory
Of my childhood fox, darting

Through suburbia, and
Change the story. The red fox
Pauses in its pre-dawn dash, flashes

Me a vulpine grin, and says:

“The city is an ark, boy, and we
Are convicts in its belly. Thieves
And murderers all of us. Go: eat,

Breed, flourish. And remember:

London has ten thousand foxes,
And in every land a city is an ark
For the foxes & the weeds.”

“Yes, but—” I start to reply,
But he’s already off & racing
As if he’s late for work.
Rats won’t eat themselves.

I ride my BMX into the fog, feeling
Like I’ve missed something—

The news in my hand like a torch.

The Philosophy of Mangoes

Mangoes do not fully domesticate. They are lush, a little louche; no amount of slicing or dicing can disguise their inherent wantonness. Mangoes are green only so that when the time comes they can flaunt their ripeness, sprawling shamelessly on backyard concrete like voluptuous nudists. If you're not going to eat us, mangoes seem to say, we're still going to make a mess. A mango, with its thick branches, dense foliage, and pendulous abundance, is a kind of nightmarish tropical grape, tempting us with Dionysian abandon, threatening us with malarial fever dreams. It is always pouring rain when we eat a mango, either in the darkness of someone else's garden or under too-bright fluorescent light, the corpses of flying ants littering the table, the voices of geckoes drowned out under tin roof. Unlike apples, mangoes seduce us directly, without the intermediary of a snake. They actually enjoy being handled. You too, they intimate, can ripen, can split open and be fed on by hungry, searching tongues, manure monsoonal soils. An apple is defined by its crispness. No one wants to eat a soft apple. The more a mango softens, however, the more it swells and rots, the more fully it becomes itself; it tempts us with disgust, taunts our Victorian decorum. Let your body go to slop and ruin, the mango promises, and you will be feasted on. Teeth will nip and tug and strip. Every part of your body will be sucked on, and devoured, and your juices will sate greedy hands and snouts until all that remains is slippery seed. The stink of mango always brings the risk of transformation. When you climb up to eat a mango you might just become a bat, forgetting who you are and leaping slick and naked into the sky.