

1994

PADDLE

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Recommended Citation

Farmer, Beverley, PADDLE, *Kunapipi*, 16(1), 1994.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol16/iss1/19>

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Abstract

We three women walked to the cove. Silver, the long light, swans drifting, pied cormorants on guard

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We three women walked to the cove.

Silver, the long light, swans drifting, pied
cormorants on guard

and three gulls, restless

as we tipped over the yellow rowboat
stranded on the sea grass

its gathered leaves and rain

water spilling in thin air.
Shoes under one arm and trousers rolled

we made our way back

we three, planting each foot

on clear dry sandstone
studded with sharp winkles -

look, here's a starfish! - and a flowering

here red, here gold
of lichen

here a fan, here a broad

charcoal heap and fire blister of rock
and here a crinkling of white comb

fine as an abalone mushroom

and sinking to our knees on to deep rocks

the clearer for being immersed
in that pure density and weight

more like the lees of the afternoon

light, grey and leaf yellow
and autumn cold, than

water. By then the hull
was a lemon shell among shells
on the edge of trees glassed

in shadow, and still

one or other of the gulls was lifting
off in a hush of feathers and red
feet, to settle back

down, fold and flourish of wing spray
close by another who
lifting, swept past, and so on

in slow sequences of approach
and veer, those same three
keeping the space of water and air

between them constant.