

# Bones at Barney Ward's Lagoon

Louise Oxley

It lies as if arranged there for a totem:  
a few steps back from the lagoon's black mud  
and white as east coast sand, a skeleton.

It's lost all flesh. A raven, Devil or some  
other worshipper has taken the muscle and blood.  
It lies as if arranged there for a totem

at empty, delicate angles – jawbone, pelvis, sternum,  
a coronet of vertebrae around the skull – odd  
remnants, white as east coast sand. The skeleton's

a wallaby dismantled, a solemn  
re-patterning of bone; loss in scrambled code.  
It lies as if arranged there for a totem,

unfleshed, unfurred, uncoupled; emblem  
of life's underpinnings laid out.  
White as east coast sand, a skeleton.

Two saplings – black wattle trees – grow over them,  
these bones; silver-green and coming into bud.  
It lies as if arranged there for a totem:  
white as east coast sand, a skeleton.