Inside Us the Dead  
(The NZ-born Version)  

Karlo Mila

Albert said,  
“inside us the dead”  
maybe I wouldn’t feel so lonely  
if my body could recall those connections  
there are only silences.

I am  
bound  
this place  
time and space  
the vā with the past is broken.

Even when pregnant  
my body feels like a ship lost in water  
afloat, remote, solitary and  
heaving with seasickness.

I did not feel the mercury line  
connecting those before me  
to their destiny.

I am not capable of thinking  
this blood is a ripple  
in an ocean  
of our blood / I am  
the next wave  
of a tide that has been coming  
for a long time / this vein  
leads back to my bones.
This is what I have learned from books.
I am an individual.

But I suspect my body remembers you all.

The curve of my legs,
the shape of my fingers,
the face of my son.

Yes, every limb,
every bend
every bone
is a recollection of
who has been before.

A memory
of all the bodies that have been
the making of me.

Inside us the dead.

* * *

This poem also appears in my book A Well Written Body, with painting by Delicia Sampero (Wellington: Huia Press, 2008). (See review, this issue, 488–491.)