

# *Facing the Empty Page*

Elizabeth Nannestad

The empty page  
looks all innocence  
but has its own sense of humour.

You might decide  
to call yourself Mme X, be sighted in foreign cities without forwarding address.  
The empty page will be at home, waiting.

The empty page is  
the Inquisition: you could throw yourself upon it,  
say, *save me*.

The empty page has  
no heart  
no home  
no pity.

The empty page takes  
everything you can give it, still is only satisfied, if ever  
for a very short time.

It is a mistake to introduce the empty page  
to your prospective lover. It will spoil everything  
leaving you alone, just you and the empty page, forever.

Don't be a fool for it,  
the empty page.  
Take refuge in supermarkets

with two radios and a loudspeaker  
playing at once.  
The empty page can't stand children's cartoons on television

so turn up the volume.  
Give the controls to a person aged less than three  
who'll be a match for it,

the empty page. Yet  
neither will it be  
set aside indefinitely.

The empty page is closely related to the Great Australian Desert.  
Good men, good women, died trying to cross it.  
Some people find that encouraging.

The empty page  
haunts the O.K. Corral  
looking for someone, might as well be you, to gun down.

The empty page is  
some people's idea of desirable  
and not unwilling

to come round for a short time to your way of thinking.  
The empty page will  
settle in

take your name at the bank  
drink your whisky  
inhabit your house

while you'll feed on your own fingernails  
wear black  
suffer doubt.

The empty page will retain affection, so long as you don't  
shove it, whack it, thrash it, push it around  
or make crossings out.

The empty page, it's hell  
to live with.  
And to live without.

Nannestad, E. (1996). *If he's a good dog he'll swim*. Auckland, NZ: Auckland  
University Press. pp. 1-2.  
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