

Coral Hull / 3 POEMS

THE PLATEAUS

The eh holden starts easily in the heat,
Of the western myall
Myall trees
Change in pasture to long grasses at the northern territory border
we start early,
flies blown away by the wind,
the saltbush sends them across its western face,
squints at the sun,
long term torquoise,
my car is torquoise,
when I break down they ask the model, make, colour.
I say, 'torquoise like the saltbush,'
along the hwy,
where the trucks and the animals do battle,
I'd back the trucks any day.

SECRET BIRD COUNTRY – WOOMERA ROCKET RANGE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

This is secret bird country, after rain.
The feathery tree by the painted rock told me of it.

The marble sky [blue succulent] grew simply bigger,
began to store moisture.

The low green trees were pretty, all spikes and feather.
They protect the leaf and flower territory,
half petals inside the spikes or grown feathery,

in the heat extreme, as if they are giving up,
like a dehydrated crow the land gaps with its beak hanging open.

Its charred black and red out there, I feel sympathy for it.

It waits for my tears as it waits to drink, to receive,
It's still and resistant,
yet when the lightning comes, it pants with the pressure,
with the terrible thirst it had forgotten about.

Suddenly it opens its fists, uncrosses its legs,

to receive

and scatters its protective centre like seeds and no longer resists.

The sun directly overhead.

The circular shadow surrounds the plant.

The intensity is always midday. It's midday country in mid summer.

The plant the sundial, the midday clock,

it's so hot.

Fucking birds, bastards, I can't see them.

The mouth of the land is a gaping skull.

The borewater ground sings in the nostrils like gas, the pink
red clay edged with salt.

This dust cries out silence.

It edges the salt lakes, pink and orange with scent.

Rich, it is so rich . . . Omoona words . . . the birds sing it,

they sing it in, territories,

glad small birds in the distance, south australia zebra finches

. . . tee tee tee tee . . . the rain,

the obviously friendly galah, pink in the gums,

the rain is luke warm,

these plants, these birds may have never had the cold touch them,

the cold is a theory like the fifth dimension,

Territories . . .

territories . . .

. . . tee tee tee tee . . .

The glad small birds in the distance,
through the dead wood and the pretty green scrub,

the blues and greys, lightening marble — aqua blue and succulent,
on the moist red dirt,

this quiet arid land has received rain, the birds
are squawking territories, galahs in the higher trees,

when listening,
the birds are deep mauve

more distance is required from the listener, here a repetitive call,
there a low-flyer, camouflaged,

The red dirt has tricked us all, it is after rain,

. . . after light rain the Dresley Creek has flooded its banks
and it's receding with swallows dipping into it,

the rain
has ran its rich course and smells like roots,

enter my breathing passages like pollen,

the ants are back, slowly and more relaxed,
the moisture trap,

the land swelters guards its moisture and utilises it,
the streams run away to the west that leads

nowhere,

into the terrible waste,
into the land too harsh to receive,

in the sudden downpour the water is wasted,

the secret birds cannot be seen, the trees are whistling,
as the land would have sizzled and whistled at its first drops,

first gigantic drops,

sinking,

and low down like a dogs belly, along the floorboards,
a hot tail at the Glendambo roadhouse, followed by lightning,
a quick light flash like a twig of electricity,
the thunder is upon the caravan roof, hot lightning reaching out,

the hot dry wind blows in the ions,
and land 'out there' from eastern outback South Australia,
along the sheep's back and the back of the fox,
the thunder is upon the caravan roof, the fox burrow,
And the wing of that pretty desert parrot, . . . which we cannot name.

The breeze . . .

jitters the feathers of mulga trees,
makes them tremble and shriek for rain,
shakes through the spikes, passes the dead grey wood,
blankets the bird call for seconds,

the wind has picked up,

has plucked that birdcall from the air and taken it elsewhere,

Chestnut—Rumped Thornbill—[look up colour in Simpson and Day].

Then another bird, quiet trumpet, trilling.

The land is talking upwards through their breasts and beaks,
their tiny eyes all the long day, the road trains pass,

Tourism: the nearly deads the newly weds, my eh holden,
pass by the quiet country after rain

and its secret birds,

will never come by this way again,

say goodbye to the shifting dune,

the name of ant you never knew,

the sting of the scorpion never felt,

and the land that sings upwards, shrubby and deep after rain,

deep with repetition and bird-song,

four notes: ta ta ta ta . . . ta ta ta ta . . . ta ta ta ta . . . weemmmm, trill.

the breeze grows warm,

the salt lakes further south west have sent it here,

warm breeze with the moist baked clay in its language,
the breeze is the language of baked clay,
of kangaroo carcass entering the car windows
and entering the cabin to hang around in there,
the contours of the bright hot shrubs, dotted by trees broken up by dull
sky,
many rocks stained clay red,
the place goes about its quiet foraging,
its territories,
its aridness,
peace and business by the road, the cars come and go,
leave the secret bird country to its cycle,
its quiet tirelessness,
the secret bird societies, or are they trees,
shrieking and trilling at the rainy weather from the north,

from the cyclone country, or
are they trees speaking, speaking birds, speaking holy,
birds simply growing from the ground up,
their tiny rooted legs,
hoy hoy hoy hoy hoy hoy . . . the direction,
the green parrot flying north points that way,
my life is alive,
it takes that route north and northwest,
that's what that koori guy from Port Augusta called the Stuart highway
he said, 'sister, that magic carpet
will take your car all the way to Darwin, good luck',
his name was Keith:

it points that way,
towards the straight road, the cyclone country,
nudging the red ochre coasts of *Arnhemland*,
'that one girl has come here to touch the land,' the birds said,

down at the caravan park Keith told us, 'take the rocks from Burnt Creek
and they will lose vibrance', will shine less brightly,

[why's that?],

do they depend on the surrounding energy?, and why is the clay deep,
so deep and red at sunset, in sunset country?,

Dresley Creek: shone from light rain,

here the zebra finches: 3 pairs checked us out from a tree,

the small birds cranky and distressed, chasing off crows,

bright and black and striped in the branches,

eyeing off the dry creek turned into rain receptive focus and rivulets.

THE DINGO FENCE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

for Robert Milne

The wire of the longest fence in the world is high and tensile with the sun's surface as a backdrop. Beyond its borders I see the land that is forever and the deep blue eyes, matted blonde hair and strong tanned shoulders of my mate Joe Wilson, finishing off the job with the cheap wire cutters, then suddenly the wire parting like an ocean, releasing the flood of sky and native fauna, like air from an over inflated balloon. The fence feels taut, then, as if falling into flight like a wedgetail eagle, it spreads and glides to earth. We opened the land to its potential, uncaged the wild antipodes, burst the dam of oppression and set the red dust free. I began by cutting a small rabbit hole into a slippery diamond along the thin grey wire, the jagged ends piercing the sky. My hands climbed the delicate frame, the wide blue backdrop pouring into line.

It was right that we cut the dingo fence. It parted like the Pacific Ocean. At first the old pair of wire cutters moved easily up its industrial spine. We intended to undo its cranky old bones and wire strung loose. A gun-crack fence followed by its shadowy inspectors, baits, traps and poisons. They were all killing animals in the tireless sun. The fence toothpicks the land, nets the scenery in and holds it to the ransom of wire. It protects the southern sheep industry, where sheep are not worth two bob, bogged in floods, flies and drought. It nets in wildlife at random and those who will never escape the fire along its five thousand kilometres barrier. It is right that we cut the fence, to let the life pour through and to clear the land of deadly restriction. This is the dreaming of the yellow-throated dog, the cut wire lies dead in the moonlight.