

Crossing Borders

Past Dead Man's Hill
we follow a petrol tanker
into flat brown and grey
where power lines
stretch like spider silk
across this never end.

Caught in the driver's window
white muscular clouds
paint a silver-edged halo
about your nose and jaw.
Right now, I'd drive with you
into forever.

360 degrees of sky
and the sun blazing
like the blinding eye of God;
too bright
too beautiful
too painful to meet.

Over ragged scrub
prey birds glide
scouring the map of earth
for hidden life.
We stop by the skeleton
of an old stone house

where I stand lookout
for snakes
watch fence wire shake
as you wade into
dung-coloured grass
to get a better photo.

Back in the car, with nothing
to say, we flow through
an un-peopled panorama
still and unswerving as patience.
This blue-domed church
presses silence to the windscreen.

Succulence

Back to the caravan park on the highway
we trudged, with its black garbage bags
mangy cat and old tin nags
chained to cement blocks
 row after row
and walked into the shabby office
you, with shaking smile, bleeding
lipstick to plead, *A few more weeks? No more
trouble*, and promises to keep up with the rent.

I lied a little, lending respectability to appease
the weary woman who held the keys
and every stinking minute stifled sobs
for what we must accept for you:
this metal-box of surrender
where you'll lie and swelter
clutching silence, growing stomach
while waiting for his visit

or maybe you'll heave yourself
up to the station to meet him
when his mum has finished dinner.
He gets the shits 'cause I get so tired
you say, adding a little more guilt
to your colourful pots of succulent pain.

Carrying your plastic bags into the van
I note your pallid skin in yellow light.
But you won't be told.
Nothing for me to offer but a little cash
unwanted advice and old pillows.
Your cloudy eyes meet mine with nothing
but his reflection and stoic grey
as you clench your lips and mumble
But I love him.

By the Side of the Road

When the sun sinks and the ridges
of our backs are getting cold
we find warmth by the sun-baked road;
little greys, roans and big reds
we all squat and sniff for fallen grain
where grass grows greener
tar stays warm and fences keep
the woollies and the fat beasts back.
The fumes of dusk tickle our nostrils
and growl to us, *come*.

When the roaring nears
we drop paws to the ground and roll aside
for those creatures are faster than emu
and deadly as old spear.
Sometimes white light fills our eyes
and we are stuck to the road
 bellies popped
 spilling colours and smells
 until

the black, sharp-beaked birds
or men with shovels and swearing
make us disappear.
Still we see ourselves
in yellow diamond signs
by the side of the road
and know we are welcome.

Rooted

The stump grinder came today
to expunge the old tree
with a huge iron-wheeled monster
that only just made it
through the narrow back lane
(the old dunny run)
then he grinned at me
with even white teeth, shocking
his dusty tanned face
into happy creases.
His metallic brute growled
spat chips and spluttered
into jasmine-scented summer air.

Ear-muffed and leathery
swaying lean hips in time
with the hungry beast that gnashed
and gnawed the grey stump
into shreds (once a seed, a sapling
a tree, who knows how tall?)
he shrouded the courtyard
with a sad, malty ash
that tickled sinuses and
settled on still damp sheets
while I sat pondering
his triumphant cry,
now she's rooted!