

# Late August Tercets; Or Summer Walks after Ben Brown

These days time is a series of straight lines  
Broken by cries of children,  
uplifted  
And folded, a peneplane eroded,

A geology of interruptions.  
 Like the twisted branches of a red gum,  
 Taut and fictive in a southerly gale.

This evening my boys and I walk spring back;  
They, in small steps behind the sun,  
plumb clouds  
For colours—orange, apricot, pink lady,

A Giant's feast in the sky. The wind  
Is summer's soundtrack in rehearsal—a young  
Magpie calls to the nest, two highway cars

In the distance wheel the road, black on black,  
And the footpath plays the closing notes  
Of winter under our shoes.  
Memory

Is a dog that trails behind us, the same way  
It followed my mother when she'd walk us  
Back from school in the Sydney sun—the long hill,

Stretched like purgatory before us,  
The rosellas hurtling through the bottlebrush,  
And the bakery that sold bee-stings

For tea. I remember the custard ooze,  
The glazed bun, the crunch of almonds,  
and her  
Slender arms before they withered. She'd haul

Us home, ragged, sticky mops of sweat—  
 To sit on the porch and watch a line of ants  
 Ascend a scribbly gum—raptured to drips

Of sap on the trunk like the shine of sugar  
On our fingers. And today,  
my boys' feet  
Sound the same as the dog's, and they have eyes

For the donuts I hold in a paper  
 Bag, oiled by icing  
                                   —translucent like the mind  
 Seeping backwards. I set course for the rise

Of Caalong Street, unwrap the journey  
In tales of blackwood and casuarina  
—Galaxies on the backs of black cockatoos.