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Poems

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Poems

Abstract

STAINS, LIVING IN ENGLISH

Jennifer Strauss

STAINS

Red rain out of the earth
While I sit in a Land Rights meeting
It marks my shiny car
With the broken dreams
Of the Mallee's soldier settlers —

Or does it blow, this dust,
From somewhere further back

LIVING IN ENGLISH

Living in English seemed natural as breathing
even when schooled to languages
where breath

 must move in different ways
to pass the necessary impedimenta
transforming it to speech.

 (How safe the Latinate abstraction
 Anglo-Saxon tongue,
 teeth, lips — any of these
 might conjure up the phantom of your body
 that merely tolerates such names).

 Eighteen years it took
 to recognise the English poetry I loved
 was an imperfect medium
 for the natural air I breathed;
 years more of labouring
 towards reconcilliation.

Knowing this, how could I dream so stubbornly,
so long, there'd be no reckoning,
no day

 when breath that mingled —
 wild or quiet —
 so sweetly in the dark

would summon lovers back
to the waking glare
of separate languages;
when what had joined us together would put asunder.