Poems

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Abstract
STAINS, LIVING IN ENGLISH

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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 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.