October Morning After Rain

Sunday morning after rain—a lilt and spring

in everything that flagged in yesterday's

Overcast. The wind shifts and the early coolness passes;

Clouds mass and crowd the blueness out. Mid-October never could make up

Its mind. The Koel's glad enough about it, though:

up there minding someone else's business

In someone else's nest. On the linen tablecloth: a eucalypt leaf

makes a dry catchment in a desert.

In my brother's garden, the avocado,

a tree that tells a whole plantation, deftly

Steps one leg from last year's leaves and leaves the other leg in this one.

It sets new fruit, the tree, and waits.

It portions sunlight, meanwhile,

and lays the sky in shadow on the lawn.

A holiday traffic of ants quickens freeways on the pavement

You hadn't known were there. Inside your halting heart,

inside the empty mind of morning, everything

That is goes on, a music seven bars ahead

of where you're at.

Later we walk the headland down to the shore.

Conglomerate, siltstone, flint, and coal-seam: we descend

Through paperbarks espaliered by salt and onshore winds;

architectures of resistance, they lay down

Their lives and thrive sideways, making torture over into art. Clouds billow and break

Like surf; a whale breaches and blows the horizon,

and below us, where the creek runs

Out into the sea, the heath paints

the feckless weather on the ground.

We skip stones across the trapped and tepid waters of the lagoon,

Rocks dislodged from shelves where once

coal-trains ran, and before that a people prospered—rocks

Smoothed by all the years that time has tossed them hand to hand.

Behind the beach, we sidestep leaches and speak

of nature and Nietzsche. Along the rainforest track,

Whipbirds make love's exquisite cries

and wise cracks, and we moan

about our shipwrecked hearts and all our ageing

Bits, and a regent bowerbird almost takes my head off in its black and magenta haste,

The kind of disguise you're meant to notice, but only

If you're quick. A Beatrice in chartreuse and pitch,

she steals her light back into darkling woods. She turns

Us, and we walk the wrackline back, and, making the ascent,

Our years blow hard, and at the top

lovers sit and watch the whales, but it's we

Who've surfaced. Oh, how we have breached and floundered

Deep and foundered, beached and found

the ground of heaven again. A paraglider lays his sail out

Under the nor-east breeze, and later, as we drink our small reward,

Among an incidental wedding party at the Surf House,

we watch him fly a rainbow

reconnaissance well out over the sea.