

University of Adelaide

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Flinders

Biographical note:

Naomi Horridge is a Creative Writing PhD candidate at the University of Adelaide. She has lived in the East Kimberley for two and a half years.

A five o'clock full moon is light
and low as cloudform.
I think Ansel Adams. Ari says
'This is like Texas'.
How afternoon sun brings out the red in burnt
umber soil and breasts of pink
galahs perched on a tree. Today I am
the third wheel, looking on
as this couple bicker
over maps; the art of giving
directions.

At roadside explanations of terrain
relief to see 'depression'
as geology, rather than a term
for people or economies.

The unmemorable
things we really do with the time. Flat
landscapes rolling past the car. 'It's amazing,'
Ari says, 'how this reminds me
of the West'. Cloud shadows move on
distant hills. Evening in a rented
cottage, asking whether
the bacon is as crisp as we would like.

We find a holiday
of midlife men on Harleys
gathered at the petrol station, smoking, pause
at a turnoff signed 'To Aboriginal Painting Site'.
How far is it? Will there be much to see?

The blank place where I only meant to pick
my way, barefoot on stones, to piss
but was engulfed. Flies rising off
a sack of leather on a stick, like old bagpipes
dropped: dead kangaroo.

Ari greets strangers, says goodbye.
He's out there, connects himself
to everybody. Sarah reads aloud ruins
from the guidebook. I prefer to let the view
float unremarked as painting. Night-black green,
blue and washed-out yellow.

Mesa, savannah, scrub, unless your own
feel just the same. 'Is this the kind of country
that became the dustbowl?'
'Yeah. Because of overgrazing.'
Wyoming and Montana, Texas and Arkansas.

Ari is seeing somewhere else. I wonder if
I too am his America.

At lunch, on this small town
main drag, I could sit forever
on these plastic chairs, survey the avenue
of trees, kindly awnings off
the highway, bypassed, watching people
pass the time of day.