ROAMING

Now, looking North,
we wonder what exists
beyond the frayed and mudded linen
clenched upon here.
This town is a mirage.
Building upon itself.
Shifting like foreign sands.

We make small divisions here
there is space.
We deepen the road
where a wheel will soon sit
split the earth,
make a hollow
you wish would fill with rain and freeze over.

The eyes of us, catch a glint
a glimpse of gold or
tin, while oil burns on
through the red evening sun.

And on Elizabeth Street
buildings with open eyes burn on
as they stare out at a sparkless
road. The dust here
hardened and licking up
at bootstraps and petticoats,
fighting its way indoors.

At noon it aches for the four o’clock shadow on its back.
Creeping up the walls of those transported stores,
placarded, on tour,
like the circus goes.
Pale uniform growths
with dream names
lost at sea,
standing on the lost ground.
Clarent, Victoria, Harris, Liverpool.
They echo out to each other
as the ghosts that move across the bare gulf.

Sundrenched clouds singing above,
taxt the pallor of your skin.
They mimic the road, its pocked face
though not stitched through with weeds.

The churches screech upwards,
they steal each other’s steeples
and the smoke that burns in the city furnace grows higher.

Men on horses

and women on foot.

Their view of the first floor windows,
slops, drapes, things to settle.

The rumpled flatness of the city
like a wet sheet was
thrown out from the sea
with the static risings of houses, roofs, bell towers.

It is a map folded inward
folded into the palm

that washes in the river,
that journeys into town and sees

Bird, bone, marrow.

Who do the cattle look to?
The ground, and the dust,
their master with his slow limp?

All the faces in the shadows are dark

and you could only tell a man from the colour of his coat.
HERDING

The view is here.
Looking South.
The road calm
and calves serene.
Nothing stops
the sharp nerve,
seismic,
as they cross the bridge.

Nervous lashes,
kissing together.
Sometimes the hides twitch
frightened by a fly
rippling through the stock
like a murmur.
Hooves slip over bluestone
as they cross Prince’s Bridge.
And this drive of honey coloured calves
will be the break
from Sydney.

This is where we walk
flanking
with a lazy whip.

We cross the water line too
dividing north from south
and wonder what is lost in between.
We find the road as a
lump in the sun.
How rich in real colours
set amongst descending hues of nude.
They move,
their muscles shuddering
in the heat.
Nervous as foals.

And the wide road reaches for
the hooves, the drag,
and the sweep of skirts
along the spine of the city
soft as a broom.

The wind pushes back
around the corners
it comes like a blow to the head.
The weather, a foreigner.
It takes you by surprise.
The smell of hay
breathing

over the city sky.
LEVELING

There is flat land for grazing,

here it hangs outside the window

but the green that holds the earth together

will be pulled up

between bovine teeth

Soon.

On the wall hangs

the same impression

of a pale sky.

Romantic hues that make the air

more lovelier.

This is what they write home.

Of the romantic skies,

promise and caress.

It lurches above us in the fields

and its fierce uprising cannot be blot out.

It is only made more lovelier on the page

than the hills that blaze

on the horizon.
From heights we cut up fields,
cracking the wet stones.
The city has been swooped upon
as a dreaming village.
The swelling roads rift the houses
from each other.
They grow like waves.
The king tide, golden
and breaking on the hill.

The vantage here
is the high brow of a bird
looking like a white eagle would
over the suburbs.

That founding hill now
collapsed under the rail weight
that shackles its head to the ground.
This view that sketched all corners,
gridded the face and numbered the houses too.

Fate has flipped the land over
from that hill
and after all its boundaries
dreamt and etched,
bore a new name.

I have seen many things leveled
But here the horizon was lifted
pushed the stars out
and made the sun rise earlier.

It is a flat farm
a braced and sea-drenched field
a space to leave from
where the mind still drags in the mud over that country.

Laura de Neefe, 2013