

On The Hill

I am a camera planted in spinifex and red dust,
—stars swipe white scratches across obsidian
a nightbird murmurs and a moth flicks moonwards.

Hours go by slow as ore trains, impossibly long
and all carrying the same freight.

Below, the constellation of yellow dots that charts
the town goes dark, and the wind that comes
with picaninny dawn rattles mallee leaves.

So high above the sleepers it's easy to believe
in spirits, that sudden coldness on neck and shoulders

a haunting real as the truth of bandicoot scribbled
in stony dirt, or your face on the hospital pillow
pale as the ghost you joked about becoming,

oxygen hissing into nostrils, whispered insistence

that *third time's the charm*, the smiles we both tried for.

Cramp makes me stand and stamp. I limp down through air

so clear you can almost see tomorrow, boots slipping

in loose gravel, gulp bitter coffee, get ready

to drive that black snake highway, bring you home,

speak to the priest.