

Classic Poetry Series

Pam Brown
- poems -

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Pam Brown(1948 -)

Pam Brown (born 1948) is an Australian poet.

Brown was born in Seymour, Victoria, and her childhood was spent in on military bases in Toowoomba and Brisbane. Since her early twenties, she has mostly lived in Sydney. She has made her living as a silkscreen printer, musician and film-maker, has taught writing, multi-media studies and film-making and worked from 1989 - 2006 as a librarian at University of Sydney. She lives in Sydney, Australia.

From 1997 to 2002 Pam Brown was the poetry editor of Overland and since 2004 has been the associate editor of Jacket magazine. She has been a guest at poetry festivals worldwide, taught at the University for Foreign Languages, Hanoi, and during 2003 had Australia Council writers residency in Rome.

Anyworld

Artworld Theoryworld Mediaworld Infoworld Touristworld Olympicworld Foxworld
Bushworld : Oneworld

Susan Buck-Morss, Art in the Age of Technological Surveillance
setting out,

 a scarlet flower
 behind an ear,
into the wide
 world into
 banner-adorned cities
faking
 permanent festivity

*

 the road
 turns an angle
like the dateline does
 near Tuvalu

*

once, it's said, anticipating promise,
 they murmured
 as they crossed,
 'Bush' like
 ' boo schh boo schh '

and
 no reply
 came

*

sprained westoxified
 all-signed-up
 for 'NightTalker',
 (the wine is under
 the table somewhere)
 crying becomes
 a critical criterion
(the flower

discarded)

*

the public sphere
is
newly perceptibly
losing memory

*

re mem ber Bam,
Arg-e Bam
ancient city of sand
and mud
collapsing in an earthquake,
the cultural heritage building
slipping subsiding,
consigning
any record
of the archaic ruin
to dust

*

the memory
is
ruined

*

who can accept
a given world,
who can
live in it ?

Pam Brown

City

a yearned-for somewhere
adverb-physically
as lost as now
 gazing across
 the chunky valley
to a hill
 of quivering lights

there is no
 destination –
just a place
 no site
not olympic
 village site
not harbourside
 casino site
nor section
 of expressway
 just east
of where
 coincidence
 has determined
 your residence
in a city
 you returned to
 to remember
 why you left

inventing
 nostalgia
 for elsewhere –
you'll live there
 in the future

Pam Brown

Cubists In Surburbia

monday's twilight dimming
 on the last few brown leaves
 of dreary autumn,
thin branches jut
 like grissini
from camouflage-patterned trunks,
 it's the plane tree the tree
 the Cubists loved the most,
the light, green grey,
 they loved that too.

Pam Brown

Darkenings

born in a de-mountable, there you are now,
fifty-something years gone by not a disaster,
in the centre of the car-lined road,
a paper bag
tucked in the crook of your arm
with two paperbacks
and a poetry pamphlet.
no longer having much idea
of earlier versions of yourself
today bewildered
by some invented crisis
apparently necessary
for a cowardly killjoy
(whom you wish, of course,
to soon forget)
to end an already-fraying friendship,
but not so sentimental
as to crank the handle
once the rust has dusted the debts.

*

you go on vacation
to an unmodified landscape,
towards a blackout, the cause impossible to source,
to candle and fire,
to night's proper darkness,
you go to the bay
where sooty grey shearwaters
come down from Siberia
to bob stiff on the waves,
dead from exhaustion,
a flight from zero to infinity.

taking the news
from a smart eco liftout —
(international features
delivering "all you need to know")

of war dunes and sand dunes
in deserts far away —
camels superseded
by four wheel drives,
date palms blown into blue yonder
and uranium-flecked scrapheaps
mapped as oases

*

there you are, back again,
at the printer as covert,
reading the back of the recycled paper,
ciphers and sign,
vigilant under fluoro
scrutinising discarded files of dissent -
a single fist raised to the world
expressionist texta
"greetings from the resistance"
but nobody's watching, just shadow,
nobody's thinking
that you're here reading reports
on indiscriminate transmissions —
avian flu, Hendra virus, lyssa virus —
insensible species' leaps,
no-bargains-pandemics,
no clues in the notes from darkening science

*

no further treatment nothing to lose,
man with cancer carries his son
to lay him down in the contaminated ground.
nowhere left now,
moon ripple on the tailings dam
where he used to skip stones.

Pam Brown

Do What

with oxygen,
it's the cylinders.
with collage,
the bit
of crinkly
adherence

with poems,
(though poems
are so ghostly
in their way)
it's the leap
taken

'art & life'
I ask you,
should I fret ?

with philosophy
it's equilibrium
(is it ?)
(no it's not)
detached
from im/possibilities

the solution,
a bit late,
but unqualified,
arrives –

to get ahead –
it's neutrality
you want,
like
frozen food
to decomposition

Fall To Float

I've forgotten what to do
and I should be keeping that
to myself
not to be too lyrical
yet I'd plunge
into a field of flowers
on earth's fat crust
shake my petalled brow
filter every speck
of pollen from my fringe
the woman who fell to earth
like david bowie did
but with my luck
and if the dead do sleep
they'd be sleeping there
where I'd land
I'd land and lie
until the pleiades
start to blink their signal
that the time is right
to plant the herb
to cast the seed
to go home to bed
but there's so much light
in this hydrocarbon wonderland
the night sky is hard to see
by day I'd float
on the tyrrhenian sea
surrounded by a haze of ghosts
moaning of failed crossings
gazing up at a wide sky
thin white cirrostratus sheets
stretching all the way
back to tunisia

Pam Brown

Flecks

sliding along
before vanishing
they keep
the lights on
through the night
I slip by
like a whisp
of toner dust
eluding dreams,
rasping inhalation,
hypnagogic flecks
disperse,
I lie waiting
for the 2 a.m. foghorn,
a cargo ship entering
Sydney harbour.
barring sleep
for night's duration
television sound
or dvds
droning on
til early light
pinching through
the wooden slats
outlines the furniture.
on the top floor
a baby wakes
and wails for morning.
my scurf and scraps
and scattered nerves
begin their daily cycle,
two packed buses
to and through
the indifferent city
to work where
nothing makes sense
on the databases,
released by flexitime
from a short routine,

late afternoons
in the cinema's womb
dozing through
jarhead
casanova
capote
syriana
transamerica

Pam Brown

Front

immaculate facades
will crumble

the ludicrous pageant
of history
falters,
grotesque and absolute

there is nowhere
further
to go.

relieved
to live here
in the sluggish flux
of the quotidian

with a poor memory

happy
to give up
applying for visas
for forgotten countries

hoping
only to continue
to barrack for the losers

to live here where I live
where it's always matinee,
where love matters

where everyone knows
Freud's big mistake –
considering adult love
in terms
of babies
and small children.

only a poet,
pissing for pleasure,
I strive to appear
as normal as possible
in the face of
gigantic
surrealist tendencies –

give the shibboleths
a drubbing

drub the placebo
while you're at it
(make mine real)

blow torch
the crème brûlée !

to suffer only
the usual fears

being
suddenly stricken
with a fatal disease
or doomed
by hypocrisy

knowing
everyone dies
of something
(it's natural)

dying of boredom
in the queue
at the consulate

dying of laughter
in any
foreign clime

watching

my friends
form
a drunken
committee of two

they're
ganging up against it
like Chinese troops
on speed

maddened
by moral superiority.

arranging
yet another
little altruistic project

just like
a dreamer
with a separate destiny

I flaunt the rules
and never anticipate
capture.

between
social behaviour
and authentic feeling
irony
becomes
the modus vivendi

then, possibly,
a pain in the spine
throbbing in the head
unpredictable blood
from the womb

the pesky irruptions
of time

In Europe

I'm leaning
on a pillar
under a high
squinch arch,
breezy
brown leaves
swirl along
the colonnade,
dust my sandals.
dear palermo,
bella palermo,
dear trastevere,
I'm covered
in commas,
I'm wasting water
roman-style,
cool chalky water
I'm letting it flow,
I'm in science road
by the sandstone
devil fountain
that spouts a trickle,
imagining
I'm walking up
viale di trastevere,
I point
to my 'wound'
my shoulder
my 'sin' like
an early christian
martyred
for a living,
bones bound
with fraying rags.
my one year
in a thousand years,
dear chrono,
your iron cross
upright atop

a potshard hillock,
I'm there
on the summit,
it's flat like a mesa,
there I imagine
my balm,
my beauties –
in a kitchen
in europe,
licking
the harissa
in europe
anywhere,
white tiles
to the ceiling,
a sprinkling
of soap suds
glistening
in a dark
autumn sink.
dear cerveteri,
I'm standing, quiet
and still,
inside a tumulus
covered in grasses
and wild flowers.
the bus
has broken down,
I'm walking back
to ladispoli,
in the distance
a bird flock swarms
in folds & turns,
in geometric patterns
like a screen saver.
swift evening rain
coming across
from the coast.

Pam Brown

In Ultimo

leaving nature's
barbarism (spider
in a glove) behind
me I enter my
paved city –
pocked concrete
& traffic carbon –
sky's all
coppery night's
coming up

I follow
the man-in-the-dress
along a lane
littered
with litter
where
Carlo & Zanzi
have signed
the sub-station
roll-a-door –
more than a tag –
a declaration –
white strokes
wide brush

no lights on,
no one home –
downstairs
short striped rows
neatly arranged,
more organised
than the library
I work in –
I stand before
my bookshelf –
wonder if
I'm a little crazy.

anyone on
the answer machine ?

up to the third floor
for a lean
& a musing –
what colour's my posture ?
what colours my posture ?

here's the view
from the balcony –
grey & darker grey
brick wall office
windows computer
screens & tv screens
nearly always on

an office cleaner's
smoky silhouette
gently inverting
wastepaper bins
under large
cibachrome photos
of American
stars

look skywards
imagining –
every passenger
has taken
the holding pattern
to heart

I should
show some vim! –
drive the car
somewhere,
walk into Chinatown,
loop the city
on the mono-rail,
decipher
an ignoble idea,

cook dinner –

toss

the colander of penne,

careful

not to steam

the B. Smith

& B. Holliday records

stacked

on the dish drainer –

all washed up

`n' ready

to spin.

Pam Brown

Lab Face

heavenly shades of night
are falling it's twilight time,
thinking outside the tick box
on the last day of the past,
to ready my selves
for an inurement of toil
I'm sauntering over
to a cheap eats turn
at the food court,
a bit of a do and a bite to eat,
something to help stave off
hollering inertia

everything's
in the planning stages
but I really should leach the gel
that carries the signal
from node to screen,
add some figures
to this year's calculations,
then add some lines
to the homilies

as follows

Dear toddlers I loved the 80s
(my true thoughts)
drinking ginger beer in Uzbekistan
beside huge black and white photos
of mosque restoration
along a corridor of murals
a corridor of communist heroes

jumping up and down on the spot
in time to a band called Soft Cell,
papering the walls
with posters of pink champagne,
re-registering on the electoral roll,
ah, the heady 80s

but later, tonight,
knowing this is the last century
of which I'll partake,
 (my lassitude,
 my disbelief, and
 mon dieu, my grief)
I'll lie on the laboratory couch
(I'm looking forward to it too)
marvelling
 at how my little egg doth pong

Pam Brown

Low To Go

throttled and threatened
with being thrown
from the third tier
of the bricked-up block.
the kids dumped
in the camper van
out the back
for safety's sake.
the statistic in Japan
90 people suicide
every day,
matchmaker websites
arranging catastrophic
rendezvous
to suffocate together
in a car.
nothing like that
happens
in a compound like this,
the stale odour
of a plebian estate
on a hot summer day.
a man in bare feet
dismantling a car
with his cracked hands.
the bumper bars
the doors the grill
prised off and filed away
in a shed full
of buckled chrome
and brake discs
and greasy cable.
amateur wrecker
"nothing happens here
nothing gets done
but you get to like it"

Pam Brown

Patti Smith Was Right

these cold, known objects
are not very likeable –
aluminium frames
& curved glass with optical tricks –
but I am 'at ease'
at this show,
there are some nice little-grin ideas –
like television
screening outside
on the suburban home's front lawn,
& time-delay vérité videos
to amuse the usually uncrackable
hardened gallery-goer

*

have I flipped ? into a strangely placid
political zone a lack of clutter
and environmental concern –
these things are so simple,
two hours here & I begin to enjoy
Dan Graham
more than Soutine, Braque, Delaunay,
Bourgeois, Basquiat, Sherrie Levine,
Agnes Martin – although
I can not deny my memory
of her beautiful mid-1960's picture –
'Milk River' –
nor her small collection
of pick-up trucks – the green Chevie
glinting with polish – the very driveable
Dodge parked
outside her desert home.

*

I spend over an hour watching,
surrendering to
Dan Graham's big "Rock/God" video

that makes a simple
anthropological connection
between US tribal & religious ritual –
group dancing, shaking, speaking in tongues –
and mosh pits and rock music –
so when Patti Smith sings
“Jesus died for somebody’s sins
but not mine”
I am converted.

*

Patti Smith was right,
twenty-five years ago,
to say that rock music,
meaning, then, for her, punk-rock,
would replace painting
& sculpture
as representative of untranscended
life itself.

Pam Brown

Pique

no one
 on the corner
 here

silent,
 not spiritual,
the city is empty

antispectacular
 & as
deodorised
 as heaven

no sleeping boys
 no density
no belching
 pissing bodies
no spitting
 in the street

utilitarian –
 make one step
 another step
 follows

the pace set
 by the tedium
 of the blessed

*

demolishing
 half the house
 to make room
for the truck

bashing the bricks
 with
 a blunt tang

aiming
the air rifle
anywhere

blasting doves
from
telegraph poles

shouting & strutting
down
BBQ lane

setting fire
to lakes

*

once
in a while
the coprophiliac
makes a deposit
in the library

where,
absorbed
in poetic gesture,
arrivistes paraphrase
biography –

& animate
early C20
heroes & heroines

maybe
that way
something
rubs off

as when
quotation

embarrasses
the text

& here am I,
nibbling
my jejune nourishment
with the laxity
of a cultivated
& singular minority

languidly
erasing
all legend

flick flick flick

*

Pam Brown

Rehab For Everyone

hands so cold
 fingers cold
tucked under legs
 sitting in insect hiss
 low white noise
gas heater undertone
 no other sound
 nothing

almost asleep,
 a car pulling up the hill

 a currawong
does that shrill thing
 into pink air

a huge open yawn
 almost breaks my jaw

the pen that makes the marks
 alters the angles of the letters

a patch
 of yesterday's chocolate
 stuck to my corduroy sleeve –
a signal
 imagined and interpreted

we look back
 at the years in the tops
waiting to be taken out of time

red brick
 wall map of Australia
grass green carpet
mustard coloured plastic chairs
 clumpy piling on the mittens

mitts on the keyboard

pushing thoughts and jingles

out

to Dublin to Seattle,
Adelaide, Kane'ohe,
Faversham, Glebe

sadly notating dim trivia
me-minus-you
outside community

literary festivals
can't help anyone
like a rehab book sale

making mistakes,
so different
from being morally wrong

in an unsettling world
it's a rabbit life,
built the walls from Castrol cases

black tyre ribbons
strewn
like a giant's licorice
under the striated cutting
siding on the highway,
say goodbye
to the Woodford bends

sometimes the clunky
can incandesce
but I want to know
how to vitalize gawkiness,

sometimes
I'm in my no-mind sometimes
in a technological mindlessness
sometimes nowhere near limber,
although that's unusual

some people

just float along all the time
accumulating the placid

sometimes
when you think you're going down
you're not,
you're going straight ahead
to a utopia of modernity.

Pam Brown

Saxe Blue Sky (Thursday Morning)

the millennium train
 whips past
 the tollway to the Harbour Bridge
CHANGE GIVEN CHANGE GIVEN AUTO COINS ONLY
 in bright orange
 against a saxe blue sky.
the gigantic matchsticks sculpture,
 one burnt, one phosphorous red and ready,
jutting up
 from a closely trimmed mound of couch.
a bronze frieze in capital letters, on the corner
 of the NSW Art Gallery —
 CHRISTOPHER WREN, (old cosmopolitan),
 (Thomas) GAINSBOROUGH —
 flashes by,
seventeenth and eighteenth century ghosts,
 glimpsed like brief suggestions, or notes,
as I enter the drab tunnel
 towards Martin Place
on my way
 to advance automation,
 to sort a set of bookbinding cards
(discard, edit, or keep,
 according, fo course,
 to a method)
cards detailed with
 pencilled handwriting,
traces of colleagues
 now moved on.
I remember most of them,
more, I remember their memos,
circulated notes —
 our names listed,
 stapled to a corner,
memo read, name ticked, then passed along
 to the next name —
pre-email,
 and computers then exclusive to data,

the binding card
 mimicking book spines,
a card index
 the instrument of record.

the train squeals into Redfern
 I emerge from the dim light
deep under the city
 to see the saxe blue sky
 look smoggier,
 pale grey-brown on the horizon,
 from here, in the inner west,
the way I walk to work,
the block — the aboriginal housing co-operative —
 demolished, gone.
 another set of glimpses, wisps,
traces of people
 now moved on.
 on this frosty thursday morning
only a small group of revenants
 warming up around
 a smoking 44-gallon drum.

Pam Brown

Scenes

what's graspable
on the starless night
of the blackout
as the gleaming cars
snake cautiously
up around
that hillside curve
is the way
the absence of street light
suggests the past –
not a past
I ever knew,
but one I make up, tonight

a boy slides through it
on a silver scooter,
coming back
from synagogue,
curly tails
dangling beneath
an embroidered yarmulke
perched like a lid
to imagination's
reckless feats
or dimmer prospects –
sets of fraying notebooks
filled with scripture

*

over the road
two very stoned spectres
can't figure out
how to turn off
the one
working headlight
on their old
silver BMW
so they leave it on

& hurry off
on foot,
jerkily,
on pills probably,
fags attached
to lower lips,
flat battery
a portent

*

an intense white light
shines down
through folding greys
on the isolated city –
it transforms
to a plastic model,
to a distant maquette,
like toys on my horizon

that white plastic bag
has been drifting
from the gutter
to the road
for three days,
when the rainwater
carries it off
to the Tasman Sea
I think I'll miss it.

Pam Brown

Spirulina To Go

if you haven't been lost
 at the showground,
in the bush, in Westfield Plaza,
 on an island

you may not know
 the perpetual present
 is exhausting,

way too many
 concurrent points of view,

– something too free in aleatory –

and further,
 a burden – a century
 of hortatory Steinisms,
Yes, that's how I read it –

 famously, she says
'a sentence is not emotional, a paragraph is'

the 'difficult' Stein at her best

'Think carefully of nouns.
Vary and think very think very once
and once more of a noun a noun they like'

DRINKING STRAW — there's your noun, mrs!
 hope you like it

*

discussing Immaculate Conception
 on the landline

&
 Original Sin –
 who knows what it is?

does an individual matter?
(immeasurable)

*

boys own rumbles by
 on a rusted bicycle
ruining the dawn's bleak dream,
 the flattened one,
 where you emerge from the lake
and wave, almost languidly

*

there's the dribbling bronze boar
 outside Sydney hospital,
 its snout shiny from stroking

dwelling
 on isolation (don't dwell)
 and other sad feelings (shouldn't dwell)
like a detainee in this,
 the inadequate body

red bumps
 bigger than goosebumps –
but not exactly pimple size
 more weals than welks

who can understand the nurse
 when she phones
 with the laboratory test data?

*

No one ever here, no footpath crowd,
 every knock of a hinge is creepy
 crack of a floorboard,
 rustle and gust

perhaps it's revelatory,
 or will be

can the past catch up with you

*

problem – how to begin the music,
 harder than beginning a poem?

the ringtone
 was the sound of that decade

if you just keep turning up
 on time

eventually
 might rain photons

*

that'd be good

*

you're embarrassed
 by my slurp
when I'm
 guzzling spirulina
 but
I've been to my personal best
 and back —
 I'm not worried

*

early intervention buys time,

how much is time these days?
 (a cheap question)

*

if you see something
say something –

This is everything I could want
in a lifetime of products

*

pulling on another shirt
over two shirts
as weather
sets in

standing in the clothes
that you once wore

*

hours sitting in one spot

a rosella fell, lodged dead in the branches,
I took it down
and buried it behind the begonia

a new cicada began to chirr

*

I've been coasting,
a clown visiting a conservatorium,

time now for application

I want to reach the inhumans,
find the kind of poetry
that appeals to them,
to their original intelligence,
and then,
struck by enargia, Propriety Limited is us

*

Unable to afford
the G'Day Highway Motel,
I sleep in a car in its shadow

while

the town that makes
the world's supply
of plastic drinking straws
is booming

*

the dendrite moves slowly
towards the synapse –
arrives two weeks later

WISHING YOU
A SPEEDY RECOVERY

the light here is so dim

*

an indestructible host organism
has the softest touch

strike another match, go start anew

Pam Brown

The Long Years

<i>We act as if being alone were a problem,
perhaps it is a fixed idea
like the fear of dying in summer
when you decompose more quickly </i>
- Peter Handke

these are the long years and these years
are the years which pass quickly.

these are the middle years.

these are the years when we realise
we have been going about living
the hard way.

remember driving at night
along Coronation Drive,
beside the river.
remember this as I remember it

as I remember the canvas fans
on the ceiling of the Renoir Café.

I was sick with influenza,
you were going away to France
or, maybe, that time, you were going
elsewhere and as I remember
the shade of the shabby fibro verandah
where you handed me your notes,
written closely in pencil
on small pieces of paper, each page
a different size, your notes
on existentialism which I kept
in a small black folder in a cupboard
and which were lost, later,
when I looked through the house
after everyone had died,

as I remember.

these are the long years
when conversational moments stretch

into stories repeated and repeated
until everything, the whole lot, falls
into a kind of overwhelming sincerity
and it is then that I become
so self-conscious that I can
no longer hear what is being told to me.

remember the auditorium
in which no one believed,
in which they performed,
and the boy who had an erection
halfway through his song,
the clock on the classroom wall,
the mustard colour
of a particular summer dress,
the patches of sweat behind the knees,
the stifling afternoon heat,
the terrible poems that you took seriously,
and the way we caught ourselves
remembering.

remember, if you wish,
that I meet with with you, each time,
these days to honour
the spirit of torn-up letters.

these have been long years –
the unwritten letters would tell you this –
that, once, I was so very upset
that I hit myself on the head
with a shoe,
and that, just before then, before
becoming distressed,
I had been thinking about
the electronic staircase in Japan
where each step plays a musical note
when stepped upon,
and, earlier that year,
I had placed a postcard on the windowsill
above my table –
a detail from Lorenzetti's painting
'Allegory of Good Government',

which I had seen in Siena in an earlier year.
it is the part of the picture
 where Peace, Strength and Prudence
 sit together on a patterned couch –
they look relaxed, as if bored by government,
 Peace is so laconic she looks as if
 she will fall to sleep
 and drop the olive twig she idly twirls.

as I remember something
viewed from the back seat of a taxi –
 a woman stood facing
a cyclone wire fence,
 tears made damp spots
on the straps of her sun dress,
the man placed his hand
 on her pale bony back,
it was so very sad as serious
 as if they might kiss.

remember the present or yesterday
as I remember the idea of our lives
 and our actual lives,
and your use of that term, again
 and again, 're-invention'
as a cure for loneliness –
like watching a woman
 with a string of pearls slowly
 testing each one
 in the wine.

here we are waiting for the natural end,
 for some future winter as I remember it,
and in these long years
we may eventually locate the places
 beyond memory in imagined countries,
where English is the last language.

Pam Brown

This Is All

this is all I will bring to you
from the deep humidity here
where everything about this evening hurts,
from the helpless beauty of the pale orange sky
to the darkening wall of the cemetery.
tonight it seems we were never here,
that we never slept here.
that the dust gathered in a brand new house
and it became a museum overnight.
this evening short involuntary gasps
interrupt my practice of abstinence
and hurtle me across the equator across the world.

Pam Brown

Ultradian Rhythm

oppspinn,

I think that's
Finnish for 'made up'

places to go like Sarcadia
or Sfax

or here, just across the tram-track
from Bingo

on the top floor next door
to Blockbuster

(a kind of
pre-cognitive landmark)

under the antenna-nest
of the dream bird
that hatches the egg
of experience, boredom.

also 'made-up'
& performed –
optimism, like
peacetime's modern luxury –
having a grave
all to yourself

down below
the traffic
sounds like the sea,
like the Pacific (perhaps)
rising under
a pall of poison,
islands sinking
as morning's white moon
still dangles
in the sickly blue
behind the mobile phone tower.

sherbet-brained,
fizzily beginning to feel
like Nietzsche spake –

nothing is worth anything

insects frolic

in my hairs,

I open another dusty book

in the weak Roman shade

seems like Brisbane

summer grey

and I've come so very far

to make this small comparison

Pam Brown

Up North

night is a nuisance
when you're sleeping
on the floor

thirteen hours
in the same shoes
and hours yet to come

I pack Xing,
a slim volume,
for the plane trip to the tropics

*

spotty faded photos
of personalities at tea
framed on the cafe wall

trendy bakeries called
"Bread Story"
behind me, at last

paw paw, avocado, lychee,
banana, bread board and sockettes
on the window sill in the sun

*

this morning, hazy mauve pink
washes the wooded ravines
of the indigo range

noisy birds, ibis and egret,
shit white splotches
onto the utes below

two men in singlets
removing green coconuts
wave from the top of the tree

*

kestrels prey
on toads and rats
on furrowed cane fields

Welcome to Mareeba
Gateway to Cape York,
cloud blankets the tableland

rodeo clobber,
de rigueur
on Main Street

*

returning through rainforest,
the Kuranda boys
do the cassowary dance

"zamier nuts"
that's what they're called
round and brown on the musty ground

last sunset in Cairns
across the port a ridiculous rainbow
rising from the foot of the range

Pam Brown