



CORNELIS VLEESKINS

TO THE LEFT

Walking from the station
to my parents' house
I keep to the left

The side of the road
with unkempt grass
mud holes and ants' nests

that hasn't changed
in twenty years

Pioneer Memorial
Presbyterian Church
in its brick cloak

huddled at the foot
of Rooty Hill still
unclaimed by developers

The other side of the road
boasts a footpath now
And many unfamiliar houses

*

As a six-year-old
I couldn't find
the balance for cycling

and now watch nervous
as my son pedals
confidently along the footpath

I recall
how when I finally
managed to stay on

I still lacked that grip
that would let me say
Look Ma no hands

*

Push feet
off the ground and
I'm flying

I'm flying I am flying
and then arrested
by the fall of the swing

Falling
a rush of trapped
air and feeling

afraid of falling
afraid
of letting go

*

Cats walk in and out of my life
surefooted and independent

(My parents would never have
a cat around the house
I don't know why . . .)

I roll over in my sleep
and find a cat has claimed
the warmth between us

*

A cold wind blows about my body

and my young daughter
claims she is too tired to walk
insists
on being carried
(As a child I beg my father
pick me up
I cannot go another step
He doesn't . . .)

I pick up my daughter

and disown this cold
Place it outside myself
like a cold wind
blowing me off my feet