

Mark O'Connor

**FULL MOON IN THE 5TH
MONTH OF THE 1983
DROUGHT**

I

The hour before moonburst when the sky is alight
for no reason
from no clear direction. Then a cloud flares white,
and up she comes, an erratic totally public streetlight,
our own light-borrowing sister moon.
From that notch in the Eastern hills
she pours her white waters. You hold your breath
knowing she is doing it,
not only here, but over the ocean, and in every place
due North or South.

The blond fields rise to reflect her,
fragrant, exultant. Full moon, there will be no night,
only a long cool ending of day. She lifts clear,
nonchalantly as over Antarctic glaciers.
Like clockwork or connivance the way she rises
just as her brother has faded.
Yet the next night she comes late, and then later,
wasting her fullness.
Are there planets where it is better done?
Only earth has this one giant moon.

II

Midnight, a slow radiation from the rocks keeps the
valley mild.

Scotch-thistles, like scarecrows, throw moon-shadows
in the bright paddocks. The sheep are gone;
the wallabies crouch head-down, mouths between
fore-paws,
nibbling like mice at scorched turf.

They crawl like small brown lawn-clippers
discreetly shortening here a blade and there
a small tuft off the side.

Somewhere a wombat is tearing the turf's brown rug,
eating rooty earth for lack of green.

An owl's **mo-poke** stills the valley,
aware that its malice is no news to mice;
The black pigs are foraging in the home-paddock
— snuff me and gallop away with a snort.

The first part of this poem has appeared in The Melbourne Age.