

## JAN OWEN

### TREE

Up the musty rungs of tapering boughs  
that slithered us through the crest of the pine  
to light, kings of the castle. Faraway down  
below: Chris on his bicycle wheeling to practise  
figure eights in the middle of Cambridge Terrace  
where quartz and fools' gold shine in the bitumen:  
Mrs Dunn, a peg doll at her line,  
hoisting cumulus sheets for flags of truce:  
Herry Bottle-Oh's cart clink-clanking by  
on Dover Street till Vardens' terriers yap.  
Our mother shaded her eyes and called. Unseen  
above the roofs, hidden in leaves and sky,  
we gasped with height and clung to the growing tip;  
the wind and tree together swayed us green.

## MANFRED JURGENSEN

to vincent buckley

autumn campus borrowing light, a time of no return. we meet  
elsewhere. your crutch is dressed up as a walking stick with  
which to measure patterns of a wilful day. you speak of ireland  
and the illness that has called you home. my feeble questions,  
weeds of love, outgrow your silent knowledge. naked children  
climb a dying tree. we shiver. the cloisters swallow shadows  
in echoes of the captive heart. turning our backs, at last you  
smile in recognition and raise your glass in joy: well, *slainte*.  
and, suddenly, our two half-languages recover some of their  
familiar speech, the broken voice of shame and anger.

is this how it always was, the helplessness of living double lives of sense? or is it part of what we carry, an exchange of gifts, the one word to redeem our learning? today we both drink water and i praise chance that you are not in pain. although your face shines mellowed bitterness, the mouth still sings, lapsed poet rescued by his craft, while outside lygon hammers its revision. the debt of hours, accumulated manuscripts, unending tasks: our flesh too late for healing. 'what is there left to say'. we part in silence rebellious to the code. i see your cunning wave as you marshal our uprising, shared blood forever native.

## GEOFFREY BEWLEY

### THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER BUT THREE

We were all sitting on the flat's balcony in the evening, smoking, looking at Singapore's skyscraper towers, big blocks of light patterns under the black sky. Mark had just come down from Bangkok by way of Penang, and he was telling us about it.

He said, the Malaysians gave me the wrong stamp at the border, just a three-day stamp to get me right down to Singapore. I'd already been in Penang four days when I saw it. Then I went to Immigration, but they said I'd have to leave, I'd have to get out within another three days. So then I had to go straight out and get a ticket on the bus to Singapore, the day after next. Two more nights in Penang, and I'd get down with half a day to spare.

I was sharing a room in this Chinese hotel with some Danish guys, and when I went back they were just going out for a meal with these Swiss girls from next door. They were going to this good chinese place round the corner. So I went too, and that was really how it started.

The restaurant was about half full with people we knew already. There were some Australians and French, some Americans, there was this huge blond guy like a weightlifter, and there was a big girl with glasses in a long dress. And there wasn't enough room, something like that, so we all sat round two big tables pulled together. I wanted to sit next to one of the Swiss girls, but I ended up between the French couple and the girl with glasses.