

Violet Dench

TELEPHONE CALL — 1956

"'Phone's not work'n," he said.

I looked at him.
Twelve or thereabouts,
hanging round the 'phone-box
with his mate.
Shirt out, one leg half over his pushbike,
arm resting on the handlebar,
staring at me in that cocky boy's way.

"'Phone no go, 'phone no go," he repeated,
gesturing with his free hand,
palm inward, poking the air.

I turned on him, hostile,
"Why do you speak to me like that?
"Thought y' could'n speak English."

Angry for those he saw in me,
I walked away in foreign shoes,
A New Australian.