JULES KOCH

TO A KOOKABURRA

You present a solo figure on a branch

With head to breast
Your words are laughter
Crystal bright and gut deep

You hold your skull like a genius
Overseeing the turn of a worm
hearing the flicker of a twig

Or just sitting
dream struck
in the afternoon rush of sun

FIONA PLACE

AIR AMBULANCED BERYL

Beryl slept in the bed opposite me.
She was talkative. She was middle-aged.
And despite a flourishing ignorance of the present,
she was likeable.

Flown in by air ambulance from Dubbo
she was alone,
with only the memory of
a dying marriage she’d left behind.

She tried to smile.
Constantly.
As though she were on holiday.
Communication between Beryl and the staff tired me.
They allowed her to stay,
but never showed her the menu.
Never bothered to tell her where the cutlery was kept.

Each day flourished higher and higher.
Each day ended,
sadder and more useless than the one before.

And when she left,
in a whirlwind of exaggerated happiness,
I sank under the bedclothes.
I knew she would be back.

She may just as well have flown to Hayman.
At least they have open smorgasbords.

NICHOLAS SYKES

BEGINNING A NOVEL IN THE 1980'S

Naturally I'd prefer to write tragedy.
But human life is based on balances.

During the Depression
people crowded to musicals;
during the boom of the ‘60’s
they crowded to protest marches.

We are a recession generation.
We see, and are part of, economic tragedy every day. All our fiction must be funny and have a happy end.