

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

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Where Wallow Grows

O'er tumbling meadows and grassy knolls West
Of scintillating reeds and ember gums,
There in lime country grows a fine array
Of the wondrously unkempt Wallow Tree.
Where the hills are yellow and trees Sundered,
The Wallow Tree grows beside the Willows
And plums in gullies of great lichen-warmed
Rubble; in marshy creeks dried up, forgotten,
Where remember not the world 'fore Wallow.
Oaken things, twisting creatures of knotted
Wood and knobbly roots, bark bleached by burnt sky.
By grace of Winters' withered saltbush, Wallow's
Crowned monarch of the whistling grasslands yonder.
Wallows' whittled life owes to cropped branches,
By all wise accounts identical, 'cept
In length, to the long reedy limbs of
The Willow by the waters green, and yet:
It's cousin the Willow wallows not here;
Long tendrils, arced hanging reeds poor suitors
For bony earth where best the Wallow grows, where
Wallow willows not for wallowing Willows.

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Hill Bones

Twilight; the silhouette of a wallaby and its mother
Bounding along a rolling crest, not far from
The hill bones in the Bucket knolls;
Those dead pike-like trees that overlook
The red dirt bleeding from the soil creep.
Break them open for termite marrow.
Then see the veins of these hills; streams and creeks
Packed up with river stones and ancient fish bones.
They feed the land lungs, the banksias and gums.
The mauve sky and dipping sun gives way
To indigo, lights up the tractors and lazy fences
And falls across dark weatherboard houses.
Their lights are coming on now, and the farmers
Are roving home by their in-cut tracks and
Their Akubra hats are catching the sun's last glow.
These hills are full of old eucalypt bones.
We're living on snowmelt blood, red soil muscle
And sinew cloaked in emerald skin.
In these Bucket knolls,
We're surrounded by hill bones.