

## The Blood You Carry

The drone of circular breath blown down  
a termite-gutted log: dingo whine,  
or the furtive snickering of a kangaroo?  
These mean nothing more to you  
than open-air acoustics that please the ear.  
Even the sound of two sticks knocked together  
won't help you understand the feathered dance.  
Puffs of dust around the ankles  
of stomping men are signals you can't read.  
A pointed bone can sing, but you'll  
not hear it, preoccupied as you are  
with the sound of your own name.  
Your kidneys won't be firked out  
like malignant oysters while you sleep;  
no mangy dog will crawl to sniff your face.  
Tell stories of the rituals you've inherited  
from a European line: killer diets,  
and stress like a rusting hinge in the jaw.  
The blood you carry is at most  
four generations old and reeks of England.  
Your initiation into adulthood  
is a twenty-first birthday cake and key,  
and the stains you leave on the other side  
of childhood don't involve a shell-cut back.  
Your sheets are dark with vomit, your feet  
red-raw from dancing on the road.  
Your hangover kills all memory of the speech  
your elders made, and the smoke you see  
the new day through is white  
and rises unsteadily from your hand.

*Anthony Lawrence*