Boundary Rider

he knows this carries on beyond
the boundary: there’s so much distance it spills over
the skyline; sometimes it’s beautiful the way it trembles
in forgotten corners of his eyes
until he becomes separate from nothing/no-one

here he’s not lonely there are roos, emus, crows
more family than he’s ever known
sometimes there are dingoes growingl from the other side
of the fence he checks the fence
over and over; he makes sure there are no holes

once there was a boy/ whose parents kept him alone/ in/ a room/ for thirty six days/ they pushed bits of food/ under/ the door/ whatever would fit/ in/ an envelope/ a slice of bread/ a Jacobs cracker/ the police came/ about a different matter/ and wanted to know/ what was/ on/ the other side/ of the locked door/ they could smell/ something bad/ they didn’t expect/ such bitter shreds/ of humanity/ the level of excrement/ the staring emaciated child/ some of them/ were frightened by it/ the child/ had forgotten/ fear/ and much else

now he has forgotten the orphanage
all he remembers is coming to this
country by boat: the endless water and then the endless dust
here everything is buried in dust
here he belongs to nothing/ no-one

he is only one of many stories
his horse’s hooves make small shapes of sound
as they travel the packed earth
the skin and bones of animals/ humans the delicate
skeletons of plants shift slightly under their weight

once there was a girl who lived with her mob/ in/ the desert/ there were many children/ they played together/ amongst/ the distance/ all the noises they heard/ were little until/ some people came and took/ the girl away/ they put her/ in/ a house/ with/ some strangers/ she didn’t like the inside/ it made her breathing hard/ she ran/ she tried/ to get home/ but she didn’t make it all the way/ through/ the desert/ her body disappeared/ into/ the dingoes and crows/ her bones settled/ in/ the dust

sometimes the wind spins the dust
into devils it sticks
to him he breathes
it in he knows this
is all he is/ there is
everything is only temporarily contained
the air in his lungs the earth in its orbit
he in his skin his blood is red
when it comes out but in his dark
interior he hears how black it is

once there were some humpies/ that settled/ in/ the desert/the long bent
branches/ the gunya bark/ sunshine dinged/ against/ the hanging silver
pans/ the men sang/ around/ the fires outside/ the skin of their palms
was/ rough and hard but gold dust glittered/ in/ the dirt/ under/ their
nails/ when the men left/ the air/ inside/ the huts was no longer formed/
into/ words/ the roofs tumbled/ into/ the dust/ the skeletal branches/ the
crumbling bark/ until there were only small squares of debris/ circles
of stone/ the sparse maps/ of long-ago lives

sometimes the sun comes over to his side
it leaps up from the horizon
and changes the world
it makes his insides shine

on the other side of the planet
it is dark now but people are still
shifting slightly in their sleep
they scratch their skin they grind their teeth
his horses hooves travel the packed earth

*Alison Flett*