

## The Bureaucrats Are Talking

The bureaucrats have begun to speak

clear the decks, pare your nails

rattle the keyboards, sighing

The bureaucrats have begun to intone

a strange tone that dips then rises

at the end of every monotone sentence

a little like the 3<sup>rd</sup> tone in Mandarin

but without its flexible grace

The mandarins are speaking now

and that sinking and rising tone functions as a slow 'fuck you'

If you wonder whether they are talking to you

they are

## The Manuscript

As he watched the last of the manuscript curl into ash  
he followed her footsteps of years ago  
past the blue metal swathe of rail,  
down narrow acacia, callistemon streets  
towards the silos and scrap metal merchants,  
through the underpass that resembled a public urinal  
with its stench, mossy drippings and gridded lights  
to the bachelor flat at the rear of a house that groaned and shuddered  
with each passing train, imagined as he found it to be, years later,  
a gas spigot beaking one corner, a cobwebbed window looking over  
a concrete backyard, little more than a bed and kitchenette  
disappearing into ionised air, he realised  
he'd stubbed out the last of a stubborn obsession, but not the story  
of how, night after night, she'd traverse the restless suburb  
then after each assignation return through the urinous underpass,  
up the narrow acacia, callistemon streets to the shared house  
where her daughter was baby-sat, the details perduring  
for decades after he'd read it, then scattered the ash in their garden  
and how, decades after she'd left for the second-last last time, she'd forgotten  
ever having typed it up in the desert, plotting her return.

## Saturations

### Extinction

The two last speakers of the dying language  
no longer talk to each other.

### The Mystic Poet

The mystic poet writes poems about his absent kids,  
wringing his lyrical hands: social media sees red.  
What he doesn't write about is how his fist  
last month inscribed the wall next to his wife's head.

### Mister Ethics

Mister Ethics flits about from continent to continent  
declaiming poems which condemn his enemies' carbon footprints.