

## Miscarriage of Meaning

Barbara Nicholson

1901 and the great Australian silence  
fell with deafening reality over the brown earth.  
A silence, screaming out its permanency  
in mortar and sand,  
recording in Joycean confusion,  
tho' lacking his learning and wit,  
that ineluctable modality  
he would ascribe to Bloom some years on.  
What measure of law could flaunt its own origins so glibly?

I turned to the visionaries of ancient Hellene:  
Speak Solon, Thucydides, Socrates,  
where in your wisdom  
Did you set the precedent?  
I searched tirelessly there  
For some rational explanation,  
Tried to establish a noble element in the intent,  
But in all the Hellenes  
Found neither trace nor hint  
Of future obfuscations that would metamorphose  
The very heart and soul  
of your legacy to the world.  
Democracy!  
What sweet, sweet thoughts you dreamed.  
And in another world a world away  
a different Dreaming,  
more ancient still  
than that of those thinkers of Hellene,  
the Brown People lived in the perfect democracy.  
A million campfires bore witness  
to their timeless enjoyment  
of a system of law enriched by its soul.  
Can anything last forever?  
What happened?  
Who were these pale strangers  
Who took the ancient law  
From the Brown Land  
And sucked the sacred life force from it?  
What name could the Brown People  
Give to the synthesis  
Imposed so brutally?  
Democracy?  
No, no, no! could it be  
De-mock-eracy?