

**Perhaps after all he hasn't gone
(a note to my mother)**

NOEL ROWE*

perhaps after all he hasn't gone
so far away
but is still coming home
through the swamp oaks
and the broad leafed tea trees
heading towards the dairy he knows
isn't there any more perhaps he's hoping
to hear his father speaking through the cracked cement
to have again the touch and breath of animals
running his finger like the wind along the fence
to feel its worried grain
noticing beneath the strong and almost everlasting fig tree
the cows sitting black shoulders forward like nuns at prayer
perhaps he's almost at the house by now in the garden
glad to see geraniums red and mauve he planted still alive
at the corner of the back verandah the Japanese fuchsia
he took from his mother's place and on the tank stand
the few swamp orchids that are left from those he gave you
though they don't seem to flower these days and just before
coming in he'll check the pumpkin vine
yes this year they'll be ready in time

then pausing in the kitchen long enough to leave a shadow
on the table
where every morning he knows you cup your sorrows
to remember pastry warm and tasting like your palm
he'll climb with night into the hollow space beside you
and lie there
perhaps

* *Noel Rowe teaches Australian Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Sydney.*