

Nathanael O'Reilly

Maple Street

We lived in a triple-fronted
Red brick veneer with awnings
On the corner of Maple
And Blackwood. Rose bushes
Grew behind a low brick wall
Capped with black tiles,
Across the street from the park.

Behind iron gates, a concrete
Driveway with a strip of lawn
Running down the middle led
To a single brick-garage
With a basketball ring
And a door dented repeatedly
From playing automatic wicky.

A six-foot high grey picket
Fence surrounded a backyard
Filled with fruit trees,
A Hill's Hoist, a veggie patch,
A compost heap, a brick barbeque,
And a tree house constructed
With two-by-fours and Hessian sacks.

On Fridays, cars parked
By Turkish families lined
The street. They drove in
From their orchards to worship
At the mosque on the corner,
Surrounded by a chain-link fence
Crowned with barbed-wire.

On summer afternoons, girls
Cruised by on gleaming bikes
In short cotton school-uniform
Dresses, zips and buttons open,
And Kelly next door sunbathed
On the roof of her back verandah
While her radio played the hits.

We built bonfires in the backyard,
Mowed the lawn for five bucks,
Fished for yabbies in the channel,
Rode to the Milk Bar for fifty cents'
Worth of mixed lollies, kicked
The footy in the park, skated
On the footpath, sprinted

Down the middle of the street
In the dark on Saturday nights.