After rain in various guises along Bell's Line of Road

This ground is harder than I ever knew; feels like it's been drying out for an ice age, like it's still resisting; timber to Young Bell's axe after the light-footed maiden passes crying after the crowbar sings.

This ground has swallowed the double blaze and the hot shadows scribbling on sunlight. A democracy of massacres has left it speechless its tongue dun-coloured. Its silences, its flesh, are too far gone.

Death and songs along the trade routes, the compass, the lash and the almanacs crowding into the cave, the signal tilting in oil. Hoddle and traffic. Not much now, to go on.

Such was the entering. And the abandoning and all warmth's sheathing. She, the lost one, grips and welcomes blind, in panic like an echo loosening on scree and flying upward. Nothing.

But listen to the hard leaves tipping: a pause before the onward rush. The bird hangs upside down in the branches...