

Portrait of Departure

Elderly couple (Sussex Street, Yarraville)

Carried from their neatly clipped garden
like sleeping children carried from a party
asleep until bodies that held them
warm new beds, nodding one last approval

at their brick veneer, Greek columns,
creaking plum tree, aged fruit oddly ripened.
A windless autumn day at dusk
radio talks back, but its problems
are ludicrous. Lawns are watered, mown
and edged; it's cuppa tea in silence
that can only be conversation.

Green shade cloth screens their house
but they're carried to where green shade
is not required. They laugh at the memory
of green shade cloth, it takes the shape
of a belly dancer, spiraling to the beat
of talkback radio, her shimmied scarf draped
on their necks makes neither blush
but drags them from their directors' chairs
for a vigorous gardening session.

They're carried when they're ready
and not before. By a warm soft palm,
a caress and a whisper from
a cherubim statue: *It's time to go now
where you've always been.*