WINTER ROUND by Emma Neale

The red jandals paper boy,

Two months on the run,

Is still three sizes short

Of these tug boat shoes

He slaps from house to house,

Ghost dot to ghost dog,

The baying from the dark side

Of corridors and teeth

Swift needles at his soles.

Tumbleweed hair

Winter skin

Scarecrow ankles and

The puddle soaked cuffs

Of his thin grey cords

Float above the giant cherry paddles

Bought for him

To grow into –

If he doesn’t wrench the straps

From the soles first,

Tripping at the tricky corner

Every day,

Over the adult lengths

Someone has taken

To balance growth

With debt.

Notes:

Baying – barking or loud howling; brittle (usually of a substance) hard but easily broken or shattered; tumbleweed – a desert plant that grows in a rounded shape, dried out in the sun, then breaks off and is blown around by the wind.