

## Minnamurra Sestets

*Bare branches in winter are a form of writing*

—Billy Collins

*There flowers the battle spear, there the muse is eloquent,  
There justice in the wide ways lends force to actions of honour.*

—Terpander

The rainforest, winter blows past, my son.

Dark air, under the canopy, his big dark eyes—

New and touching everything.

Red Cedar, behemoth,

Blots out the sky and you dart over the boardwalks

Gumboots clapping rubato. Today, I write to you

In this place

—this piece of an old world—this story.

The lyrebird scratches its way through the undergrowth

Mapping contour lines on the forest floor. You say,

The scrubwren's a pirate,

its black patched eye

Watching every movement for treasure in the dirt.

Coachwood leaves flutter like pinwheels in the sun

And the lilly pilly sings itself in flaming tongues;

Ochre, dust, and myth. Maybe, it's the day that narrates

Us, like letters punctuating a page, our steps

A key stroke in time.

Yet, I wonder in thirty years

From now, if you'll remember the sassafras

Or the detritus fermenting the air—that smell

Which buries deep in memory; or if the land

Will forget us too—the granite boulders balancing

Another million years in their books.

Old man banksia,

Sits beside the track, his beatification

One miracle away. Like little golden halos

His inflorescence—bright, above the martyred cones

That litter our path. You're holding one now,

Thumbing the woody lips for its seeds and secrets.

Ahead a suspension bridge hangs like a hyphen  
Between the bloodwoods

—a hammock of cables and planks;

Dressed down by a decade of algae and moss.  
Below us, the lichens have drawn battle lines  
Over the river rocks like countries on a globe;

But war's a word you don't yet know—my little  
Berserker bounding on the boards.

The emerald dove,

Perched on one of those jealous vines, is still new music  
To you, thinking nothing of the radar echo  
In its coo-oo. It was the Spartans' wisdom to cast  
Their children to the wild,

only to make war in them

For a lifetime; barefoot on snow-capped Taygetus.  
Your hand is outstretched and gone, a game of peek-a-boo  
Among the prickly rasp fern

—fistfuls of broken sprigs.

This residual place, left by the wood-getters  
And pastoralists, returns new in our minds;  
In its own way, becoming a past we've now written.

I find you again, warm chips in one hand, ice cream  
Dribble on your chin and that perpetual  
Boisterousness of youth—squirming in your mother's arms.  
Cabbage tree palms form a woodland of giant's arrows  
Around us

—thirty-foot margins for today's page;

Reading life in these moments,  
one word at a time.