

## *On the possibility of winds*

I am outnumbered:  
the trees are attacking the windows.

Even the bland azaleas  
hurl themselves sideways, scatter the last brown petal.

The nondescript palm leaves  
swish in aggressive tempo, describe impossible curves.

The gum trees of spindly limbs  
refuse to be patterned, move everywhichway  
indifferent to my understanding.

I am outnumbered by leaves.

The imported pine, guarding the steps,  
leans from its vertical, inclines to Pisa.

The jacarandas, caught in their annual moment,  
shimmer like demented dancers, scatter their purple sequins.

The camphor laurel creaks on its solid stem.  
All the arboreal world thrashes and swirls.

Irrationally shaken, driven by quixotic powers,  
creatures of the invisible air:  
the trees are attacking the windows.

I am struck down by the possibility of winds.

## Sea-speak

All you see  
is the luminosity of light  
one bather  
rising and falling  
imagined / out of focus,  
a bird? a smudge  
on the window through which you see  
the tight still line of the drawn horizon,  
the white 'look I'm moving' blown to the left  
'now I'm gone' 'watch me spray'  
'again' movement of waters  
and — hurrah!  
standing triumphant  
arms held up like a dancer  
insisting it's all a background  
the rider skims  
past the window and is gone.

Because it is early morning  
the sky glows with a tender light  
that mother-of-pearl above the horizon  
one of those mornings when the day  
asks you to trust it, walk into its waiting arms.  
Later — the hard edged glitter of light  
will be harsh and beautiful.  
Last week — after the 'torrential rains' the sea must have been  
terrifying and beautiful  
Hurrah!  
a rider  
past the window.

Against that relentless murmur,  
you can speak for a moment.

*Shelly Beach (Ballina)*

Sky

Ocean

Pool

Rock  
Pebble  
Sand

Grey

Green/grey

Green

Black  
Black/grey  
White

T h r o u g h   t h i s   w i d e   m o r n i n g

Broken

Calmed

Here  
Here and here  
Everywhere

## *Soundscape*

The buzz of leaf blowers —  
during the day the suburb  
hums with the tools of trade.  
The block of units, opposite,  
almost refurbished,  
echoes with saw and drill.  
The cars,  
behind the single bus (each fifteen minutes)  
groan to the bus stop,  
whoosh past and down the hill.  
Nothing is quiet,  
everything moves and echoes.

In the evening, domestic noises,  
a baby's whimper, families arguing, laughing,  
a car door slamming, the faint pulse of a distant train.

At midnight, the cry of a young man  
Lydia.....Leila  
a name,  
repeated over and over —  
Lydia.....Leila  
Loved one  
sobbing, wailing,  
Let me in  
Lydia.....Leila  
the name  
blurred, through the quiet night air,  
Lydia.....Leila  
sobbing, wailing,  
dispersing like smoke, lost in the listening silence.

In the morning,  
the buzz of leaf blowers —

## *Naming*

How extraordinary —  
the roses near old parliament house,  
the parliamentary gardens, saved by Mr Broinowski,  
bloom in November, languid in opulent summer.  
From Constance Spry to Sharifa Asma, they squander  
their heady perfume, scatter their old rose cushions  
of David Austin petals,  
each spiked with its label, naming.

Across the lawn, looking down the ceremonial way  
to the war memorial, the ramshackle tents  
and shacks of the aboriginal embassy  
still endure. Painted symbols. A ribbon of campfire  
snakes upwards. The unmoving air  
of midday speaks: 'we are here,  
we have not gone, even when you will not see us,  
even when you erase our names, we are here.'

In the building,  
the warren of small rooms, the darkened glow  
of polished timbers, and the voice of Menzies  
'our melancholy duty ...' and the photographs  
of Cecil Beaton, a cornucopia of faces,  
labelled with names you know, the twentieth century list  
of everyone worth knowing (as he might say)  
each caught in that one brief moment, that orchestrated lens.

All of this, on a fine day, around old parliament house —  
how extraordinary.

## *North Coast New Year, 1990*

Up here, at this hour, in this heat,  
you throw words around with all the lazy intent  
of beachside ballgames.

Water,  
sprays on the lawn. Water  
splutters in the Bonaire. Water  
splatters from the cats' dish  
as they blunder, heat-blind, pink tongues hanging.  
Even mosquitoes  
wait for nightfall  
(ah! the bare flesh).

People  
with bright moist skins  
loll on beds, staring upwards.

Even the cheerful pentas  
droop in vases. A leaf shimmers limply  
at the Bonaire's bidding, rising, falling,  
and the ceiling fans  
still have their minions — notepaper,  
scraps that people are writing on,  
(during the cool of morning and evening)  
flutter with deceptive vitality. Their authors  
do not reflect on the dynamism of the message  
(faintly the seasonal liturgy: 'Border drives through the covers')  
but lie inert, unworded, just as they fell.

Later, from the south, like burning leaves on a wind gust,  
the 'terrible news' will reach them:  
'In Victoria today bushfires have destroyed ...'  
In that heat, that inferno,  
you hear the end of all wordplay.

## *Progression*

### *I Casino*

Sat'dee arvo you had to have ninepence  
and you had to have a bike  
so you could say 'see ye,' 'be seein' ye' as you rode off  
'see ye Sat'dee arvo'. Down the front it was crowded.  
Up the back we had  
Fantales and legroom and 'excuse me please'.  
Down the front it was all happening — it was  
'Jeez' and 'Christ' and 'fuck off' and the torch  
'Who said that? Out you get!' groans, whistles,  
feet drum, drum, drum, drum, drum, drum, catcalls, a scream  
'Who was that?' the torch. Down the front  
was the plot that up the back  
could never quite follow, *le cinéma vérité*  
that up the back conscientiously went to see  
all our lives, without one Sat'dee arvo.

### *II Annandale*

The City of God undoubtedly exists at sunset.  
All that Michelangelo sky strains our necks,  
the airborne turrets, the celestial radiance,  
are clearly visible. Scurrying home into the Western suburbs  
the creature cannot but pause to acknowledge the,  
pause in awe for the  
grandeur? The Hunter Baillie makes its assertion  
clearly, and it must be the earthly beginning  
of unimaginable splendour. Note how the earth has stopped  
spinning so this long golden moment can be held

by supernatural design. Observe how the  
earth has flattened so that the sky  
can occupy much more than its rightful attention.  
Converts stream to the doors. To enter into that world of light!  
to be transfigured with meaning! Feel how the heart  
has slowed, readying for some overwhelming impression.

In the church the windows are high and narrow.  
Light streams in ordered lines. Patches of red  
on the stone at our feet alarm us, blue glass  
drains the wild light.  
Our hands are clammy. Chill.  
The roof is in shadows. Running out of the nave door  
we are not surprised to discover the earth is moving.

Next day, scuttling towards the Western suburbs,  
we duly acknowledge our daily portion of divinity.

### *III Leichhardt*

We've moved it all inside.  
The hall ripples with green.  
Tyre tracks of tirelessly pushed wagons  
score this undergrowth.

In the perspex corridor  
we insist on ferns.  
Hanging like predators, they slap at intruding faces,  
claw at the eye level.

On the chairs, chintz reeks of summer —  
full-blown indolence for your idle moment.  
(A bird dies in a basket on the love seat.)

Out the back it's all concrete —  
car entrance adds to the value and  
it gets muddy in a wet spell.  
Chips packets lodge in cracks.  
A discarded fireplace leans in the wind  
(until it fell and smashed the discarded mirror —  
seven years of concrete).

Inside we turn on the television and watch the world.