

Rodney Williams

Come Back Down Here

a two-way poem

later too frail
to have seemed
a tomboy
like harper lee's scout
you climbed
every sap-rich tree
across our two-acre block
pine
or gum
always the explorer
venturesome
staunch of mind
stretching for a hand-hold
you kept
balanced
while vaulting limbs
to elevate your eye-line
upwards to an eyrie
focussed on the horizon
alert in your gaze
as if cataloguing galaxies
while you surveyed
your demesne
like stout cortez
drawn from keats
a heroine in our tree-house
later to spark my tinder
with an intellect of flint
if in spirit not reconciled
with our father *in absentia*
your initial inspiration
judith wright's example
woman to man
whereas our old girl hazel
could only ever implore you
rapunzel up in that tower
let down your hair

in memory of Janet & Hazel

challenged by ill-health
too early too long
as a youngster
you felt impelled to live
through cherished books
remaining forever
a lover of epics under tsars
in hunger for other worlds
truly the glue in our own
ever challenging
as our big sister jano
questioning plumbs and levels
in celebration of
others walking proud
like atticus' offspring
in another man's shoes
acknowledging shades of grey
acute as any eagle
zooming in close
with a telephoto lens
on dewdrops over cobwebs
the atlas of your hopes
expansive
introducing me
to yevtushenko
courageous
with reflections amidst the ice
in that most siberian of wars
when confronting
a dilemma of conscience
if not praying for a blessing
a voice of the heart
ever devoted as mother
for two decades bereft
beseeching you
come back down home here
before I die

after Dorothy Hewett

by your address
expatriate
if not in nature
an american
from southern seas
australian with redwood roots
despite forfeited treasures
in yellowing journals
early work long abandoned
first poems read by silverfish
your husband professorial
worldwide in authority
becoming californian
your children san franciscan
boy and girl
dual in citizenship
plural in outlook
bald-headed or wedge-tailed
with whites wide around pupils
still bloodshot
so delicate
across an ocean weeping
no long-distance stranger
to the northern pacific
to eliot and plath
in exile
never remote yourself
despite a chilblained childhood
ambivalence finely balanced
mindful of your promise
pledging three years northwards
multiplied seven-fold
to bring up cherished children
in so different a state
our dear mum haze still pleading
darling
come back down here