

## SixFold – Poetry

### COME BACK DOWN HERE

### a two-way poem

### *in memory of Janet & Hazel*

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

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

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