

## Music in the Gorge

The people spread like moss across the gorge  
dwelling in three species: of water, rocks and sand.

The water-dwellers give themselves to thick and silky green  
as the skin of water tuts their bodies,  
dappled yet sleek, the finest clothes  
these humans have ever worn.

Tapering to yellow as its wet rims lick the dry,  
the intense stain that is the waterhole  
concedes to translucence in the shallows.  
Someone's sculpted boyfriend, dark-skinned, in dark underwear  
a woman's pasty, wobblesome daughter, bikini-clad  
share the same body  
of emerald water.

The rock-dwellers are mostly young  
and invariably playful:  
children scuttling among crevices,  
fluoro-skinned, flitting like small spotlights against  
pensive ancient mother rock  
and all move – or are unmoved with shared  
oblivion – to the contrast of ages.  
One little girl teases her parents;  
our shrill sniper  
commands their feigned amusement  
as she dances above their hatted heads,  
merry among the gumnuts.

The sand-dwellers cluster in shapes of one, two,  
four, five...  
ten...  
(although as minutes approach concert hour and punters accrue,  
the clumps find continuity, merging to one).  
Some folk directly embed themselves into, or sit upon, the sand;  
some gild the interface with picnic rugs; others, camp chairs;  
fold-out tables mark the most committed setups  
staked upon the land.  
The shadows that our people cast on these parchment banks  
are squiggly-edged  
as lulls of light conform to sand-mounds and sand-peaks.  
Gum trees reach in  
on an Australian beach scene  
in the bush.

I suppose I'm of the sand clan  
(omniscient observer though I'd like to be):  
a parade of calves passes my post as  
all are encouraged by the weather's hospitality –  
the lean and sinewy,  
the loose, quivering with collected years  
and opal-like with gentle rainbows of veins,  
the hairy,  
    the *very* hairy...  
and I think about their endless similitude but never sameness  
and I think  
what a wonderful shape the calf is.

Three landscapes, it has,  
Ormiston Gorge  
making three subspecies of us people  
gathered here for 'A Capella in the Gorge'.  
Though naming the concert we're bunked in to see  
it's not, I feel, apt for our Sunday arvo crowd  
as we read, swim, chat, sit,  
    float, nibble, scurry, flit  
with people who mean much to us, or those who mean less so,  
in modes of excitement (or neutrality) – their idea it was, or not, to go.

The people spread like moss upon the gorge  
not of naked voice,  
but singing against some breathed musicality  
of nature's amphitheatre, sandy, rockish, wateresque –  
instruments accompanying song.