

Crisscrossing by Elizabeth Holland

The valley floods, finding the fissures, water rolls in, milky and silver  
In fly the rays over the sandy soil, in roll the schools of fish and swivelling sharks,  
In glide the canoes, mapping with the stars.

Barangaroo sings up the fish to the mesh of the surface  
Rubbing oyster meat through her fingers, flings the shell hook as quick as a  
cormorant  
While up above she sings.

Elizabeth turns from the smudge of smoke rising from the canoe  
Wrenches her skirt through the tall grass, plunges onward to her rocky chair  
Spiky seeds catching and clinging to cloth.

Grace rebuilds her easel, winding the screws tightly,  
Plants her feet deeply, her easel a shield as the lines flicker and flash  
and the arms of the bridge reach closer to an embrace.

Wendy swathes her head in dark cotton, hacks at weeds, carves out pathways  
Fills the gaps between the snaking fig roots with clivias, bromeliads and gingers  
And a garden rises up from the garbage and the grief.

My daughter lies like a snail on the boardwalk  
Forehead pressed to the planks as she peers through the gaps, to the suck and sway  
below  
To the leathery dance of the kelp.

And that afternoon as the sun sets, lying back in our kayaks  
Gazing up at golden clouds bright against magenta sky  
As ropes chime against masts and the tide takes us where it will.