

Signatures

At a cage of spikes, drawn to a stump of branded ironbark, tourists lean
for the names of explorers as though looking for spiders, gone
to the colour of the long-dead wood.

In Blackheath cemetery, headstones of the stockade dead
loom from a creep of brambles,
inscribed with thorns in a plot of unvisited dark.

Over Katoomba pigeons turn from the underside of a purple thunderhead
like a thrown set of knives.

Against a stand of radiata pine, the cockatoo is *white*—
its signature is a crest-risen screech.

The need to name what we leave in the world grows wild in us.

The need to leave our names is planted, cultivated:
carvings, stencils, deliberate bushfires, threads of self-liberated blood;
in caves, bedrooms, on the sides of yarded freight trains,
in grey boulder shadow over dry sclerophyll scrub ...

With your amateur ornithology, and internal, scene-changing gaze
do the wing-bells of startled top-knot pigeons trouble you, Anthony,
like a hint of cautionary music, when you find
a total absence of your name in a veil of mountain ash bark
or a scenic lookout's death- and love-enticing rails?

Anthony Lawrence