

## **Don't go there**

"Don't go there" he says  
I go anyway  
The patterned soles of my boots leave patterns in the grey dust.  
He looked done in,  
The man in the heavy yellow suit  
He'd been there  
He'd looked upon Hades and survived.  
He dropped the hose and walked on  
Leaving his own patterned tread among the grey forest ashes  
In a stupor I thought.  
He'd said "Don't go"  
I go anyway.

It's the quiet that gets you  
Or is it the explosions that create the quiet?  
The sudden jets of sparks  
The glowing hell holes once mighty forest giants  
Fighting death with fiery life  
Sighing loudly, shifting, collapsing with the effort.  
Striving to stay alive  
"Watch them big 'uns" he shouts  
"They ain't done yet  
Don't go there."  
I go anyway.

Smoke catches at my throat  
I want to run  
It gently shrouds the ravaged bushland  
Calming it  
"Even the wallabies are coughin'" he'd said.  
"Poor buggers.  
I need a rifle, not a water hose" he'd said.  
"Don't go there" he shouts  
"But!" I say ... I go anyway

The sky has been swept away  
Gone with the cataclysm of fire  
A rain drop  
Big, falling slowly to plop in the pattern of my boot  
Like a tear.  
More tears, slow, mixing with my own tears.  
This is the legacy we leave our children  
A generation angry, deceived, deserted.  
I think "I won't go there"  
I go anyway

This is our greed  
Our political ignorance  
Our indifference to our earthly home.  
They said "Don't go there"  
We went anyway.

How do we apologise?  
How do we atone?  
I had to go there to see.

Tears mingle with raindrops  
Falling fast now plumping into the ashen earth.  
A blackened hand touches my arm  
He's back.  
"You had to go" he says  
I nod.