

John Ryan

A Colony of Royal Hakea

I never grow cynical of the idea
that sea is spermatozoa
that each earthen tremulation
is a breast that we succour,
that we enter the creases
of earth at these carnal moments.

the most hazardous coves
with the best fishing...

otters periscope whiskered faces
above the effervescent meringue
where water crashes, not soughs,
against a semicircle of boulders,
aligned like Stonehenge to the Antarctic.

through the knee-high scrub
the old explorers curse their way up
to an upland of Royal Hakea,
erratic columns of cabbage heads
oddly crowned with brown splotches
as if gnawed on by locusts

to decompose while alive is a gift,
to court death a little each day
rather than plummeting, is grace;

its vegetable body pulsates
orange scrawlings within green translucence
plying an inheritance from the sea:
teeth of tiger shark, teeth of mako,
teeth of lemon shark, hammerhead

if I were to touch this saw-toothed plant
all the fluids of me
would sizzle and steam,
and looking up from the earth,
the serene blue would fracture into fiery lines.