

SONG OF THE AVON

I have seen mountain and valley and forest,
Rocky grey outcrop and green mossy bank;
Tall mountain ashes and blossoming meadows;
Mess-mate and stringy-bark, rank upon rank.

Willows and wattles cast shade on my shallows,
Wild flowers, grasses and fern deck my brink;
Grey kangaroos and opossums and wombats
And smaller bush people come down to drink.

I have been chilled in the white frost of winter;
I have been warmed by the hot summer sun;
Spanking white raindrops have dappled my surface,
Flooded the low lands and made dry creeks run.

Bush fires I've seen in the height of the summer,
Terrified animals fled to my arms
As smoke choked and scared them and flames roared behind,
To lay waste the forests, the towns and the farms.

Once there were black men who lived close beside me;
Made bark canoes from the living gum trees;
Hunted and fished for the food that they needed
And acted out Dreamtime Corroborrees.

I know the hidden glades deep in the forest,
Places where no white man ever has been;
I know where men's bones have lain all uncovered,
Fleshless, un-cared for, grassed over, unseen.

I could tell many a story of heartbreak;
How men lived rough in the heat and the cold,
Braving the hunger, the danger, the hardship;
Men who left home to go searching for gold.

Sometimes I'm quiet and sometimes I'm angry;
Sometimes a trickle and sometimes a flood;
Raging and surging, I've swept away bridges,
Covered the land with a blanket of mud.

Many a creek joins with me in my journey
Down from the mountain tops, frolicking free;
Underneath bridges and curving through Stratford,
Into the Lakes, on my way to the sea.