

**'The Unseen Life of Trees'**

**Chrissie Gittins**

*for Esther and Jess*

When the fraying skeins of silver birch  
sway in the wind they think of  
lulling water in the floating harbour,

the dried out plants on a deck,  
the bespoke barge door cut to close  
on a trapezium.

A sparse beech globe of yellow  
holds an afternoon with two young friends,  
who will walk through their vivid lives

beyond the end of mine.  
A ball of mistletoe hangs  
way up in spindle branches balancing

a trowel, a ginger cake,  
and a framed copy of Jessop's 1802  
'Design for Improving the Harbour of Bristol'.

Umber banks of oak climb the hillside  
dragging children by the hand.  
'There will be time,' they whisper,

canopy to canopy.  
'There will be time, before  
all our leaves stretch out across the frosted ground.'