

FROM A TO B

As I stride from A to B,
Along a beach, beside the twisting C,
Between furrowed headlands, beneath the sky,
Above the sand, amid cynical cries
Of snarling gulls, it's though I seem to glide:
My mind simply along for the ride.



Softly in sand my footprints scrape,
Progressing further out towards the cape
Where heathlands crouch beside the coast,
And ocean vapours haunt dark rocks like ghosts
Of shipwrecks snared by salivating reefs
Sharper than any dragon's teeth
That adorn a dark-eyed siren's breast,
Or seal a deadman's treasure chest.



And there, deep beneath the surging swells,
A turbulence of mysteries and spells,
A treasury of seeds unsown,
Of concepts in the womb of the unknown,
Of questions that none have dared to ask,
And answers that retreat behind their masks;
Of creatures that as yet have not evolved:
Their very shapes still unresolved.



And so it waits, this unimagined hoard,
Undocumented, unexplored,
For they who will but persevere to find
The pass that leads across the questing mind
So steeply as it threads its way through E,
By-passing F, continuing on to G
With bearings on the far-off Peaks of P,
And the legendary Land of T,
Where doubtful dragons brood beside their traps
In wait for those who move among the maps
By moons that slowly turn the tide:
Our minds along simply for the ride.



PIECES OF PLACES

My rucksack is packed
 With the tell-tale traces
Of a wilderness filled
 With far-flung spaces,
And its pockets are crammed
 With pieces of places.

There are places in pieces -
 Little fragments of each;
There's a water gum gully
 And a river oak reach,
With canoes in the reeds
 And tents by a beach.

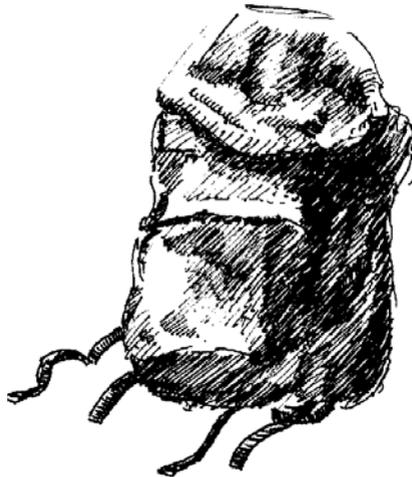
There's a montane brook
 With its hurrying gush,
There are caves in a cliff-line
 And the thundery rush
Of a waterfall hidden
 By the thickness of brush.

There are forests and fields
 And boulder-topped mountains,
There are tangled-up ropes
 In twisted-up canyons,
And smiles on the faces
 Of my tired companions.

But I note you're a sceptic:
 That battered old pack
So tattered and torn
 Is not fit for a back;
How on earth could I shove
 Such a load in that sack?

Yet, though the bag sits
Unassuming and still,
Its humility hides
A phenomenal will,
For it carries the contents
Of valley and hill.

Yes, my rucksack is filled
With pieces of places,
With moon in the mallee
And fire-lit faces,
And all of the things
That my yearning embraces.



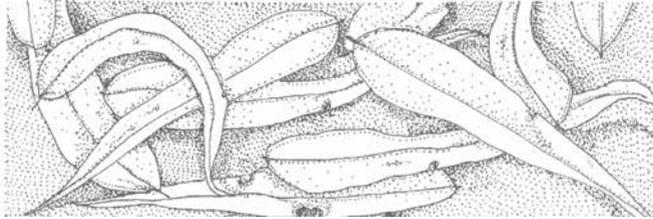
THE THORNY HAND

There's a gully in the ranges, in the far-off Northern Blues -
The kind that you imagine one would effortlessly cruise;
To trace it top to bottom should be quite a simple feat,
For the contours don't look awesome on the topographic sheet;
You'd expect to make good progress and be down in half a day
With time to sniff the orchid blooms that decorate the way:
But I have to disappoint you, the reality's more bleak
For anyone descending into Thorny Hand Creek.

You'd begin enthusiastically, and mutter "It's a breeze..."
Until, that is, you're collared by the creeper in the trees
As it sinks its vicious hooks in you, "Oh, bloody hell!" you crow,
It's the kind of organism when attached will not let go;
Then once The Hand has got you in its unrelenting grip
It loves nothing more than having something fleshy it can rip.
When it dawns on you there's no escape, believe me you will freak;
You'll wish you were a million miles from Thorny Hand Creek.

You realise the fact that you must face the claws alone,
And well within an hour you're reduced to blood and bone;
You struggle on pathetically, your temper on the boil
As bits of you are left behind to fertilise the soil.
The sorrow you will suffer one can only understand
When one is in the clutches of the dreaded Thorny Hand,
For the skin will leave your fingers and blood will smear your cheek
If inadvertently you enter Thorny Hand Creek.

You started out a rational and cheerful human being,
But no-one now who saw you would believe what they were seeing-
A terror-stricken animal, the prey of barb and thorn,
Till every single part of you is either pierced or torn.
A thousand times you wrestle from the Thorny Hand's embrace
As sweat inflames the many lacerations on your face;
The rest is far too hideous for anyone to speak,
Just pray you'll never stumble into Thorny Hand Creek.



THE GRIP OF GRAVITY

From the lookdown I can see
A great gorge wall in front of me
Yawning at eternity,
Defying the grip of gravity.



Steep, steep, this buttress leads me down
Through mist as soft as feather-down;
Down, down, I step with quaking knees
In dawn's half-light and hanging breeze;
The truth that lingered near the dead
Is resurrected in my head,
For every single dawn is birth
Across the face of planet Earth.



Moisture in the moss is sipped;
Clouds descend, the wind is whipped
With forests' scent of eucalypt,
The valley sealed like a crypt.

What worth are wagon-loads of gold
To kings whose hearts have frozen cold?
The same grim hands prepare the graves
For emperors and galley slaves ...
What isn't here is not amiss,
My lips the sweet white water kiss;
The doubts that wander through my head
Are fools to think that truth is dead.

Now, from the valley, I can see
The mountains stand majestically,
Cliff-faces looming powerfully
Defying the grip of gravity.



RHAPSODY OF THE RANGES

I

Tired and weary, my eyes resign, relax,
Shutting out glare that so ferociously attacks;
Closed to the heat as its hostility fades
Cooling in damp recesses of the shades,
Resting like pools in a subterranean stream
Lapping the banks of Imagination's dream.

II

Ahead, a pathway switches back and turns,
Wending its subtle way through stream-bank ferns,
Crossing countless courses of rivulets and rills,
Leading at length to ledges where water spills
Over a darkened wall as it plunges down
Journeying partly over, partly under the ground.
There, at a salience, I peer below
Watching confusion in marriage with order grow
Spider-webbed forests beneath watch-tower walls
Over which cool sunlight coruscates and falls,
Spraying its beams over slanted slabs of stone,
Mingling with wind-waved shadows from branches thrown;
Shades of light and darkness, subtle hues of grey
Scattering down the ravine in a desultory way.
Woven, entangled canopy of green,
Corner of a hidden world that's seldom seen,
Mist-moistened with vapours from the crouching skies
Welling like the tears of life that heaven cries:
Softening sweet sadness the libations pour,
Filtering through foliage to the forest floor.
Deep in the heart of this convoluted range
Time is God's master-manager of change;
Echoes reverberate through the aeons there
Sending primeval messages through the air,



Carried along vague passages of the breeze,
Mingling with songs from high rafters of trees;
Merging in harmony, to the sky they bring
Silver-voiced melodies in offering.

III

Enter these ranges that ride the world in waves,
Down through depths of their crystal-lined caves:
Galleries of statues ossified like bones,
Stalactites clinging to walls flowing with stones;
Curtains and pennons, embellishments of silk
Hang in chamberways like frozen streams of milk;
Ribbons and mysteries, sails, sheets and shawls
Wrap and enrobe the mountains' inner walls.
Stay by the glow of a lantern's friendly light
Safe from the frowning Cimmerian night -
Damp echo-cages in lowly chasms deep
Down where eternal waters seep,
Down where unseeing eyes of darkness dwell
Under the mountainside, secured by spell.

IV

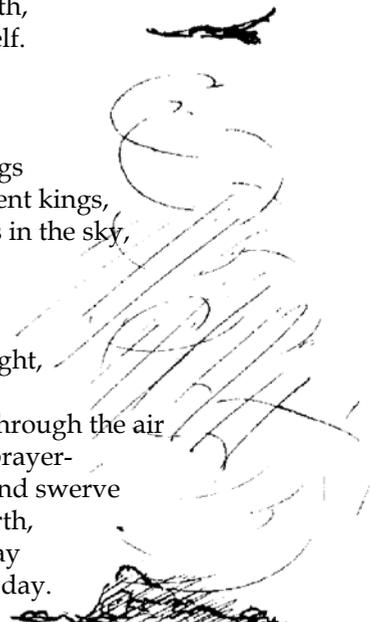
Rise from the caves and sullen caverns cold,
Wake to the light of a sky a-shine with gold,
Walk through these lands where the wand'ring spirit delves,
Drink from the veins of the mountains themselves,
Breathe through your body the warm organic air,
Take that from life which is your ample share;
Wilderness, far as a mortal eye can see,
Rolls upon seeming green infinity;
Wilderness, life-giving, bountiful, and yet
Weaves all the while its retiarian net,



Reclaiming its children when finally they fall,
Casting the net over one and over all;
Ever-devouring the contents of its wealth,
Lusting to live, yet it must consume itself.

V

Teeming with living and animated things
Stand the great mountains like viridescent kings,
Lords of their landscape, proud profiles in the sky,
Catchers of clouds inhabiting the high
Dome of the azimuth's panoramic face
Roofed by a covering of infinite space,
Laced with meandering pathways of flight,
Swept by currents invisible to sight
Where swifts career, wheel and sprint through the air
Slicing the sky with the wings of their prayer-
From pinnacles blue they sweep, soar and swerve
Across the limitless shoulders of the earth,
Cruising the void as they spiral and stray
Burning the fuel of each solar-powered day.



VI

Mountain and hill over deepening dale,
Rill into riverway, valley and vale;
Canyons and chasms, caverns and clefts,
Gorges and gables, gullies and rifts;
Ranges and buttresses, ridges and steeps,
Spurs plunging into the slumbering deeps;
Sheerdowns and terraces, swamplands and mires,
Towering pinnacles, turreted spires;
Plateaux and tableland, wind-blasted heights,
Deep river valleys that wind from our sights:



The mountain's broad heath-smothered summit is won,
I peer through my eye-lids to peek at the sun
Burning with fire-tipped arrows and spears
Aimed at the flank of a whole hemisphere-
The curve of the earth forming part of the view
Lost in a fusion of green and of blue.
Peer from the rim of the scrub-covered top
Into the gorge, a three-thousand foot drop;
Thundering buttresses propping the fells,
Jutting with cliffs like remnants of shells,
Crash to the rivers where water swift-sweet
Cleanses the mountains' alluvial feet,
Nourishing them in pools that drift by
Mirroring patches of crystalline sky
So clear, so lucid it seems it would crack,
Shatt'ring like glass as though under attack
From Jupiter's hammer for purpose employed
To break the blue boundary bordering the void.

VII

Sky-drums are pounding a thunderous tune
Promising storms for late afternoon:
So may the rivers eternally run
Back to the oceans from which they all come,
Down through the rapids, the pools and the caves,
Back to the churn of the wind and the waves.

FOR THE HORIZON

Away ...
at the cross-roads of land and sky
immovable mountains
wedge against the far horizon;
the ranges crowd
levering up layers of skyline.

Toward the horizon we tread,
the past at our backs,
each step measured with a goal-
a goal that will soon enough
see us emerge from our past
to stand among the hills,
surveying new destinies,
knowing that in this way
we have moved with the mountains.





THE CAMP OF THE CLOUDS

My pack is loaded, I'm pounding the ground,
To the Camp of the Clouds my heels are bound:
I'm slogging that razorback into the sky
And kissing the doldrums a breezy good bye.

For it's gaiters and shoes,
Compass and map;
I'll be cramped with the blues
Till I'm out of this trap,
So I'm setting my sail
Away from the crowds
For I'm taking the trail
To the Camp of the Clouds.

Up on the tops the cloudbursts pour
As the thunderstones rip, rack, rumble and roar;
The lightning-bolts smash the crags into clay,
I'm on top of the world 'cause I'm heading that
way.

The storm jockeys shout,
The stonehags hiss
As my hat flies out
Through the sullen abyss:
But I'm setting my sights
On that steepening grade
To the storm-broken heights
Where the clouds are made.

Now the headless riders are cracking their whips,
The storm stallions gallop madly over the cliffs;
In the Pit I hear Vulcan clanging his forge
And the Titans a-waring down in Tartarus gorge.

From an underworld vent
The hell hounds howl,
They've caught wind of my scent
And are out on the prowl;
I defy them to catch me!
For no creature or force
Can shake me or snatch me
Away from my course.

Let mist-monsters bellow and swirl into space,
Let tempests, like harridans, howl in my face;
The wind-battered woodland explodes with debris-
I've clapped on the pace, are you coming with me?

The gales are attacking
And tearing at the ground;
It's time to get cracking,
Let's not sit around,
So it's up with our packs,
We are leaving the crowds
For we're taking the tracks
To the Camp of the Clouds.



IRRAEORANA

The Father of Clouds is chanting his song
On strong-legged spurs where the rain comes along,
But even so high and mighty must run
Before Irraeorana the welcome sun:

Orb of the sun
Brilliant and proud,
Warm-hearted one
Melting the cloud,
Unveiling a view
Of high panorama,
The gold and the blue
Of Irraeorana.

On the sides of the massifs the wildwaters flash
Where down through the bynas they tumble and crash;
Wind through the cloud-racks manoeuvres and shifts
Among sunbeams that strike at moisture-soaked cliffs.

Old Carrabeanga
You're children run scared,
Their lives are in danger,
No, none shall be spared,
For sailing on higher
Far over you now
Is the vessel of fire
With its slow moving prow.

As mist-vapours flee through the narrowest necks
Steam rises over the sandstone decks;
The fog-shrouded gloom disappears on the fly
As the welcome sun burns a hole in the sky.

Irraeorana
The greeting anew:
Squalls become calmer,
Sun breaking through
Dissolving all trace
Of thunderstorm drama:
The rainbow-lit face
Of Irraeorana.

THE LIVING GIFT

Moving gently through lowlands in the fog
That shrouds the moor,
Shrouding reeds in sheets of moisture clouds
That cleanse as vapours pour
Upon valleys and hillsides in morning's mellow haze,
To which the Earth and all its children
Breathe their everlasting praise:

Creeping slowly up the mountains'
sides to stride
Across their peaks,
There to nestle in saddles where
A skyline's catchment keeps
The rugged gullies gushing clean to
rivers far below
That rejoice in the reality
Through which their rapids flow:

Roaring wildly over mountain tops,
Thrashing through the sky
To descend upon Creation
With lightning in its eye,
Thumping thunder-drums and
cymbals, summoning icy squalls and showers
As the surface of this conscious Earth
Rejoices in its powers:

Permeating energies of oceans,
Swamps and bogs,
Lying dormant in the desert
In swollen bowels of frogs,
Till all living things give thanks with joy and praises running rife
When to ground, in liquid blessings,
Comes the lubricant of life:

It's the living gift of liquid wealth,
The gift of life from Life itself.



MEMORIES OF WALLARA HEIGHTS

Wiping fragments of thunderstorm from my eye
I look out from the bleak ledge
where night steps into the void.
Clouds on wind-wings brush my face
as the moons roll back across the years
to Wallara Heights, down a back-ladder in time...

Pushing upslope from the shelter
of a rivulet, we grappled
across the grain of vegetation
bristling like the nap
on a topographic hide.
We twisted through sturdy arms
and fingers of over-lapping bushes
where spinebills flashed by our noses.

'You're not coming through here'-
the stiff gesture of the Banksia bush;
so I stopped to taste a gum-leaf...and turned
to see if you were following.
I let the silence draw level
and waited for the stern crunch
of your feet; smelt the splash of sweat
and pollen in my hair, squashed
a sugary fly at the corner of my eye
as tiny bees drowned themselves
in the steam in my ears.

All that night on the wind-swept height
the moon drifted across my eyes
as it sailed star-wards
above our plateau camp,
shining its torch through pallid clouds
with mallee wands reaching up around us
thrashing in symphony with the wind.

Beside faint flickers of the fire
I followed the pale face of that cold watcher,
bleached sailor drawing a beacon
across the sea of dark;
a barnacled bow cresting the clouds
splashing my eyes with ashen light
washed through a meshwork of mallee.

Sinking at the shore of a purple sea,
the light in my mind fading with the fire;
a feeble gleam on the map of night,
my eyes straining to follow
the progression of the moon
beckoning toward
the ridges of tomorrow.



EPISODE WITH SHORTS,
T-SHIRT AND SANDSHOES

The sun, from its afternoon angle, beams
On walls leaning over this stone strewn stream
Where I crouch by the creek, flushing sand from my socks,
As it boisterously burrows its way through the rocks
To pry ever on by innumerable races,
Spraying itself over dark sandstone faces
To saturate shadows and smear them with slime
And carve the solidified structure of time.

I'd been shovelling and shouldering for most of the week -
When I knocked off Friday I could hardly speak,
My spine was on fire and burning my back
So when I got home I went straight to my pack
And, though no great object of beauty to see,
I said to it sweetly "You're coming with me":
So in went some rice and a packet of noodles
With the rest of the regular kit and kaboodle
All stowed in the boot of 'The Mountain Express';
Then on to the bitumen, wheels to the west ...

I crashed by the car on the old plateau road:
Next morning I purposefully packed up my load,
Then out of the frying pan into the fire,
Sandshoes and T-shirt and shorts my attire
As I made for the ridgetops crusty and coarse
Where gathering rills give the canyon its source,
Where seepages widen and deepen the rifts
And coral ferns cling to cracks in the cliffs.
Then into the scunge on a compass line
With Dillwynia covered in devils' twine,
And splinter-like branches that jab and rub
And trip me up through the dead-stick scrub.

I crossed a succession of ironstone tops
Following a lead through a bloodwood copse,
As into a saddle I continued to toil



Through a turpentine thicket on chocolate soil
Where the faintest dew-of-the-morning settles
On Hibbertia saligna's deciduous petals;
With bright little blooms on the native Oxalis
And thorns on treacherous Smilax australis,
Whilst the acrid oil of rutaceous brush
Broke from some leaves I gently crushed.

Then I spun down a spur heading into the hollow
Sidling a pad that wallabies follow;
I swatted the scrub till I came to a landing,
A promontory with an aspect commanding
A view of a void, grim and intense,
With bluffs strategically placed in defence:
This furrow was sheer, so I traversed around
And by way of a moss-covered log I slid down;
Some dextrous bridging, then back on the slope-
The negotiable route had no need of a rope
As through a Prostanthera thicket I burst
To be down at the rivulet quenching my thirst.
With one arm I swung my pack from my shoulder
And sat in the filtered light on a boulder
Swallowing in, as dragon-flies played,
The medicinal breath of the sassafras glade.

But the creek beckoned onward, gushing and purling,
Around and under log-jams swirling,
Sucked through the knuckles of rapids and shutes,
Chewing at the banks, exposing the roots;
There were still-water sections of pebbles and sand,
A compulsory swim and a hand-over-hand:
But then of a sudden a change in direction
Where the creek dropped away through a fissure-like section;
The roaring of water assaulted my ear,
I readied myself and my abseiling gear
And proceeded to reconnoiter ahead
Skirting a terrace with feelings of dread.
But there... at the end of a ledge... I could see





A convenient belay from a coachwood tree
Anchored by roots to the end of a shelf...
So into the darkness I lowered myself.

I doubled the rope and clamped on a cleat-
An overhung abseil of forty-five feet.
As soon as my toes touched the gravelly ground,
Released from my harness, I pulled the rope down;
Then onward I swept through the dimly lit alley,
Passed walls like a tightening vice in the valley
Where the narrowest slice of sky could be seen
Above clusters of ferneries glowing with green.
From dubious corners away I backed,
On log-lanes I practised my balancing act;
A series of swims, a couple of tumbles,
A sequence of wades and bouldery jumbles,
Circular sink-holes, abrupt little falls,
Floodstones and chockstones wedged between walls
Sculptured and gouged by torrential forces
And currents that flash along underground courses.

Tall cedar wattles stand on the opposite flank
To my camp in a bracket of fern by the bank;
Crayfish crawl through mulch in the pool
While a gust through the gully, with fingertips cool,
Teases the branchlets and tugs at vines
And frolics with fronds in these narrow confines.
Tonight, the moon walks the sky with her lamp
And parties of fire-flies dance through my camp,
Wrapped up on a bedding of leaf-litter there
I'll curl by the fire and sleep like a prayer,
And my soul, in a twilight terrain of its own,
Will sink in the pool of my dreams like a stone.



TRAVELLER

Pausing in pools beneath wedge-tail bluffs
Under greywacke overhangs,
he eases to rest in the cavernous realm
of the water dragon.
Motionless. Still.

But is never really still,
for even at night the eels in his belly
wriggle like ripples through his dreams.
Nor is he ever hungry,
for he is always nibbling away
at a mountain or two.

Peering down the reach
he sees a bend, a point where looms
the limit of sight and certainty,
beyond which he must travel,
beyond which is his future,
beyond which is the sea.

The traveller flows on...



EVERYTHING

It's a tintinabulation in my ear,
Music moving through the gallery so near,
It's the air itself I hear.

It's the smacking of a rocky waterfall
A -lilting through the gully's wooded hall,
It's the Mother Sandstone's call.

It's the rhythm of reverberating rhyme,
The slow tolling of the passage-bells of time
With their corresponding chime.

It's the tuning of the purifying breeze,
The clinking of Imagination's keys,
And it puts my heart at ease.

It's an echo through the canyon ringing strong,
It's the surface of a reservoir of song,
Deep, wide and long.

It's the sizzling ring of insects in the ground,
A powering-out of voices all around
Through the miracle of sound.

It's the resonance of movement in the air,
The flowing notes of silence everywhere;
It is laughter in a prayer.

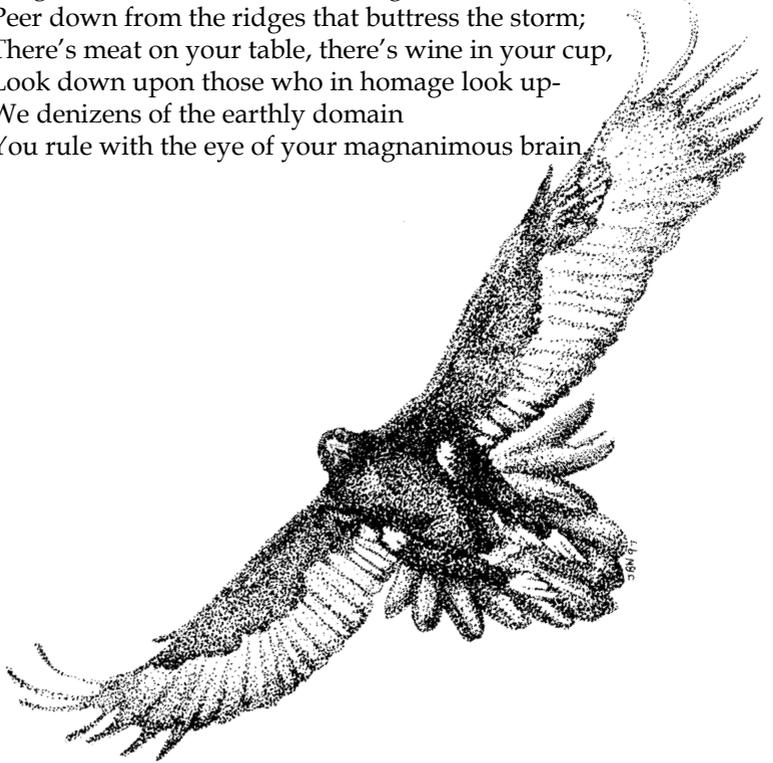
It's the Pipes of Pan: heartsong of love and fear
Calling to every creature far and near,

It is everything I hear
It is everything I hear
It is everything I hear.

KING OF THE MOUNTAIN

Circles ... he circles ... hovering awhile ...
Then straightens and glides down a hollow air-aisle;
A hunter a-sail in the fathomless skies
Angling a line on the earth with his eyes;
Drifting away through the thermal blue deep
Where complex air passages murmur and sweep.

King of the Mountain in wild wingéd form!
Peer down from the ridges that buttress the storm;
There's meat on your table, there's wine in your cup,
Look down upon those who in homage look up-
We denizens of the earthly domain
You rule with the eye of your magnanimous brain.



COOLANGUBRA TRAVERSE

The chainsaws were silent on Sheepstation Creek
Where they and the 'dozers had been working all week;
All week in the treasure trove cutting the prize,
Through the south-eastern forests, picking the eyes.

Under blanket-leaf cover we climbed up to Nalbaugh,
With lyre-bird fanfare we rose to the plateau,
To Nalbaugh over Wog Wog and White Ash Saddle
To the upland heights that the megaliths straddle.

Then across to Square Swamp where the scrub was like wire
Surrounding the sides of a high mountain mire
Where Boronia grew, among others to mention
The bladderwort aprons and a delicate gentian.

The plateau lay clothed in cool temperate apparel,
Tall forest of messmate, silver wattle, brown barrel,
With huge granite tors from an ancient upheaval
Evoking a scene prehistoric, primeval.

At our feet grew exquisite and rare Tetratheca,
And shrilling with song the white-throated tree-creeper;
The black cockatoos looked as though dressed in leathers
And acknowledged us simply by ruffling their feathers.

From Swamp Rock and White Rock we had views of Nungatta,
To the north Coolumbooka reclined on a platter;
Through clouds the high summits appeared as if islands
Obscuring the far Tantawangalo Highlands.

For two days and nights we sojourned on Nalbaugh,
We'd moved through the forest and fern of the plateau,
Till when from the mountain we had to disperse
And proceed with our Coolangubra traverse:

Evolution's design - the blueprint of God,
Untainted, unspoiled, where few'd before trod;
We crossed the Wog River and made the Wog Way
And reached Reedy Creek in a full-on day.

We had walked through the bracken and sidled the falls,
We had woken to lyre-birds rehearsing their calls,
We had woven through scrub as best we could do
Zig-zagging on paths of the wild wallaroo;

We'd seen what the wilderness keeps in its store
And passed through the forest mosaic in awe;
We'd climbed the steep spur-lines and sidled each spire
And fallen to sleep by the coals of our fire.

O mighty Coolangubra!
May the rain clouds roll
Forever on the forests
Of the Kangaroo Skull;
May your waters flow like nectar,
May your storms like pulses beat,
And may you cheat the snarling chainsaws
A-snapping at your feet.



SOLD

For water, wind, earth and fire,
For legends and myths and all desire,
For all the good we can acquire -
SOLD! unto the richest buyer.

And so our forests wait their turn
For big machines to mash and churn,
To road and rape, to scar and burn:
Too many lessons there to learn.

Hear the great trees crash and tumble,
Hear the heavy trucks a-rumble;
Ask, "Why must our bushland crumble?"
Answer: beaurocratic mumble.

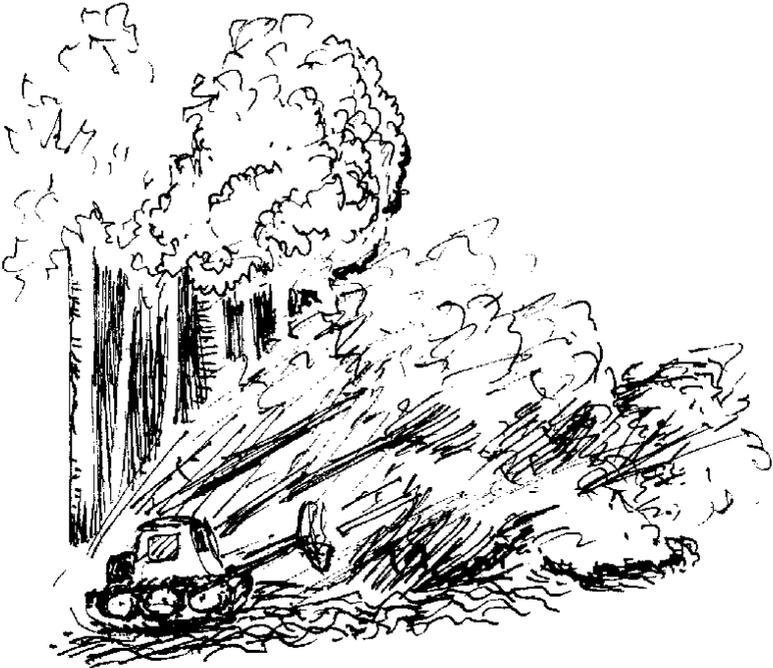
Just look at how we treat our land
With eyes on profit and demand;
Sold, segregated, fenced and canned,
The motive - greed - I understand,

But in the name of our great Lord
Why sit back dumbly and applaud?
For have we not gone overboard
With forests clear-felled, scarred and scored?

Then gone the work of the Divine,
Then wind will blow and sun will shine
On endless ranks in endless line:
The ranks of radiata pine.

But you can't put a lid on what's called 'pro-gress',
Yet with so much bushland in distress
Why spread such environmental mess
Through the ridges of the wilderness?

So drone old man your didgeridoo,
Screech the alarm of the white cockatoo,
It's the land of possum and kangaroo
Where the legends must die for the myths to come true.



EVERPRESENCE

So I entered another forest;
a whip-bird cracked with pin-point accuracy...
frogs croaking infrequently,
mist setting in the premature dark.

Alone on a mountain of lone-ness,
a mosquito swooped and dive-bombed my ear
that and the gloom were all I could hear,
and trickling of water beneath.

A suffocated watercourse,
an animal pad I could barely discern,
a mist-spilt green light soaked up by the fern
illuminating the shadows.

A clearing, an old tin-scape,
collapsing iron and slabs of bark
wrapped in a skin of quickening dark
and bundled up with scramblers.

A crumbled shack, detritus of hope,
so unlikely a place in time for me,
all grown over with raspberry
and darkness ... like a bandage.

I walked away
through air perfumed with gardenia essence,
leaving the forest to its everpresence
and its canopy of healing.



THE OLD MAN OF MOSSMAN

I hear the waters gush over the stones
In the granitic gorges of tumbledown bones,
For the Old Man of Mossman has burst at the seams
Where the wilderness waters pour forth from his dreams.

I see the trees in the light of the moon,
Hear forest hens churn out their chortling tune,
And the Old Man of Mossman is solemnly proud
Of his rainforest beard and his cloak made of cloud.

I've heard of the stories he revels in telling:
Of furious winds that come screaming and yelling
The chaotic strains of their cyclonic chorus
While tearing the hair from the flesh of the forest.

His poems and songs tell of pythons and possums,
Pigeon-sized moths and Myristica blossoms,
Of cascades and creeks and their tributary feeders
And vines that envelope the tall pencil cedars.

The hide of the Old Man is rough as the boulders
That cover his body and sit on his shoulders;
His skin is so coarse it would give you the shivers
To cut across the grain of his ridges and rivers.

He's guardian over the Mountains of Granite,
Unequaled for power in this part of the planet;
It's above and beyond any doubt he's the bossman...
As old as the hills is the Old Man of Mossman.