

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.

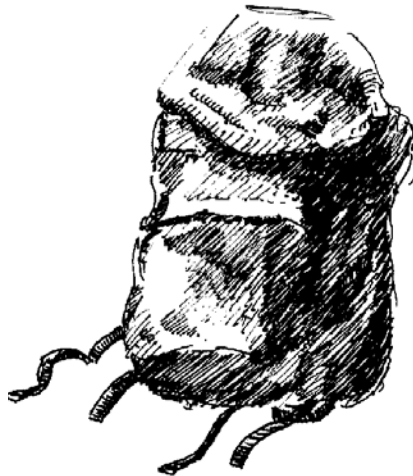
There's a montane brook  
    With its hurrying gush,  
There are caves in a cliff-line  
    And the thundery rush  
Of a waterfall hidden  
    By the thickness of brush.

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.



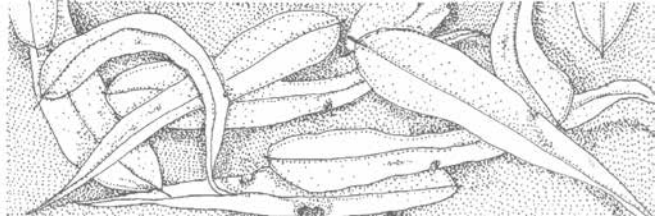
## THE THORNY HAND

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.

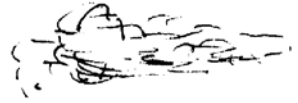
You realise the fact that you must face the claws alone,  
And well within an hour you're reduced to blood and bone;  
You struggle on pathetically, your temper on the boil  
As bits of you are left behind to fertilise the soil.  
The sorrow you will suffer one can only understand  
When one is in the 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,

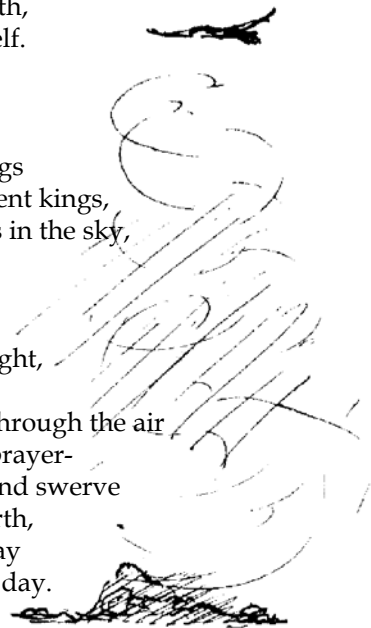




Reclaiming its children when finally they fall,  
Casting the net over one and over all;  
Ever-devouring the contents of its wealth,  
Lusting to live, yet it must consume itself.

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.

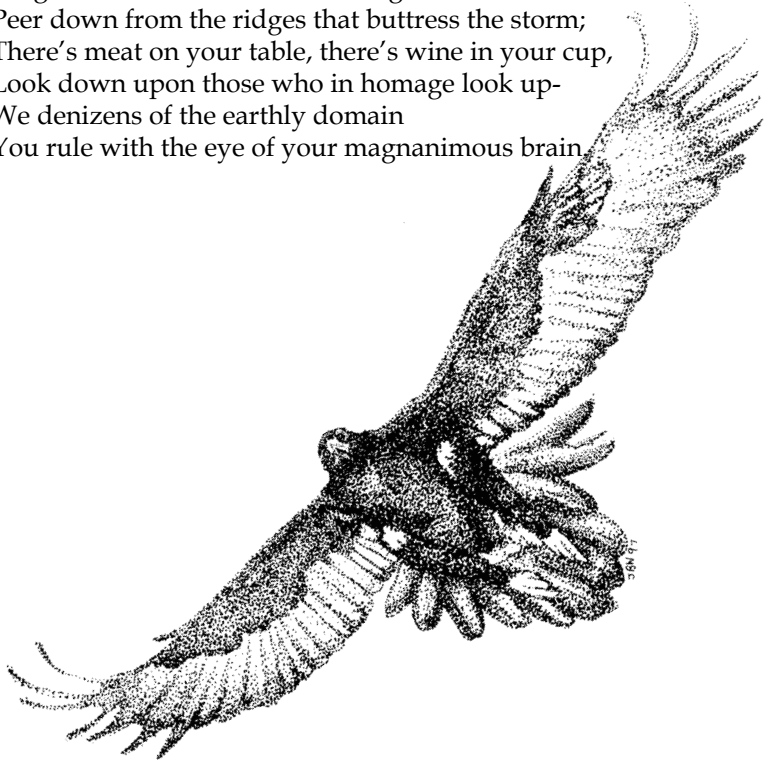
It's the Pipes of Pan: heartsong of love and fear  
Calling to every creature far and near,

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.

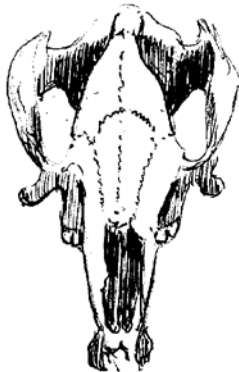
For two days and nights we sojourned on Nalbaugh,  
We'd moved through the forest and fern of the plateau,  
Till when from the mountain we had to disperse  
And proceed with our Coolangubra traverse:

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.

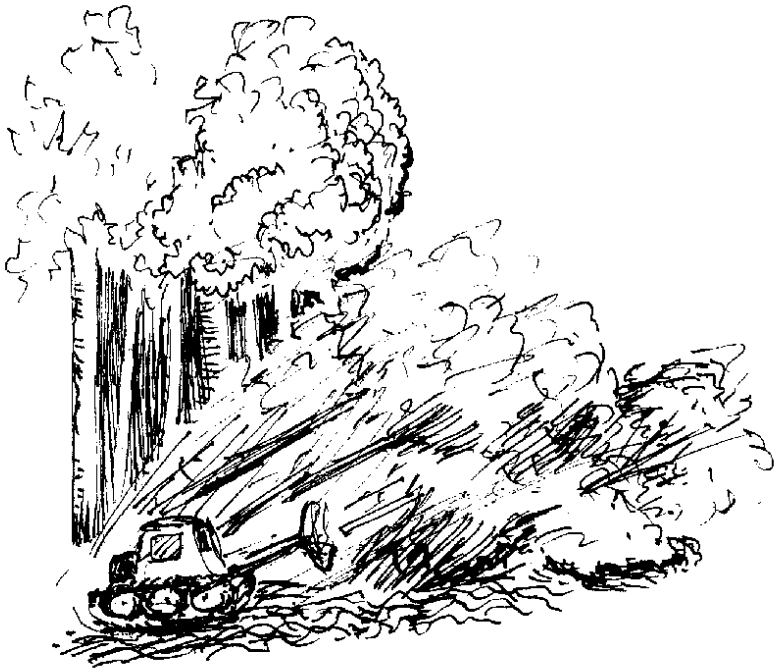
Just look at how we treat our land  
With eyes on profit and demand;  
Sold, segregated, fenced and canned,  
The motive - greed - I understand,

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.