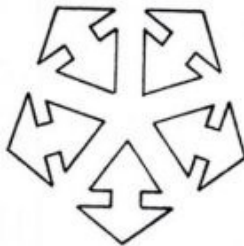


INTER-CULTURAL PROSPECTING

Eleven Australian Poems



Poems by
Mark Oliver Smith
Research and Design by
Chris Nelson

Presented

To

For



By

Home to the Bogong Moth



“The Murrumbidgee Ranges”
By Elioth Gruner 1937

<https://wikioo.org/>

Introduction

The eleven poems in this booklet form part of a series of Australian poems:-

Our Golden Tree

This selection sought to introduce the reader to the three streams of the Australian culture. Those are the Aboriginal, the white-Anglo-Saxon and the Multi-cultural. It was intended that the poems would contribute to a widening of cultural awareness.

Fannie Bay

This selection contained eleven poems of place. These poems sample places such as Darwin, Kendall, Alice Springs, Boorowa, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Yirrkala, Taree, Kalorama Heights, Kununurra, and Wagga Wagga. Naturally the poems are about people and incidents as well as the landscape.

Inter- cultural Prosecting

Australia is now a multi-cultural nation. As the author travels in and outside Australia he visits Thailand, Indonesia, China, Ireland, and provides samples of thoughts from the Indigenous Aborigines of Australia. The poems seek to look through a different lense than that which the author developed in Australia.

Tourists who travels outside their own country not only gain knowledge about the country visited, they also learn much about their own country in the process.

Regional geography locates Australia between South East Asia, South Western Pacific, Antarctica and the Indian Ocean. A visit to our nearest South East Asian neighbour, Indonesia, is a revelatory experience. It differs from Australia on a great range of cultural observances. These differences provide Australian tourists with greater insights into their own cultural assumptions and mores. Migrants to Australia from these countries also enrich Australian culture.

I have included two poems about Ireland (Eire). The differences that arise from visiting Ireland by an Australian of 50% Irish ancestry enables one to make comparisons of an almost forgotten era. Although the two poems in this sub-section do not go into the differences between the two countries, they do reflect some thoughts that an old diasporan has made about his earlier mother country.

The last three poems are an attempt by a '*balanda*' to get inside the thinking of some indigenous aboriginal minds. While this can never be completely successful it still has merit. It reveals the fact that the aboriginal people are wisdom people who do not seek to own the land. They treat the land as owning them! Their culture is based on respect for the spiritual basis of life and the sustainability of the planet. Their culture is based on a different form of consciousness than modern European.

When we go prospecting among cultures we can learn much about ourselves.

Mark Oliver Smith.
Calvary Haydon Retirement Community
Canberra, A.C.T.

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No. 1
Thailand
An Oriental View



Mandarin Oriental Bangkok



On the verandah of the Oriental Hotel

1

An Oriental View

Two red roses
Vased on the table
Of the verandah
At the Oriental
Watch while two women
cocktail
Their thoughts at sunset
Along the Chao Praya.

They are charged no pilotage
For the up and down
Ferrying of their minds.

Along life's stream
They drift
Until they meet Mongkut
And find their release

Slaves no longer
To any patriarchal order
They may henceforth
Dress in saffron.

Once reclining,
Then in sitting position,
They not only stand
But are liberated
To walk their way
With Gautama
From the shackles of
belonging.

O Chakri,
May the fragrance
of those two
Spread throughout the land
To make of it
One Rose Garden

No. 2
Thailand
Kanchanaburi



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00406.026

Building the railway over the River Kwai
<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C41423>



Hellfire Pass
Vaughan Murray Griffin, POW at Changi

2

Requiem at Kanchanaburi

Those 100,000 sleepers
from Moulmein to Nong Pladuk
carry not the weight of rails,
or supply trains,
of rice and ammunition
for the Imperial Army.
They carry the weight
of all that counts:-
the courage of the Dutch
the gallantry of the English
the mateship of the Australian
and the sacrifice of the Thais.

Train it if you wish
but the real lines
are those rows at Kanchanaburi,
Chungkai and Kranji
where you will find
the names of those sleepers
printed in bronze.

Before they were laid to rest
they stumbled through
Hell Fire Pass
and dreamed a
thousand dreams
of childhoods on the farms,
of Christmas dinners ,
and puddings,
of Europe's quaint old charms.

They dreamed of sweethearts,
of wives they left behind,
of families in the making,
of Utopias they sought to find.

When finally they succumbed
to malnutrition and cholera
and dysentery, worm infestation
and ill-treatment
they found their peace
and crossed their River Kwai.

No more pain or suffering.
No more agony or strife.
For us they gave a new
Tomorrow.
For us they gave their life.

No. 3
Indonesia
Waingapu



M.V. Kelimutu
<https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/photos/of/ships/>



Photograph by Lizy Dhik
<https://tehsusu.com/watu-parunu-sumba/>

3

In The Waters of Waingapu

The dark water
Laps reluctantly –
Almost noiselessly,
Beside the M.V. Kelimutu.

High above the jetty
Orange neons glimmer in the failing light
While the fire spirits dance
In the watery depths below.

Though never embered,
Sumba still pays
Her respects to Siva
And his spiritual mentor,
The faithful Doerga.

In turn,
They Kundilini the souls
Of all true explorers
Who venture
Into the necklace
Of their bejewelled islands.

This is much more than recompense
For those venturesome souls
Who fish and canoe
In the waters of Waingapu.

No. 4
Antarctica—New Zealand
Mount Erebus



Mt Erebus
Wikipedia.com



Mt. Erebus Disaster | Air New Zealand Flight 901
Artists Impression. The Flight Channel

4

Mt Erebus

Mawson flirted with death
And climbed those awesome heights.
He met the son of chaos
For six wild windy nights.

While the fire inside was frozen
The cold winds burnt him through.
He chilled when Erebus rumbled
But marvelled at the view.

Unlike Scott he never made
That journey into hell.
He struggled up Mount Erebus
And returned again to tell.

But those who flew from New Zealand
In that great big D.C.10
Will never leave that gravesite
Or excursion there again.

The underworld now active,
Will wreak her havoc wide.
Islands soon will shrink from view –
Tsunamis at high tide!

There is a law in heaven,
Disobey it at your peril.
Pay homage to Mother Gaia
Or liberate the devil!

No. 5 China



Chinese famer in the field
Chinadaily.com.cn



The Five Rams sculpture
Yuexiu Hill
Wikipedia.com

5

On The Path of the Ecliptic

Look in the fields of Foshan,
See the toiling Taurean
Buffaloing in rice paddies -
Apis long since descended
And the farmer on all fours planting,
Visible proof that men
Are equal to the Gods,
That all can enjoy the communal
wallow!

See in Yuexin Park
Five Fiery spirits sculptured in stone.
Once Arian messengers,
Purveyors of cereal
To the Pearl of the Orient.
Now reminders
That form is frozen process.
How time itself can cement!

Go through Guangzhou,
Watch Pisces swimming
Along the rivers of pedalling people,
Or paddle through the market place
Among the frogs and eels and crabs
And you will find Christ-
Meat ready, as one flavour only,
In that human soup bowl!

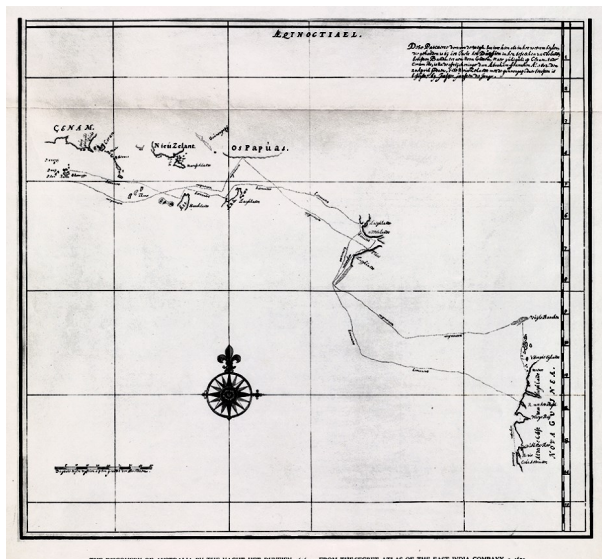
Dwell now on the peach blossom,
The dahlia and chrysanthemum -
Fragrance is a heavenly sign -
A new dawning has begun.

Saturn and Uranus combine
in Aquarius;
Sternness and change are one.
Earth, Fire, Water and
Air combine.
China still follows the sun!

No. 6 New Holland



Replica of Dutch sailing ship, the 'Duyfken'
<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/>



First European map of Australian coastline during the voyage of the
Duyfken, in 1606. <http://www.duyfken.com/>

6

The Visit of the Duyfken

Built of stately proportions,
cargued with legal and religious conventions
fuelled by a spirit of adventure,
the Ark Royal of Europe,
pinnacle of seven seas,
commanded by that Dutch Noah,
Abel Jansz,
gospelled trade in fabled southern quays.

Storm tossed,
wind blown,
cursed by flooding rain,
Jansz's little dove-
heart almost asunder-
came to rest
and for a brief spell
Old Europe araratted
in the land down under.

Land of the Holy Ghost-
gentle , peaceful and mild?
No! Land of the rugged coast-
forbidding, hostile and wild!

No land of biblical traditions,
a penal settlement to boot.
A site of entirely new conditions,
awaiting a culture to root!

No. 7
Ireland
Shannon River



A view across the River Shannon in Limerick, County Limerick, Ireland. Piotr Machowczyk.



Sixth century monastic site in Clonmacnoise, located on the banks of the River Shannon <http://banagher.ie/2018/04/25/clonmacnoise/>

7

My Shannon

The Shannon flows by lough and down
From Clonmacnoise to Limerick town,
Through curragh fen and burren land
My heavenly music – sweetest sound!

Its ripple and rill on highland hill
Courses through the Midlands still.
Its gurgling life through mossy peat
Sings with joy – a heartfelt beat!

For in her blood there courses daily
The Sean-Nos and Shannon Ceili,
A dear red rose, my true Irish dream,
Swanlike grace – a free flowing stream!

Gaelic Words

Lough
Down
Curragh
Burren
Sean-Mos
Shannon Ceili
Nos



No. 8
Ireland—Muiredach's Cross



Muiredach's High Cross
<https://aleteia.org/2020/05/30/unveiling-the-mystery-of-the-high-crosses-of-ireland/>



High crosses of Ireland. <https://aleteia.org/2020/05/30/unveiling-the-mystery-of-the-high-crosses-of-ireland/>

8

“Pray for Muiredach Who Raised this Cross”

No! I 'll not pray for you
Muiredach McDomhnaill.
(Of that you have no need!)
Your cross sparkles
With the hope of Christ
As the sun dances
On its mica-flecked features.

Not so poor Anna Livia
Who needs all our prayers.
The cross she has formed
Lies in the peat waters of Dubb-Linn
Coloured by the burden of defeat.
The sun dances not
In the gloom
Of her soot-stained walls
And gun-metalled streets.

It was you Anna
Who surrendered the Celtic bloom
And taught Deidre
To tankard that dark brew
of self-pity.

It was you Anna
Who married the Playboy
And ground down
The hope and pride of the culchies
Into their lees of discontent.

Well might you discard
The sackcloth
And wash the ashes
So that your body
Might shine in its millennial light.

No, you can look after yourself
Muiredach McDomhnaill,
While I pray for Anna,
To green her dress
Paint her lips
And make her eyes sparkle
For joy again!

No. 9 Aboriginal Australia



Gurangatch and
Mirragan
[https://
www.ncacl.org.au/
atsi_resource/
gurangatch-and-
mirragan/](https://www.ncacl.org.au/atsi_resource/gurangatch-and-mirragan/)

Desperately attempting
to flee from Mirragan,
Gurangatch swam
through the earth, cre-
ating the many chan-
nels, caves and rivers
seen throughout Aus-
tralia to this day.



9

Cookoogong - A Man of High Degree

Cookoogong could sleep with eyes wide open.
He knew that Macquarie's brass plate
Did not make him chief of the tribe.
The Governor had much to learn
About aboriginal customs.

Throsby was a different kettle of fish.
He not only trusted Cookoogong
He wanted to learn his tribal ways.
He let the Burrah man lead him
All the way to Bathurst.

Cookoogong was not deceived by flattery,
He was already awake.
He had seen Mirragan
Poison the waterhole with millewa.
He had witnessed the shag Billagoola
Dive deeply at Birrimbunung – Alai
Near the Wanbee-ang caves
And catch Gurungatch.

Cookoogong knew that the white soldier
Had already entered the Burragorang
And that, like a snake,
He would soon slither with his settlers
Across the Cookbundoon.

Cookoogong also knew
That once Gurrangatch
Was discovered by the white man
All things would be different—
That the Dreamtime would disappear.

No. 10
Aboriginal Australia—The Dugong



Dugong. Sydney Aquarium



Roughsey, Dick (Goobalatheldin), Aboriginal Group with Dugong,
1968. <https://www.aasd.com.au/>

10

Lament for the Dugong

The West Wind blew softly
Wild Dolphins at play,
Sea eagles soared skyward,
Fish skimming the Bay.

Our totems now frightened,
Strange tracks in the sand,
Land rights and permits
Are strangling this land.

Royalties and handouts
Not turtle and fishes,
It's Balanda tucker-
Naught for our wishes.

Blue ringed octopus,
Poisoning our mind,
Ciguatera is creeping-
The deadliest kind.

Come now the East Wind,
Blow strong in our faces,
Bring back the dugong,
Restore us these places.

No. 11
Aboriginal Australia—Bogong Moth



Bogong moth
<https://www.science.org.au/>



Big Bogong
<https://en.wikipedia.org/>

11

In The Days of the Bogong

1.

High up on the Big Bogong
The tribal elders
From the Walgalu, Ngunnawal
And Ngarigo
Agreed that it was time
To change their barbed spears
Into prodding sticks.

But appeasement first.
Then purification
Through the whirring
Of the bull-roarers.
And these suspicious neighbours
Became friends again
And jubilation
Echoed through the ranges.

Then the signal for transformation
Was made ready.

The serving elders
With their dried grass
Funneled in bark
Ignited that spark
To incense the Big Bogong
In preparation
For the sacred meal.
A wisp of smoke
Climbed the scree slope

And in that instant
The hunters became gatherers
And the Big Bogong
Smiled the smile
Of a beneficent Queen
About to yield her royal jelly.

2.

Argotis infusa
Is only a little chap
But there were lots of him.
He had the happy knack
Of uniting people
With his agreeable taste
And inner fire.

Once dislodged
From his sleeping quarters
And collected on bark plates
He had to be roasted
On heated sand
Sifted by fibrous nets
And left to cool.

Those tasty morsels
One-time heavenly hosts
Swarmed ever so plentifully.
Perhaps their memories will,
On yet another hill,
Herald a new corroboree.

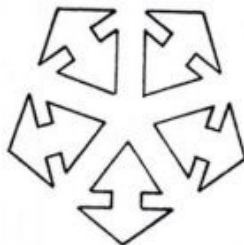
About the Author

Mark Smith had an extensive career in Education. Although trained as an English and History teacher he taught little History and less English.

He began his career in the New South Wales Department of Education. After later training as a District School Counsellor and Guidance Officer, he became a Teachers College Lecturer. He later transferred to the Commonwealth Teaching Service and became a Principal Education Officer. After being compulsorily transferred to the newly created Northern Territory Teaching Service, he was made a Superintendent of Guidance and Special Services.

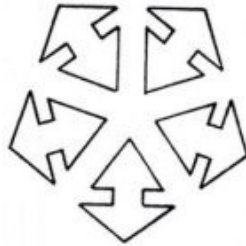
Mark's interest in poetry began when his uncle presented a copy of Henry Lawson's poetry to him in 1950. Now retired in Canberra, he has collected some of his own verses in order to pay tribute and acknowledge his debt to his favourite bush balladist.

In retirement Mark has enjoyed his membership in Probus. He has enjoyed interstate touring, genealogical research and historical studies with U3A. In gathering his poems together, he is seeking to honour an interest that was dormant for a long time.



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