



Made in Aussie

Australia was the birthplace of this compendium of poems. On the spur, I decided to put thoughts into verse, beginning close to home in South Australia, before moving further afield. From the starting point I tried as much as possible, to vary the style and form of the poetry, so that each reflected the subject, while being presented in its own unique manner. One of the first to be completed was ***Loading Night at Wallaroo***.

Loading Night at Wallaroo

*It could have been a still, quiet night,
On the long wooden jetty, with the town in sight.
The sea was gentle, calm, almost still;
The lights of the town looked down from the hill.*

*Odd groups of people gathered to fish,
But lines stayed slack to spite silent wish.
The only one catching with the help of a light
Was a man on the ship, engulfed by the night.*

*But the motors had started an hour ago;
The belts rolled endlessly to and fro.
Wheat poured from the belts, down tubes to the hold:
Food for the thousands; a grain tinged with gold.*

***As the grain flowed down, the dust billowed high,
Sweeping over the jetty, filling the sky.
The noise and the dust told the townspeople too
That a ship was loading at Port Wallaroo.***

Wallaroo, South Australia
February 1979

Wallaroo, a wonderful sounding aboriginal name, for a small wheat-loading terminus in South Australia. In the glow of a warm summer's night, I stood mesmerized by the activity which buzzed around the big ship. A first-time experience for me, but a long-continuing lifeline for the townsfolk.

Secrets of Sydney

***It's strange that in a city
That can boast the size of Sydney,
The atmosphere's so tranquil
Around the harbor, at the hub.
What does it hide?***

***The ferry saunters over
Towards the wharf at Neutral Bay.
Clank and thud on the landing,
Then back to Circular Quay.
Let's go for a ride!***

***Off-hand look of the workers
Surely conceals an inner pride.
The visitors look so casual
When merging with the throng,
(But alas) they sit outside.***

***Sleek yachts just simply waiting
To unleash their weekend sails,
Now stranded in the foaming
Of the ferry powering by.
Our eyes are opened wide.***

Sydney. August 1979

I was bowled over by the places that sit on the shores of Sydney's glorious harbour ... and the ferries that connect them. For my first few times there, I stayed in old guest house, wonderfully situated next to the *Neutral Bay* wharf, from where it was possible to watch the ferry approaching, then nip out to jump on, before it departed for *Circular Quay*. Then providing I didn't exit through the turnstiles, I could ride forever on a single 50p ticket, thus becoming very acquainted with ferry travel and absorbed in observing my fellow passengers ...hence this poem.

Night and Day

***Chattering waters under the deck,
Generator roar from the nearby hulk
Trolleys of barley throw shadows from the light;
The whole dam jetty was a sight that night.***

Thoughts

***Hear the din from the morning shift,
Barley in pallets, hoisted to the hold.
Scraping from the chains and shouts from the men,
Down on the jetty ... load up yet again.***

Wallaroo, South Australia, March 1980

Night and Day tells a similar tale to the earlier *Loading night at Wallaroo*. This poem, once again, reflects a hub of activity as the golden barley grains are transferred from shore to ship, bound for the ports of Asia and Europe. When a ship is *in*, the *wharf* - or *jetty* (as the wooden structure where ships berth is called in those parts) - becomes centre of the action ... both night and day.

Sydney by Night

Lights:

***Some still,
Some twinkle,
Some flash,
Coloured
Yellow, red, blue, orange, green.
Some big,
Some bright,
Mostly small,
Mostly white.***

Reflections of light

***Some far
And long
Some near
And squat,
Yellow, red, blue, orange, green.
But softer,
Shimmer,
Mostly thin,***

Mostly white.

***Jagged topline cuts the void of night:
Man-made erections voice the labours of life.
Nature's light is straight and true,
Where land-lying dots meet shimmer on water.
An enigma,
A falsety,
A truth.
A forest of light:
A reflection on life.***

Neutral Bay, Sydney 1979

It's many years ago now, but I can still remember looking out across the water, from the hotel in Neutral Bay, towards the array of bright lights atop the tall buildings in central Sydney. At a little less distance, there were other lights positioned on or just beyond the opposite shoreline, while the combined reflections of this compendium of lights shone back in a haze of colour, shimmering in the moonlight on the water, reflecting both natural and built environments. Fascinating!

Grampian stop-over

***Bumped into some kangaroos
The other day,
Or almost anyway.
Dreamily crossing a bridge
To 'Venus Bath'.
Said "Christ. How are you?"
But they were on their way,
Heads bobbing through the scrub,
Weaving as they went
Between the trees.
At a safely parted distance
They turned to say
(With ears pricked high):
"Nice to meet you cobber."***

Halls Gap, Victoria, 01.01.1997

Venus Bath was the preferred short walk of the day from *Hall's Gap*, in the Grampian Mountains of Victoria. From my first stay there as a teenager, until recent times, it's been the *must-do-at least-one-time*, go-to spot. On this day I was alone, but with nature's fascinating friends.

Winds of change

***The launch pulled out to a cranking sound
And the noise drifted over on the still noon air.
Images that hung in the heat of that day,
Reflected the languid atmosphere there.***

***Tall red lights shone to boats home-bound,
As the breeze issued warning of the change to come.
A fire-like moon rose through faraway clouds,
Heralding the start of a dynamic day.***

***A cold, grey sky was all the way around
Waves choppy white and foreboding now.
Beach-walking weather they seemed to say
But not for long – mark the winds of change!***

***The guls could barely stand their ground,
With breasts puffed out to the frenzied wind.
Trees on the lean from storms gone by,
Now bent once more to retain their form.***

***The gale howled hard on the beach it had found,
Foaming waves battered the expectant shore.
It seemed Armageddon was bearing down;
Everything screamed “Enough. Please no more!”***

Port Vincent, South Australia, 1983

Winds of Change describes a landscape that I came to know during years spent in rural areas of South Australia. I travelled for work and stayed - whenever possible - near the sea. Clocking off the work routine at the end of the day, often I would stroll along the shoreline in the dusk of evening, or soon after dawn the next morning.

On one spectacular day I was fascinated by the weather. The forecast heralded a *change*, or a wet and windy weather *front*, sweeping in from the West, from the direction of The Great Australian Bight (and Antarctica). The hot and languid day changed ominously, to evening breezes and faraway clouds, and then by the next morning, to raging storm and foaming waves.

Nature can be quite remarkable at times and the enormous change from one day to the next - as depicted by these five verses - shows the power the elements can unleash, at unexpected times.