

The Aborigine's Lament

Khoo Soo Hay

Canberra, my once fair Canberra,
You are not what you were,
When once I was here.
What heirs have robbed you
Of your youth, your koala
And the coolibah

My weary dry eyes must cry
That you are queen under strange skies,
A mistress to spies.
You bear a crown of card-board,
And sit on a carnival gold throne,
Labelled the Stone of Scone

They made you unchaste and spoilt
By cunning confusion
And timely seduction,
Metamorphosed you
From a corroboree
To an A.C.T.
And made you mother
Of the fostered Seven
From Perth to Brisbane.

'Tis but a veneer
To be stripped of gum spine
And replaced by pine,
To be robbed of your friends,
The budgerigar
And the kookaburra.

They forced you against
Your feminine frailty,
To condone their impropriety;
Planted phallic obelisks
Teeming the summer skies
With fertilized flies.

Yet what else betray?
To dam you for a lake
And your virtue forsake.
Say no more to me
So dearly intimate,
Such then is your fate.
For time must pass through,
Instilling fragility
In senility.
You are gone, too far gone.

My heart is growing cold
And my bed I must fold.
Farewell, my dear old love,
This is the snow-gum's last summer.
No more the spring for her.
Farewell, once beloved,
The trail lies heavy,
I leave, I leave without you.

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This poem was written while spending two summer vacations working in Canberra, as research assistant in the Wool Section of the Bureau of Agricultural Products, Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries in the early 1960's.

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