

B11.

Entry in category 3 bush poetry

DISTANT DIALOGUE

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( on *The Bulletin's* death, Jan 2008)

'Good morning Henry, have you heard  
the news from down below?  
I can't believe what's just occurred.  
It's quite a body blow  
for those of us who spend our time  
on Aussie Poets' cloud  
recalling rhythmic patterns, rhyme  
in verse that did us proud.'

'I've heard! I've heard! It pains me, Bart  
and were I back on earth  
I'd make my way quick-bloody-smart  
to buy ten dollars worth  
of solace from the nearest inn  
to mark this tragic day  
the once rumbustious *Bulletin*  
has sadly passed away.'

'Yes, 'passed' is weakly apposite:  
no protest banners showed;  
no angered poets set alight  
the publisher's abode;  
no week of mourning was declared;  
no weeping in the street;  
the city pulse was unimpaired  
and never missed a beat.'

'Well, in the past we've disagreed  
on city versus bush,  
a topic editors decreed  
would give their sales a push.  
I'm hoping now some country town  
where verse retains appeal  
will have a poet jotting down  
the misery we feel.'

mf

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'The city publishers are now  
all stubbornly obsessed  
with finance news, pop-stars at play  
and snaps of them undressed.  
Your *Faces in the Street* wear frowns  
but no-one paints their fates  
as you did, Henry; much less crowns  
your derelicts as mates.'

'It's obvious few writers now  
concern themselves with verse,  
yet editors will stoop and bow  
to smutty tales and worse.  
I note your *Snowy River* strikes  
a chord through suburbs still,  
while lads are bucked from motorbikes  
up-dating *Mulga Bill*.'

'And one or two true gentlemen  
like *Dunn of Nevertire*  
(great portrait from your tribute pen )  
are rising from the mire  
of knavery and greed below.  
Who'll laud the lives they've led?  
Our voices faded years ago;  
*The Bulletin* is dead.'

'It's masthead motto was withdrawn,  
as jingoism lapsed.  
Then – damnable! – true verse forsworn.  
Small wonder it collapsed.  
Here, floating on these boring clouds,  
there's little we can do  
but wipe the teardrops from our shrouds,  
recite a verse or two.'

' I could recite my latest –*Chill*  
*Despatches from Irak*  
but we've already had our fill  
of news that's edged in black.  
I'd rather hear your *Undermined*,  
equating politics  
with Sydney tunnels serpentined  
by engineers and tricks.'

mf

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'Well, thank you 'Banjo' but we've got  
an urgent job to do.  
While indignation's surging hot  
we have to say adieu  
with fiery pen or subtle spin.  
Tomorrow we'll compare  
our tributes to *The Bulletin*,  
whose loss is hard to bear.'

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