

'...to effect the voluntary removal of the entire black population...to place every last one of them on Flinders Island'
- George Augustus Robinson (Conciliator of Aborigines, 1832)

1.

why I am known as *a Victorian do-gooder*
yet achieved so little good.
Even as Arthur's Black Line surged downwards

martial law declared, the bush flickering with guard fires, his dragnet capturing only one man and a boy, it had begun.

Better Truganini had not ferried me to safety
across the Welcome River on a log
when the Port Davey mob attacked with spears.

2.

We journeyed south-east from our base camp opposite Swan Island, crossed Tomahawk River and the Montagu, pursuing a course to the end of the Western Bluff.

With me chief Manna-largenna, recruited
from Hobart Town gaol, Truganini and Wooraddy
nine other aboriginals and two white men
earth's shadow on the face of the moon
our foreboding. Truganini insists it's Manna-largenna
killed by the Stoney Creek tribe
and gone up to the moon.

Chronicle

We have left the port at Lemnos and I'm lying in my bunk,
while there's singing from the deck above my head.
I emerge to gleaming moonlight, see the mountain's silhouette,
and a flashing lamp that fills my heart with dread,
while astern there sails another ship—I see its blackened shape
as it rides the endless undulating swells—
we are heading north, it's freezing cold, and now we kill the lights
as we make our way towards the Dardanelles...

We have passed the point of Imbros and the mist is rolling in,
with the eerie shadowed moon positioned low.
It's as if they know we're coming, for a searchlight splits the night,
then two others probe with iridescent glow.
We are flanked by other ships in line on port and starboard sides—
in suspenseful silence everyone is borne.
A destroyer passes, leaves a wake of silver as she glides,
and the pale horizon shows it's nearly dawn...

As the time to disembark grows near we quietly fall in,
and the roll is called in urgent whispered breath;
I am wondering which ones of us will make it through the night
and whose destiny it is to meet with death.
Now the thunder of the guns is clear and pellets whip the sea—
with a calm and ordered purpose, quashing fear,
as we disembark down ladders into waiting boats below
we are struggling with our clumsy, heavy gear...

We are under heavy fire, noise immense—at last we land,
finding harsh terrain of soaring cliffs and rock;
but we're young and full of fervour, ready now to take our stand,
and determined that the foe will get a shock!
Now it's hailing lead—the beach is strewn with wounded, dying men,
while stampeding hordes ignore impending doom;
there are boats discharging more, a constant rattle from the hills,
and the ships are roaring broadsides from the gloom...

We are ordered to advance today, and summon all our strength
when the urgent cry goes up of, "Charge the Turk!"
So we scream inside our respirators, dodge exploding shells,
and despite our abject terror do not shirk.
Overhead our planes are swooping low with great horrendous din;
we proceed at speed with hand grenades and guns,
but like skittles many boys are felled, their limbs flung everywhere—
an appalling end for loyal ANZAC sons...

I am resting in a bunk again reflecting on the pain,
all the carnage we are leaving far behind,
and the so-called guts and glory of each bitter war campaign—
for the damage is to body, soul and mind.
When the noise of fighting ceases on this doomed and fatal shore,
will the birds return to sing, build nests and toil?
Or will gloomy clouds of darkness hover, nevermore to fade
while the cries of vengeance echo from the soil?...

Here I sit on this old rocking chair considering the past,
tracing faded words with wrinkled shaking hands.
Though it's years ago, such memories are truly meant to last—
for the legend that emerged forever stands.
Ah, Gallipoli! You ravaged us and stole so many lives
and deprived us of our innocence and youth;
but you cannot crush the spirit that was birthed upon your shores,
nor escape its recognition, pride and truth...

Now the war is long since over and I'm lying here alone,
while there's singing from the telly near my bed.
I emerge from ancient writings, glimpse the trees in silhouette—
then a sudden dazzling beacon shines ahead!
Through enfeebled eyes I comprehend a dim and blackened shape
riding undulating swells that pledge release.
There they stand, those proud battalions—time to sign my final page
and advance towards the everlasting peace.