

In a Landscape (1948) (Tribute To John Cage)



ryandra country, where each parrot bush
fires up, proud as lunar rocket countdowns,
you see its be-whiskered pale cream blooms:
florets that will never make it to the moon.

In the measured program of your youth
your days may well ascend like slow notes
played on an absent toy piano in rooms
darkened. This is real numbat country,

Where leaf-litter and fallen wandoo bark
mask the scurrying tiny feet of the fleet.
Even the western greys will bound
more quietly, reverently here, I think.

Walk on past mallet and powder bark,
past wilga ochre pit, abandoned rail
line, but salt has risen in the streams,
nearby towns are dying on their feet.

In this landscape of farms and roads
of gravel, the great granite domes
are rural aureoles of weathered stone;
and curlews call in a darkening sky.

December 2022

Notes

Parrot bush – local name for the dryandra plant (*Banksia-dryandra acuminata*)

Numbat – small marsupial and animal symbol for Western Australia

Wandoo, mallet, powder bark – WA trees

Western Greys – WA species of kangaroo

Wilga – red ochre.



FIGURE 1

Watercolour of Western Australian bush by the author

Professor Glen Phillips BEd (hons), MEd, PhD, is a WA poet and painter, born 1936 in Southern Cross, outback Western Australia. As a career academic, he is Director of the Centre for Landscape and Language at Edith Cowan University, Perth and has served in Humanities and Arts at the university and its predecessors since 1962. He was a guest poet of the 2019 WA Writers Week for a public release of *In the Hollow of the Land, his Collected Poems, 1968-2018*. He has now published more than sixty books of poems in Australia, China, the USA, Italy, UK and Thailand and two books of short stories. Twice President of Fellowship of Australian Writers, he served twenty years on its WA executive. Glen co-edited the FAW and Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers Centres anthologies and many others. A prize-winning poet, he was a founding Director of the WA poetry reading group, 'Poetry in Motion' and performed in Europe, USA, Asia and on the ABC TV, ABC Radio 'Poetica' series and SBS and community television stations. He is a life member of three Writers Centres in WA and current Patron of the K.S. Prichard Foundation. His poems have been translated into Chinese, Italian, Spanish, French and many more of the world's languages. As a landscape painter, his most recent exhibition of landscapes was in Shanghai, November 2023.

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