

John Singer, a Scot by birth, travelled extensively. He was trained as an anthropologist and worked, for much of his life, with overseas aid projects in SE Asia. He retired in 1978, and came to live in Townsville. He died in 1986. The extracts published here are from an occasional journal which he kept, recording his ideas, thoughts and feelings about North Queensland.

Alec McHoul, now of Murdoch University, edited the extracts for LiNQ.

DAVID REITER

SLEEPING SHARKS*

*One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more . . .*

— John Donne
Holy Sonnet 10

Whose dream is this? Soft light
of dusky sea has a palette
that warms the palest skin.
Your green eyes have plunged here
before. In waters deep as winter
sleep, your flippers ply a path
for me below the coral. Without
sunlight, all colours become a lie.

The cave comes true: two *galanos*
loll in the shadow's shadow, too thin
to match my apparitions. You tease
the leathery lip above the ridge of teeth.
Prompted close, my fingers wilt like petals
on a tomb. Is this the love to outlast decay?

* In underwater caves between Isla Mujeres and Cozumel, Mexico, divers may come across "sleeping sharks", supposedly feeling the effects of excess oxygen in the water.