

Phil Ilton

## WILD LIFE

Breaking from the city  
we cruise the bitumen.  
Our cockpit is stocked with  
OJ bottles of water  
cassettes no younger than 15 years and  
expectation.

We watch the sunset over the Snowy's mouth  
where it still has water.  
A publican cooks us an after-hours meal  
we pitch our tent wherever.  
Daylight finds kangaroos by the sea  
we spot a lyrebird in the bush  
dump with the breakers at a beach called Eden.  
We sniff the haze at Nimbin  
where children of the forest romp  
in rainbow T-shirts.

Inland, galahs linger on the road  
earn their name as we approach.  
At Brewarrina, weirs of stones in the river  
erected by Aborigines to catch fish.  
We absorb the ambience of the moon on water.

We skim the corrugations out the Back o' Bourke  
laugh and cough at the dust in our car  
catch emus by the track.  
We camp by the Darling in the desert.  
Black cockatoos herald the dusk  
a goanna dives in the river.  
We jolt from our seats as a snake  
slithers from our tent.

Our reward for roughing  
is a unit on the coast.

When the breeze forces open the sliding door  
your eyes shine as you say  
"The wind wants to come in."

And I know  
any snake in our tent  
won't keep me from you.