

RUTH MANGAN

COSMIC PLAN

(Pantomim of an Aboriginal legend explaining the presence of
the Southern Cross in the Australian sky)

Mululu to Centaurus changed. The Kanda will not die.
Can you leave the songs you sang with such delight?
Will Conduk help them meet you in the sky?
Shall you trust them to the Spirit of the Night?

Can you leave the songs you sang with such delight?
Prevent their being spoiled by mortal man?
Shall you trust them to the Spirit of the Night?
Take them with you, Mululu. I will help them if I can.

Prevent their being spoiled by mortal man
Save them from the jealous women's spite?
Take them with you Mululu. I will help them if I can.
They will meet you in the picaninny light.

Save them from the jealous women's spite;
Clever Conduk has devised a Cosmic plan.
They shall meet you in the picaninny light;
I will weave a rope of silver, span by span.

Clever Conduk has devised a Cosmic plan:
Your songs will greet you in the starry sky.
I will weave a rope of silver, span by span.
Wed to mortal man, the four would die.

Your songs will greet you in the starry sky.
Four songs to Conduk's camp speed like storm-rent wind.
Wed to mortal man the four would die.
Hair and beard, beard and hair, silver I will bind.

Four songs to Conduk's camp sped like storm-rent wind.
Over the creeks, my dear ones, over the arid ground.
Hair and beard, beard and hair, silver I will bind.
The magic rope is finished, coiled in a silver mound.

Over the creeks my dear ones, over the arid ground.
Sing me a Kanda tribal song, before we say goodbye!
The magic rope is finished, coiled in a silver mound.
The rope is strong enough to climb. I tied it to the sky.

Sing me a Kanda tribal song, before we say goodbye!
Rejoice, mourn not, O Kanda, this is no tribal loss.
The rope is strong enough to climb. I tied it to the sky.
Four songs climbed my rope to form the Southern Cross.

Rejoice, mourn not, O Kanda, this is no tribal loss.
Four daughters live forever, under their father's eye.
Four songs climbed my rope to form the Southern Cross.
Mululu to Centaurus changed. The Kanda will not die.

PETER WELLS

NOTE ON THE PANTOUM FORM

The Pantoum is a Malay poetic form never before, to my knowledge, used in English. It is very exacting, yet highly effective. The first two lines introduce one strand of thought; the next two deal with a second strand which both contrasts with, and complements, the first thought. The second line of the first verse becomes the first line of the second verse, and a new line is added to develop the first strand or theme. Similarly, the fourth line of the first verse becomes the third line of the second verse to develop the second strand, and so on throughout the poem. The two strands of thought are, as it were, plaited. Finally, the last line of the poem has to be a repetition of the very first line, thus bringing the complete idea in full circle and tying the strands off neatly. Mrs Ruth Mangan, in choosing an Aboriginal legend of how the Southern Cross came to jewel the Australian sky, has woven an exotic tress which echoes the Kanda chant with its ruminative progression and timelessness, admirably marrying form to subject content.