

RUTH ALGIE

WHERE ELDER'S WORD IS LAW

A legend is, where elder's word is law
In Aboriginal camps beside the river bed,
Of magical Feather Foot and trackless boots he wore
To slay in vengeance for spirits of the dead.

When spinifex was April gold across the plain
And manned machines mined copper underground,
We fled in awful fear before his whispered name.
On Council lawns a warning-bone was found.

No victim eludes the dread Kadaitja-man
Who draws his power direct from primal tribes.
He hunts with ritual rattles crossing borderlands.
A terrible taboo will ensure no witness survives.

As evening alights amongst the ghostly gums
Our haunted huddle hiding weary eyes.
When darkness descends the Feather Foot will come
And tomorrow — tomorrow somebody dies.

ROBERT C. BOYCE

A MANNER OF DROWNING

A
Man believed
To be a poet-of-sorts
Has been found

 This gentle afternoon
 Flowing
 Bright side up
 In the river

The sun
Between
His brittle teeth
Clenched tightly

 Outgoing
 Seaworthy
 And suitably attired
 For the voyage home