

From a collection of hand and typewritten pages of verse
by Elizabeth Durack – loosely assembled into five parts
by padc July 2010.

IV To ———

- 1 Dear God (1953)
- 2 **Prayer to the Road God** (1962)
- 3 To Kim (1954)
- 4 **Mario** (mid 1950s)
- 5 The death of Albert Namatjira (1959)
- 6 To DP (1957)
- 7 To Michael (1945)
- 8 To Kathy and John (1954)
- 9 To Mary pregnant for the sixth time (1954?)
- 10 To a young artist – on the subject of colour
 (c.1954)
- 11 To Robert Juniper and Robin Brennan (1956)
- 12 To Reg (1957)
- 13 To Reg (1998)
- 14 To Donald Stuart (1961)
- 15 To a daughter (c.1952)
- 16 **To the Southern Cross** (1955)

2 Prayer to the Road God –

Oh dreadful Mason –
Oh terrible Builder –
You who use flesh and blood
for mortar
and human bone for binding straw –
Oh awful one of the long arm
and the long blinding eye –
who tumbles your building blocks
of metal and broken glass
into spiralling castles
of siren-hideous, screaming-silent,
night-lightning,
panic –

Oh fearful Mason
who sits cross-legged
at 'cross walks',
supine
at 'level crossings'
who, serpent-scaled, and
'slippery when wet'
entwines the
'winding road'
and hides curved in the
'curves' –

You with the blinding
yellow eye
who, perched on
'crest'
cunningly replaces
'left' for 'right'
and scatters the
'cats eyes'
in a dizzy confusion
of rubble foundation
for an up-building
of a new castle
of
siren-hideous,
white-black,
screaming-silent
night-lighted
terror.

Oh terrible Mason –
build not of the flesh
of my flesh
bind not with the bone
of my bone –
that the teeth of my teeth
may not bight forever
in petrified anguish
upon your lime-encrusted hand

– spare him – spare him –

#

on waiting for Michael to come home –
3.00 a.m. 26.4.1962)
[but I will be asleep when he does]

4 **Mario**

Ruins lie behind your eyes
and against the raw blue of cobalt skies
the grey and twisted olive writhes
in a summer wind that sears
and bends the cypresses like spears
flung by rough marksmen, and
glaring white upon the hill, stand
ghostly columns, and a hand
severed from some whitened statue
lies without fingers in the sand.

And in your eyes twin tapers shine
lit in some forgotten shrine
where the urgent roots entwine
a crumbling image lately dressed
with a doll upon her breast,
and black-draped women in a row
lift gnarled hands and murmur low,
but do not ask them if they know
what they pray for or who to –
that was forgotten long ago.

#

Perth, mid 1950s

16 To the Southern Cross

Set there an arrow
set in a bow
ready to let fly
at the word go.

Set like a jelly
up side down
set like the smile on
the face of a clown.

Set like four jewels
set in a crown
set like a plaster cast
set in a frown.

Set like a keen high
precision tool
sharpened and pointed
set with a rule

Aloft in black sky –
brand new and bright
kite to forever fly
set in its flight.

Set like the felled tree
set to transfix
St Peter reversed
on his crucifix.

So is the Southern Cross
set in the heaven
tonight as I saw it
at half past eleven.

#

Perth, 25.11.1955

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