

Top-End Tour Part 3

Four Sonnets and a Haiku

June-July 2018

Robin Ford



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Cover image Derby WA

Table of Contents

On Yellow River	4
Bush fire	6
To be a pilgrim.....	7
End of the road	10
Too much of a good thing?	12

On Yellow River

Our guide on Yellow River introduced himself as "An Aboriginal man" and then stated the people and areas he was from.



view from a lookout in Kakadu

On Yellow River

I took it, he intended to confront
The stereotypes encountered every day.
To some extent his actions were a stunt
A long continuous energetic spray.
His tirade covered Catholics who had
More children than the two that he preferred;
And guns were good, and regulations bad,
And he'd eat any animal or bird.
But then he gave the kids a chance to steer,
And said "Your parents will not live for ever
So make the most you can of when they're here."
He's smart and quick and thoughtful, and he's clever.
And by the time he dropped us at the landing,
I had a somewhat smaller understanding.

Bush fire

We saw fire in the bush one evening on our way back. At first we thought it was controlled burning, but as we drove nearer we weren't so sure.

Driving through darkness

Fires burning in Winter dry

Floods in Summer wet



To be a pilgrim

This image is of the guard-rail around the so called "prison tree" near Derby WA.



Barrier around the 'Prison Tree'

To be a pilgrim

Their law, that ever was, I scarcely know
(that law was once invisible to me).
It named this country in the long ago,
With stories telling how it came to be.
I'm on a pilgrimage, where I will learn,
The things my kind inscribed upon this land.
Each plant and tree examined in its turn,
And hist'ries told so I may understand.
One land, two cultures, bound by diff'rent tales.
Some dark, and some uplifting — others hidden,
Too often it's the darkness that prevails.
What did occur? Some memories forbidden.
Injustice past and present — present sorrow;
At Uluru well met: hope for tomorrow.



End of the road

We drove up to the lookout; spread below,
Were tidal flats; new signs spun us a tale
Of how the town developed years ago.
I wondered if the port was doomed to fail.
It seemed that Wyndham had run out of scope;
It never topped its moment of success
When gold was found and people came in hope
And ever since it's struggled to impress.
We drove back down and stopped so we could send
Some mail; I grabbed my chance to take a spell
And, for a moment, tried to comprehend
The point of carving boab nuts to sell.
So intricate, so simple, and so real
So beautiful that twenty-dollar deal.



11

Boab nut on the 'Prison Tree'

Too much of a good thing?

The bus tour through the Kimberley was grand
And Darwin also Kakadu and Broome.
I gained appreciation for the land.
And wondered; “Are we in a tourist boom?”
Now, can you have too many tourist buses?
They travel; yet the people passing by
Are fellow tourists: here is where the fuss is —
The goose might suffocate and it might die.
So can the locals monetise their lives
While keeping under wraps (and thus protecting)
The essence of themselves, so it survives,
While tourists still have options for connecting?
Some local people can allay these fears,
With knowledge gained from sixty thousand years.



Cable Beach, sunset