# **Classic Poetry Series**

# John Streeter Manifold

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### John Streeter Manifold (21 April 1915 - 19 April 1985)

John Streeter Manifold was an Australian poet and critic, known also for his interest in Australian folksongs. He was born in Melbourne, into a well known Camperdown family. He was educated at Geelong Grammar School, and read modern languages at Jesus College, Cambridge. While in Cambridge he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain. He was involved in an attempt to create a successor (Poetry and the People) to Left Review, when the latter folded in 1938.

He then worked in Germany, in publishing. During World War II he served in intelligence in the British Army, in the Middle East, Africa and France. He was a published war poet; Trident, with Hubert Nicholson and David Martin, was published by Randall Swingler's Fore Publications in 1944.

In 1949 he returned to Australia, settling in Brisbane. He was a founder in 1950 of the Realist Writers Group. He then worked and published mostly on Australian songs and music, reciting ballads at arts festivals. He died in Brisbane.

#### Works:

Verses 1930-1933 (1933),
The Death of Ned Kelly and Other Ballads (1941),
Selected Verse (1946),
Who Wrote the Ballads?: Notes on Australian Folksong (1954),
The Violin, the Banjo and the Bones: An Essay on the Instruments of Bush
Music (1957)
Queensland Centenary Pocket Songbook (1959) editor
Nightmares and Sunhorses (1961) poems
Penguin Australian Song Book (1964). editor
Op 8 (1971) poems
Collected Verse (1971)
On My Selection (1983) poems

#### **Guess Who?**

From billabong or pond he serenades the moon upon his small bassoon; the moon does not respond but in the hope she might he keeps it up all night.

The meatworker in magpie suit goes home and practices his flute ten times on end he will begin the Bridal March from Lohengrin, or make the Kookaburra smile by his attempts at Fairest Isle.

He needs both industry and skill the satisfy his hunger did he run up that monstrous bill of his at the fishmonger?

In arrogance and outward show but not in brains he's strong; olive above and white below with either eye a crimson glow he's waiting here, for figs to grow upon a currajong in intellect no less than colour the female bird is even duller.

- 1. Bull Frog
- 2. Butcher-Bird
- 3. Pelican
- 4. Fig Bird

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