

Classic Poetry Series

**Roland Robinson**  
**- poems -**

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## Roland Robinson(1912 - 1992)

Roland Robinson, was born in Country Clare, Ireland in 1912. At the age of 9, in 1921 was brought to Australia. After only a brief education he worked in various jobs, mainly in the bush as a roustabout, boundary-rider, railway fettler, fencer, dam-builder, gardener and as a life long love - a ballet dancer.

Robinson's first published poetry appeared in *Beyond the Grass-Tree Spears* published in 1944. He served in the Australian Army. His love of the Australian landscape and everyday scenes were inspiration for his poetry. He was one of the most dedicated poets to the Jindyworobak Movement.

As a writer and poet Roland Robinson was dance critic for *The Sydney Morning Herald* in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1940s he took classes with Helene Kirsova and appeared in a number of productions by the Kirsova Ballett.

Roland died in Sydney in 1992

# Bees

From the hollow trees in their native home  
them old fellows cut the honeycomb.  
On honey and little white grubs they fed,  
'cause them young bees was blackfeller's bread.  
That's why they was so mighty and strong  
in their native home in Currarong.  
An' them old fellers' drink was honey-bul;  
honey and water, a coolamon full.  
Naked through the bush they went,  
an' never knew what sickness meant,  
them native bees could do you no harm,  
they'd crawl all over your honey-smear'd arm.  
But them Eytalian bees, they'd bung  
your eyes right up. When we was young  
we used to rob their honey-trees,  
Savage! they'd fetch your blood, Them bees  
would zoom an' zing an' chase a feller  
from Bombaderry to Bodalla  
Well Old Uncle Ninah, and Billy Bulloo  
Old Jacky Mumbulla, King Merriman too,  
them fierce old fellers, they're all gone now.  
An' the wild honey's still in the gumtree bough.

Roland Robinson

# The Drovers

Over the plains of the whitening grass  
and the stunted mulga the drovers pass,  
and in the red dust cloud, each side  
of the cattle, the native stockmen ride.

And day after day lays bare the same  
endless plains as the way they came,  
and ever the cloven ranges lie  
at the end of the land and the opal sky.

With creak of pack and saddle leather,  
and chink of chain and bit together,  
with moan of the herd with hobble and bell  
they come to the tanks at the tea-tree well.

And through corroding blood-red hills  
by sanded rivers the Gulf-rain fills,  
far, where the morning star has shone  
and paled above, their tracks are gone.

Roland Robinson

# The Ruined Homestead

White birds, frightened from silver grass,  
whose blood-rose breasts and wings are thrown  
like petals settling down the pass,  
flower the ruined homestead's stone.

Rise from the fallen walls and scream,  
crested, from the stark dead gum;  
shatter the crystal of the morning's dream  
where I, across your landscape, come.

Roofless, the broken stonework frames  
red arid hills, a valley where  
the ghost-gums writhe like whitened flames  
and desert-oaks droop their dark hair.

And when, in the crucible of the hills  
the molten day has died, there stands  
under the blaze of stars that fills  
its night, a house not made with hands.

Roland Robinson

# The Sermon Of The Birds

I was clearing thirty or forty acres once  
Out in the western range near Nightcap Mountain.  
And as I was working, I heard a gathering of the crows  
Singing out in a jungle gully. Their clamorous cries  
Drew the attention of all the other birds.  
Jackass and butcher-bird, soldier-bird, sparrow-bird,  
Scrub-robin, magpie, and the black and white cockatoo,  
They all flew down to the crows in the jungle-gully.

And I followed after their clamour, and in the midst  
Of all the splendid excitement of the birds  
I heard one feller was singing above them all.  
It was the lyre-bird, the mimic of all the scrub,  
And they held this beautiful sermon or half an hour.  
The birds would stop and listen a while but still  
That beautiful voice, the lyre-bird, would keep on singing  
And draw then and join them all to a chorus again.

And as I stood there and listened, the Scriptures was  
Hitting me all the time. The sermon seemed  
Like the prophecy when Christ shall come and summon  
The birds, the valleys, the hills, the mountains and the ocean  
To sing in praise of the grace and the reckoning day,  
And the beauty of earth in the splendour that He created.  
And I went back and told my people of what I had seen,  
And the sermon of praise I heard in the mountain range.

Roland Robinson