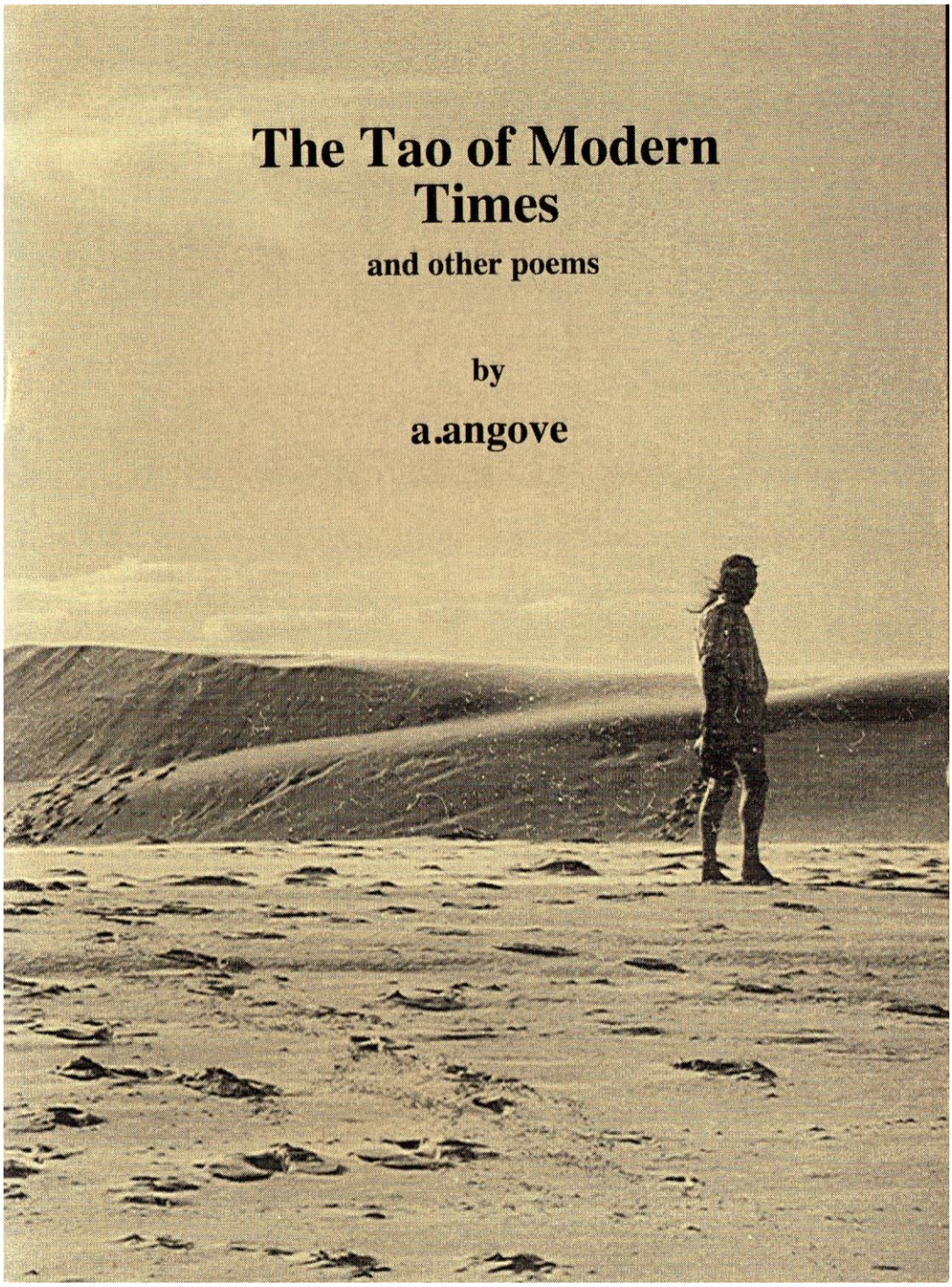
The Tao of Modern Times

and other poems

by

a.angove



The Tao of Modern Times

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by the author:
Bungeleen and other bush songs
love songs, the tao and mt. nugong
Bun Jirrah Gingee Munjie
Mt. Nugong No.22
Kurnai Poems (Gunnai wark)

for Erich Muehsam 1871-1934

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Acknowledgements
Some of these poems have been previously published in the Bairnsdale Advertiser, the Anarchist Age Monthly and Inhabit. The poems follow a completely different theme from previous work with the exception of the Kurnai poems. The 'tao' poems are deliberately simple naive, didactic and somewhat 'tongue in cheek'. Thanks to Janice Morphett and Emma Gardner for reading, comments and criticism.

A.A.
September 1995

"And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid:..."

Micah (Chapt4: 3-4)

other poems

Kurnai Poems (Gunnai Wark)
(translated by the Author)

60.
north of Ensay
the place where the wind blows
is called Blowhard.

daar ba numblamunjie
mungie mungan cowwar beeba beeba
tharbla beebamoothick

61.
on Blowhard
in the night
the plovers call.

ma beebamoothick
bil buth butgaluk
wango birran birran karndan

62.
from Blowhard
to the north
lies Mt. Nugong;
below is the valley
of the place of the blackfish.

mungan beebamoothick
jellan wango daar
dyettyanan bulganugogong;
thanga wango boora boorya
ba wango numblamunjie

63.
the sea eagle laughs
all day

wango gwonamaroo krambana
bal woorin

On Blowhard - for the lowly wattle (Acacia decurrens)

1.
I have nurtured the wattles;
now seed pods & other dried matter
block the spouting of my home.

2.
The wattle rewards patient effort;
their dried branches warm
my winter evenings
- a timber ignored & despised
by the locals

3.
one definition has it
that you are only local
if your grandparents
are buried here.

4.
hence it follows
that the only true locals
are black.

5.
likewise,
because of our forefathers
there are now
no true locals.

6.
Blowhard is
an aptly named locality;
against the winds
I once set
a puny wind generator
to provide my power.

7.
only time will heal
the wounds of men;
after a score of years
the trees I have planted
break the monotony
of bare & barren ground.

8.
the wattle tree (called rubbish
by the locals) is precious;
when all else fails
may your bipinnate foliage
heal the earth.

9.
Acacia decurrens
(or is it mearnsii ?)
your blooms are more brilliant
then all the yellow dross
recovered from Cassilis
or the Haunted Stream.

Maxims - quaint and otherwise

1.
when two people get together
you have a complex relationship;
when small groups form
you have the foundations of sub-committees;
when there are paid officers & bureaucrats
you have the beginnings of empire.

2.
with another person
you have a partner;
with a few more
you have friends;
with workers by your side
you have comrades;
with a boss pulling strings
you acquire an arsehole -
a cancer on the body politic.

The diggers

gold, gold GOLD
demented commentators cry
in their blinkered jingoism

at the same time, ironically,
the acacias down the valley
are in full boom

I am like the demented commentator.
Impoverished by circumstance
I return to my futile scramble
in the auriferous gullies
from Dogtown to Dawson City.

Numblamunjie 12 - Summer 1994

Summer peaks
with a thousand fears
gnawing at the heart
of the status quo;
with a thousand changes
more threatening than bushfires
born & carried by north winds;
any body with ambition
and no roots in the community
no hand in the soil
is the hidden enemy of the people.

Numblamunjie 13 - Summer 1994

The hot air on iron roofs
shimmers and dances;
the sun, high overhead
bakes hard the ground;
you choose ambition
- without its clothes -
(it is a summers day)
and forgo the fight
(or a few kind words)
in favour of a friend.

the tao of modern times

(with apologies to Lao Tsu, Thoreau, Kropotkin and etc.)

1.
though the tao knows -
it can never sanction murder
of, for, or by the people

2.
a politician who can read the times
will be safely ensconced
in south america or switzerland.

3.
when people avoid their taxes
politicians should take heed

4.
when the people protest in the streets
governments will be in disarray.

5.
when people refuse to pay taxes
and turn on the collectors
governments will retreat or fall.

6.
governments that tyrannise their people
will eventually collapse;
its members too, in turn, will be subject
to a reign of terror; so it has been
many times in history.

7.
during the good times
politicians and bureaucrats
build empires.

during the hard times
the people are bled
to pay for those empires.

8.
during the good times
politicians and bureaucrats
build empires.

during the hard times
the services to the people are squeezed
so that the empires remain intact.

9.
during the good times
empires are built
and employ many people.

during the hard times
the workers are put off
leaving an administration
that rationalises its existence
with consultants
and other sundry experts.

10.
if you are waiting for
an election to correct our/your ills
you will wait a long time.

11.
it is an axiom of government
that an empire so created
thus remains.

so it follows:-

that the minister for mines
shall be an important politician
though all the mines are worked out.

that the minister for immigration
shall rule the cabal
though the people desert
the country in droves

that the minister for agriculture
be in the inner cabinet
though salinity destroys pastures
and the north winds carry
top soils out to sea.

12.
a good government
is little seen or heard.

a poor government
flaunts its achievements
before the people.

but the people
are not deceived.

13.
a good government
is of, for and by the people.

a poor government
is at the beck and call
of all the factions & lobbies
of the moneyed and powerful.

14.
a good government
taxes little and spends less.

a poor government
is always searching
for new ways to bleed the people;
in the winter they send
politicians and department heads
on fact-finding missions
to warmer climes.

15.
adhere to the adage
'leave well alone';
the grand schemes
of pollies and planners
will end in a stuff-up;
thus only change
that which no longer works
and eschew politics.

16.
if you put your faith in a
politician you are misguided
and can only be betrayed.

17.
beware of economists
and other false prophets
offering
fistfulls of dollars
pie in the sky
merely the bait of
mercenary missionaries.

18.
do not be so proud
that you cannot use the cast-offs of others
that you cannot use the cast-offs
of the dead.

19.
the essence of reality
is the earth below your feet,
a shout in anger,
a song of joy
and the shit on your hands.

20.
when a politician talks
of democracy and fairness
and promises great gifts
he wants you to put him in power.
when in power he talks
of responsibility and sacrifice -
thus are all politicians
enemies of the people.

21.
a good politician is soon forgotten;
a bad one is sometimes remembered
for his lies.

22.
once someone is elected to power
he/she:-
forgets the ordinary people,
socialises with the famous & wealthy
occupies the headlines,
adorns the moving screens.
so are politicians known & reviled
throughout the land.

23.
now we/you have elected
another government
obsessed with creating jobs
by putting people out of work.

24.
biological differences
and outside appearances
makes no difference
to politics or politicians;
they are all tarnished
by their parasitic trade.

25
who has that sickness,
that insecurity,
that craving for the headlines?
only politicians and mass murderers.

26.
mass murderers are
a cancer on society
feared and reviled
by the people

27.
some say we are too hard
on the poor politicians,
others that the disrespect
of the people is well earned.

28.
sometimes we are beguiled by
the party of the people against
the party of privilege.

but all political parties
play the jockeying game
for positions of power
over you and I.

29.
to nurture a tree
is to be persistent.
to protect a tree
is to show courage.
to plant a tree
is an act divine.

30.
a politician seeks success
whilst a mass murderer
seeks notoriety.
both in a sense
must be discovered.

31.
such success can be
measured only in
positions of power
and publicity.

32.
thus it follows
that the owners
and directors
of the media
hold real power.

33.
but even the power
of the media is illusory -
like the plot of a pulp novel
headlines are forgotten
by tomorrow.

34.
those who pursue power
are deluded; such ambition's
in opposition to equanimity

35.
power is an illusory vanity -
like Canute trying to stop the tides
or an arrogant male
pissing into the wind.

36.
since the media, mass murderers
and politicians are dependant
on each other it follows
that when you ignore them
the solution is at hand

37.
the media, mass murderers
and politicians are dependant
on each other - a symbiosis
of shame

38.
the mass murderer shoots
down the innocent
in the streets;
the politician directs or prepares
others to do so -
and calls it defence;
journalists flourish on violent
banner headlines and footage -
translatable into dollars
for the media moguls.

39.
pity the poor journalist!
have you forgotten Vietnam?

40.
our school existed
for over one hundred years -
a quaint anachronism
in the land of
supermarkets and forcefeed.

now it is closed -
one side of politics kept it open
because they did not know
what they were doing,
the other side closed it
because they thought they did.

41.
pictures of refugees fleeing
war-torn homelands,
dying of cholera,
starving in the streets -
that is known as
good television.

42.
an axiom of television is -
one body is better
than one hundred brawls;
one brawl is better
than one hundred nature shows;
one grieving, distraught mourner
is better than the still
of one hundred bodies.

43.
is there not a better way
to promote and prolong life
than by spreading
terror and fear
amongst our children?

44.
a playing field
that is level
from one perspective
may not be from another.

45.
accountants as a rule
are cautious souls
always giving advice
about other people's money.

46.
bankers, like teachers,
are settled in their ways,
unwilling to take risks,
losing their money only
in sound investments.

47.
one bureaucrat takes
your money by force;
he is derisively known
throughout the land
as the taxman.

another bureaucrat
dispenses these expropriations
with largesse on
grand tours
grand salaries
grand pensions
grand prix
for politicians and
other important people.

48.
a government of sensitivity
will tax the rich
and give to the poor;
such collective wisdom is rare
through space and time.

49.
a government with
foresight will foster
learning and freedom;
whilst other tyrannies
in their numerous insecurities
prepare for war.

50.
those who defile
the rights of others
forfeit their own.

51.
to qualify for the dole
in a democratic society
is your/our right.

but to obtain it requires
a grovelling persistence.

to continuously receive it
implies dependance and humiliation.

thus does the polity
oppress the poor.

52.
there is no god
but that in your heart;
there is no historical inevitability.
Only your courage
the earth and good works.

53.
the random killing
by the mass murderer
strikes terror in our hearts;
all killing is obscene.

54.
there is a prophet,
someone of courage and wisdom,
for every age and for all times

55.
one prophet of our times
was (the singer) Lennon who wrote
the simple truth:
"the war is over if you want it".

56.
a mass murderer
poses the ultimate paradox
- kill or be killed,
defend or die -
only the state and its servants
are less blatant
in their crimes

57.
what then is the way
of the modern tao?

as of old
the paths are manifold.

the modern tao is merely a mirror
of the masters of old.
for every question
there are a thousand answers,
around each obstacle
there are a thousand ways.

58.
choose the path of many ways -
avoid dead ends
and one way streets.
but also remember
that life is one of the latter.

59.
it is a fallacy
that any parliament
represents the people.
usually pollies speak for their party
or some other privileged few.

60.
cherish the earth
and trust that the earth
will be kind to you.

61.
what is said here
has been said before
a thousand times
a thousand different ways
in history.

62.
work not for your self
nor even the approval of peers;
work for the earth.

63.
move through life lightly
with minimum disturbance;
that is known
as being close to god.

64.
move through life lightly;
if you must scratch the earth
do so only with love
and good works.

65.
disregard all gods, demi-gods,
saints, directors, generals,
politicians, economists
and other preachers:
have trust in yourself
and in commonsense.

66.
move through life without fuss;
but shout loudly long and hard
against inequity and war.

67.
it is an amusing tradition
to name your dogs
after politicians;
but this is hardly
fair on the dog.

68.
our modern system
of cabinet dictatorship
will withstand many crisis -
war, depression, revolution.
what it will not withstand
is the contempt and ridicule
of the people in the street.

69.
the money trader
moving billions of dollars
around the world
in an instant
is today's (modern) pirate.

70.
what good is it if
you have slept with
a thousand willing partners
and loved none?

71.
now and again
in the so-called democracies
we are given the grudging satisfaction
of removing some of those
from the spoils of power.

72.
the tao is like
painting a picture
with few words - or none.

73.
who told the lie
about faded charms?
both familiarity and freedom
are the foundations of love.

74.
do all your possessions
make you any wealthier?
you are mistaken.
you have been deceived.

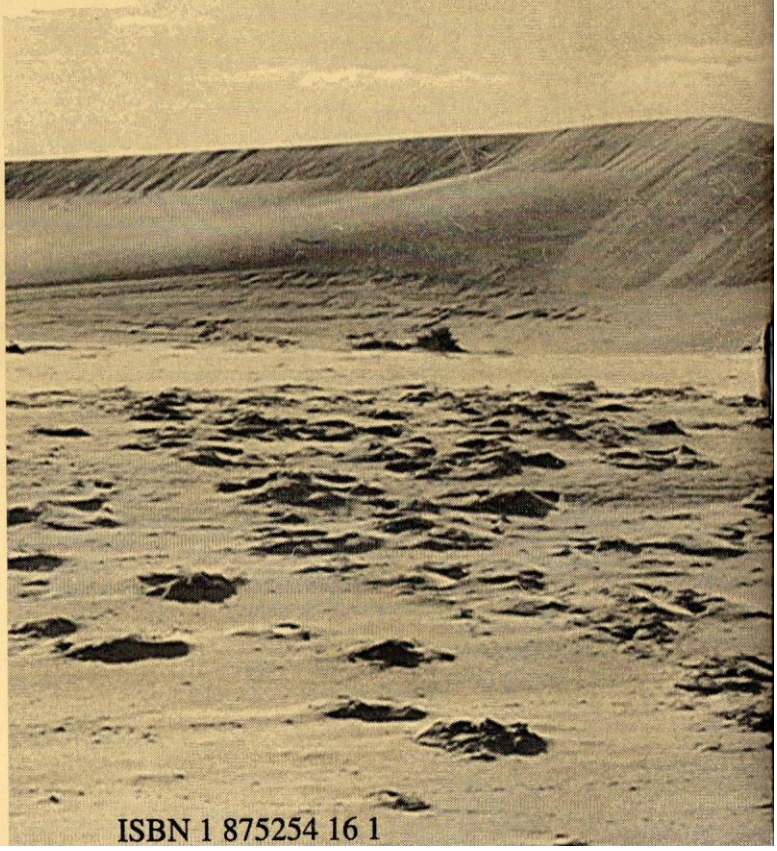
75.
when is the golden age?
not in some neo-fascist yesterday
but here and now.

76.
what are popes and politicians for?
to provide us all
with a laugh a day.

77.
another prophet
of our times was (the comedian) Marx,
who made us laugh at ourselves.

78.
having discarded
and denounced all
leaders, authorities, experts
and works of didacticism
you must therefore
also disregard this;
herein lies the ultimate paradox.

A. Angove has lived in east Gippsland for more than twenty years and has been writing for most of that time. She has published five small volumes of verse, *Bungeleen and other bush songs* (1989), *love songs the tao and mt. nugong* (1990), *Bun Jirrah Gingee Munjie* (1991), *Mt. Nugong No.22* (1993) *and Kurnai Poems* (1994). The former received favourable reviews in *The Small Times* and *Bun Jirrah Gingee Munjie* has a foreword by well-known poet and author of *The Ash Range*, Lauric Duggan. Angove has had work published in many small and off-beat poetry magazines and performed on community radio. She has developed a distinctive, simple, yet compelling, style showing some influence of the 'Jindyworobaks'. Two of the poems have been anthologized in *PIE* (WAC. Melb..1974) and *Shadow and Shine* (P.Morgan, CGS,Traralgon, 1988). A.Angove is a pseudonym.



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