

# *The Colours Of The Cross*

Words: Pat Drummond.

Dateline: Split Rock, Warrumbungles National Park

I've been sleeping like a gypsy, I've been living on the land.

High up in the Warrumbungles, west of Coonabarabran.

Stretching out my bed at twilight, waking somewhere after three,

I've been blinded by a vision few of my time ever see.

For the moon has finally set behind a stand of cypress tree

and one or two grey kangaroo are grazing close to me.

Was I woken by their tugging at the strands of summer grass?

Or the night owl as it cried out weaving circles down the pass?

Perhaps it was the chorus of the crickets in the creek

or the bats that cross this clearing with their high metallic shriek.

Something reached to me and roused me, bid me wake and be aware

of the living land around me; of the night breeze in my hair.

For my eyes lifted like windows in the breached walls of my sleep

And the stars! Oh God, such majesty would make the angels weep!

Where the black breasts of the mountains rising proudly, stark and steep

Form a frame around an ancient vault a billion light years deep

From East to West, a vapour trail of luminosity

Where the stars swim by like minnows in a vast eternal sea.

And every now and then across the universal face

A shooting star carves out it's path and leaves a fiery trace

**Above it all, in centre stage, the symbol of my land  
But not the Southern Cross of Flag. No, something far more grand.  
Here Gamma is a gold star and Alpha, sapphire white.  
Beta is the palest blue and Delta to the right  
is also blue, but fainter too, and Epsilon of ochre hue.  
A fiery coloured constellation blazing through the night.  
Gamma for the beaches and the golden wattle fountains;  
Alpha for the mantle of the snowy southern mountains;  
Beta for the unrelenting blue of western sky  
Over cotton crops and wheat farms when the land has left them dry;  
Delta for the rivers and the lakes when dyed sky blue  
And Epsilon for deserts and the red of Uluru.**

**For those of us who seek for more, but lost the shining proof  
from the first time that we slept in boxes locked under a roof**

**Rise up now past the pale star of your incandescent light!**

**Rise up above the pelmets and the cornices of white!**

**Beyond the darkened roofspace; above the gable height**

**beyond the boastful arrogance that stains the city night!**

**And be lost...within the darkness and the wonder of this place**

**That is lost upon this planet; that is lost in deepest space.**

**With one Pointer for the future and one Pointer for the past.**

**Carve out your life between them as a shooting Star at last!**

*\*Author's note; Three of the five stars in what is commonly called 'The Southern Cross' are hydrogen burning stars so their colour would be blue under magnification, while two of the stars burn oxygen and are therefore yellow. The colours described above are attributable, I am led to believe, to variant luminosity. This effects the way the stars are perceived by the naked eye which is, after all, how they are most often seen and, indeed, were exclusively seen for most of human history. The brighter blue stars appear increasingly white to the unaided eye while the dimmer gold stars appear to exhibit a more red-gold hue.*