

# Not Lost

*If not we ourselves, the day will come  
when our children will undo what we have foolishly done.*

- Edward St James

*We shared their delight.  
Their festival mood became our mood;  
we all revelled in a common abundance  
& in each other's wellbeing.*

- Aldo Leopold

I.

Some dark secrets run so deep that they slip from view.  
The hole left in our conscience  
is gradually plugged,  
with shallow distractions  
and awkward half-truths.  
Questions, if uttered, pass unheard.  
An uneasy and enduring silence prevails.

So it has been since the end of our war  
When we were imprisoned at the Settlement.

II.

I have been here from the first time of the Settlement

I have been here since the beginning of the Settlement

You brought me to the Island and I have been here ever since

When I was in my Country  
I seen many of them in the bush  
For there was Natives at their Country

& now my dear friends

What was it that kept you out so long a time

My friends can't you tell me what it was kept you out so long?

Why I think they were looking out for the sick

My brothers  
in our own Country a long time ago  
we were a great many men  
A great number  
But the white man killed us all  
They shot a great many  
We are now only a few people here  
& we ought to be fond of one another

The native People of Van Diemen's Land is gone out hunting  
& some of our men has got some books out with them  
And they are singing and reading  
out in the bush

We never were taught to read or write  
or to sing to God

Now my friends I should like to tell about something  
what yourselves to not like to hear it mention to you  
This is you have got to die some time or another  
Yes you must all die  
We have not got to stop in this world  
where there is having no peace  
& where there is always sickness  
Would you like to stop here  
this wicked sinful world  
where there is always fighting and Growling?

Me like to tell true  
& me tell you true

The way in which we are treated  
it is shameful for any Person of any feeling to hear

You put arms into our hands  
& made us to go to fight the Soldiers  
we did not want to fight the Soldiers  
but you made us go to fight

You do as you like with my things  
& take away my Garden  
and make me a prisoner

You used to carry Pistols in your pockets  
& threaten'd very often to shoot us  
& make us run away in a fright

Our houses were let fall down  
& they were never cleaned  
but were covered with vermin

You did not care to mind us when we were sick  
until we were very bad

You put many of us into Jail for talking  
because we would not be slaves

You shot our dogs before our eyes

We are free Aborigines  
We are free Children, not taken Prisoners  
We freely gave up our Country  
after defending ourselves  
You made for us an agreement  
which we have not lost from our minds since  
& we have made our part of it good

III.

Fix your mind on that other pole  
& the four stars our Old Ones knew  
to guide you through the darkest forest  
& past the coming Inferno  
There is a path not wholly lost  
Often spoken  
Seldom walked

Other voices  
Inhabit this garden  
Their echoes move without pause  
Over ashes freshly burned  
But rich with bursting life  
A bird calls  
A dry pool,  
filled with light  
beckons.

*This vanishing world is beautiful beyond our dreams  
It contains in itself rewards and gratification  
never found in the artificial landscape  
or man-made objects so often regarded  
as exciting evidence of a new world in the making.*

*The natural world contains an unbelievable diversity  
and offers variety of choice  
provided of course that we retain some of this world  
& that we live in the manner that permits us  
to go out  
seek it  
find it  
and make those choices  
- Olegas Truchanas*

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Endnote: The voices in this assemblage, other than exact quotes from those named, are based on (I.) the author's original text, (II.) the writings of Tasmanian Aboriginal people (including Pallooruc, Drinene, Nomome, Walter George Arthur, Thomas and David Brune, Wooreddy, Maccamee), held in permanent detention at the Wybalenna Settlement on Flinders Island between 1833 and 1847; (III.) remix of Dante, T.S. Eliot and the author's original text. Wybalenna text is drawn from Leonie Stevens; *Me Write Myself: the free Aboriginal inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land at Wybalenna*, Clayton, Monash University Publishing, 2017. Quotes from St James, Leopold and Trukanas are drawn from John Griffin; *On the origin of Beauty: ecophilosophy in the light of traditional wisdom*, Bloomington, World Wisdom, 2011; and Max Angus, *The World of Olegas Truchanas*, Hobart, Olegas Truchanas Publication Committee, 1975.