



GIRAMONDO PUBLISHING

# GREEN SHADOWS AND OTHER POEMS

## Author Note

I wrote only poetry until I was in my mid-twenties. I had three poems published in obscure places, but the dozen and more that I sent to mainstream publications were all rejected.

For as long as I considered myself a poet, I struggled. I believed I was obliged to develop, even as a beginner or a novice, a particular mode or style that would serve as a conduit and would make comparatively simple the task of turning a throng of mental images and vague feelings into an intricate and compelling pattern of words.

I sometimes wrote strictly metrical poems with formal rhyme schemes. At other times, I wrote what I knew as free verse, using as my model some of the works of DH Lawrence. I was never confident enough or skilled enough to let my subject matter itself suggest the peculiar form best suited to it.

I recall no sudden decision to abandon poetry in favour of prose-fiction. For several years after I had begun writing what I hoped would become a long novel having the title *With Perished People*, I still wrote poetry from time to time, but I seem to have felt more competent explaining myself in sentences than in poetic forms, and from about the age of thirty I wrote hardly anything but prose.

If pressed, I might suggest that a lack of confidence silenced me as a poet. After *Tamarisk Row* had been accepted for publication, I felt myself writing my prose with a measure of authority that I had never felt as a poet. Whatever the deep reasons may have been, I felt full of confidence while I wrote most of the poems in *Green Shadows*. Part of my confidence may have come from my having finished all the fiction that I had been driven to write.

I felt contented and relieved and with no more to say on the morning of Cox Plate Day in October 2014, but after I had read, in the *Weekend Australian*, a review of the collected poems of Lesbia Harford, I sat at the kitchen bench and spent no more than ten minutes composing the first poem in *Green Shadows*. Many of the other poems in the volume came to me almost as readily. The hardest to compose took no more than a day or two. Some were composed when I had no pen or paper at hand. I well recall composing and holding in mind the whole of 'Political Philosophy' during an hour's drive along lonely roads in the far west of Victoria on a summer morning in early 2015.

Even after more than sixty years spent writing, I still find the process itself mysterious and awesome, and nothing has so mystified and awed me as the sudden coming into being of these fully-formed poems in the very last years of my career. I used the word *sudden* just now, but perhaps the development of the poems was anything but sudden and needed the best part of a lifetime.

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