

The Publican at Eromanga

The Publican at Eromanga is a large and lonesome bloke who stands behind his counter surrounded by the elegance of green and purple-painted rough stucco walls.

He leans the great flaccid bags that pull his eyes red-rimmed on grimy knuckles, and stares beyond his unscreened door at goats.

Black, brown, white, speckled, ambling, meandering, collecting, dispersing, nibbling, nursing goats.

in the dust of Eromanga's only track.
He'll slide his hulk across the bar,
lumbering outside to crank out
liters of petrol, six at a time,

return and push cold stubbies,
giving the Queensland salute of hands
waved against the flies
continually.

He'll tell of chloroform trees
with plenty of shade and no ants
where even a man's horse can sleep,
and of shooting forty kangaroos an hour
in the good old days.

the last Christmas party by Eromanga's water tank,
the farm he hopes someday to carve
out of northern Queensland's jungles.
And the last time he was in Sydney.