

Tumba-bloody-rumba

A Bush Poem

I was in the Riverina, knockin' round the towns a bit,
Calling in at place to place to get a schooner in me mitt,
And on one of those occasions, when the bar was pretty full
And the local blokes were arguin' assorted kinds of bull,
I heard a conversation, that's stuck with me till today.
For it's only in Australia you'd hear a joker say:

*"Howya bloody been, ya drongo, haven't seen ya for a week,
And yer mate was lookin' for ya when ya came in from the creek.
'E was lookin' up at Ryan's, and around at bloody Joe's,
And even at the Royal, where 'e bloody never goes."*

And the other bloke says: *"Seen 'im! Owed 'im half a bloody quid!
Forgot to give it back to him, but now I bloody did!
Could've used the thing me bloody self! Been off the bloody booze,
Up at Tumba-bloody-rumba shootin' kanga-bloody-roos."*

Now the bar was pretty quiet, and everybody heard
His peculiar integration of that adjectival word,
But no-one there was laughing, and me - I wasn't game,
So I just sat back and let 'em think I spoke the bloody same.

Then someone else was interested to know just what he'd got,
How many kanga-bloody-roos he'd gone and bloody shot,
And the shootin' bloke says: *"Things are crook - the drought's too bloody tough!
I got forty-two by seven, and that's good e-bloody-nough."*

This polite rejoinder seemed to satisfy the mob,
And everyone stopped listening and got back on the job,
Which was drinkin' beer, and arguin', and talkin' of the heat,
Of boggin' in the bitumen in the middle of the street,

But as for me, well the most interesting piece of news,
Was Tumba-bloody-rumba shootin' kanga-bloody-roos.

By the way:

Did you know that this old poem spawned a scientific germ?
The word: "tumbarumba" is now a technical linguistics term.
It means a word inside another. Isn't that meticulous.
For example, you could say: *"don't be re-bloody-diculous"*.

"And who bloody wrote it?" did I hear somebody say?
The bloke who wrote *"They're a Weird Mob"*, a best seller in its day.
Nino Culotta was his nom de bloody plume.
John O'-bloody-Grady was the name at birth he did assume.

Oh! and one more thing:

Bush poets and playwrights find that "*bloody*"'s bloody handy.
It keeps the metre neater when they've something metrical to bandy.
Now if Shakespeare'd been Australian, he'd have used this de-bloody-vice.
"*To be or bloody not to be*" 'd make Hamlet more pre-bloody-cise.

I like the mixture of pleasure and bemusement the narrator conveys as he recounts a conversation heard some time ago and the manner in which he wavers between his "educated observer" register and the vernacular he spoke as a kid.

Source:

I came across this poem on the internet by chance, while seeking information about the song "*Tumba-bloody-rumba*", with lyrics by John Wolfe.

It was written by John O'Grady (1907-1981), who is also known as Nino Culotta, the author of *They're a Weird Mob*. <http://www.bushpoetry.com.au/> and <http://www.abc.net.au/overnights/> and other sites. It is also attributed to Will Carter, <http://www.bushpoetry.com.au/>. On some sites, the poem is erroneously attributed to John O'Brien, nom de plume of P.J. Hartigan (1878 to 1952), who on the same sites is wrongly identified as Nino Culotta.

I've changed some of the narrator's lines to how I would've said things and added the postscripts.

A tumbarumba or a tmesis is a technical linguistics term that refers to a word into which another has been placed. This usage may come from O'Grady's poem, which includes the tmeses: "*my-bloody-self*", "*Tumba-bloody-rumba*", "*kanga-bloody-roos*" and "*e-bloody-nough*". [Wikipedia]