

'A WORLD OF ITS OWN'



Poems by JAMES McAULEY

Paintings by PATRICIA GILES

A World of its Own is a sustained lyric, an enchanted and enchanting song that captures in words and colour the simplicity, the beauty, the aloneness of a little-known, unspoilt world.

Poet and painter viewed this world with independent eyes, neither seeking to interpret for the other. In an unusual collaboration they have captured a subtlety of impression and re-created a wholeness of experience difficult for either to achieve alone. The poems have a rare visual quality about them and the paintings and sketches a lyrical eloquence as though each art was about to spill over into the other.

In the last poem in this book McAuley writes :

all things visible
Become a treasure hoarded in the heart
Till brought forth by the artist's hand,
transformed
Into an image

A World of its Own is a treasure hoarded in the heart and transformed by its artist's hands.

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‘A WORLD OF ITS OWN’

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OUT OF SERIES

'A WORLD OF ITS OWN'

Poems by JAMES McAULEY

Paintings by PATRICIA GILES

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY PRESS

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‘A World of its Own’

I view this book with delight; I see it as one of those rare occasions when poet and painter join in a common vision and a common experience and yet each is completely individual and each vision is specific and personal. Here, as it seems to me, the *ways of seeing* the same place, the nature of those ways of seeing into total personal experience are completely different; and yet the two experiences unite and join in something that neither artist nor poet could individually have achieved.

I should like in this note to add my testimony to theirs since I, too, have shared the experience that led to the making of this book. Tasmania was where I grew up. The east coast, Swansea, Bicheno, Scamander, the Freycinet Peninsula were where we went as a family for holidays. One of my earliest memories is looking across from the Swansea side towards Coles Bay, a small boy crouched among the reeds, told to stay there and not to move while my father and another man went swan shooting farther up the bay. I stayed there a long while watching the wild water driven by a gale as in the first poem of this series. A later poem, Swans on Moulting Lagoon, recalled this incident vividly to me. I heard shots in the distance and after a while a dead black swan with its scarlet beak came drifting down and into the shore. It was the first time I had seen one of these beautiful birds.

Many years later after visiting James McAuley in Hobart, my wife and I went camping

in early spring on the Freycinet Peninsula. There in cold air and deep sun we clambered and walked over

‘Those miles of track behind the beaches’

both on the inland and the ocean side, exploring the great boulders for the marvellous wealth of flowers and plants, many of them peculiar to the area. As it was so early in the season we were totally alone and that same ecstatic aloneness is something that breathes from the poems and the pictures in this book – a sense of intense awareness of every detail, of total immersion and absorption in the life of rock and bird, lizard, spider and tree, and yet a sort of intense detachment of spirit. At night in the camp at Honeymoon Beach we would set up our table and chairs between car and tent. As the dusk began to draw in we would find ourselves surrounded by the wild creatures of the bush. First the bandicoots scurrying round our feet for dropped crumbs and fragments, then two kinds of possum and several sorts of wallaby and kangaroo simply expecting to share our meal with us. They seemed completely confident that we would, and in the enchantment of that ‘World of its Own’ they were of course not disappointed. I recall lying in bed in the tent one night with the flap open while a large ring-tail possum, in conflict with an even larger grey kangaroo over the peel and core of an apple I was eating, won the contest by simply climbing on to my stomach and warning off his rival with the possum’s curious snarl.

This was an area not far from Coles Bay and its creatures which this book celebrates. It is part of the same scene. At the time I did not know that McAuley too had visited it,

though I knew his intense interest and his passionate awareness of every aspect of Tasmania's bush and countryside and the way observation, and his gift of being totally absorbed into what he observed, seemed to flow directly into poems of an absolute simplicity and lucid statement which I have always envied and have never, as a poet, been able to achieve.

I can say less about the pictures that go to compose this book. They are not 'illustrations' in the ordinary sense any more than the poems are written to be a verbal context to the pictures, though here and there one can see that the artist has taken a hint from the poet or that the poet has seen something through the artist's transformation and re-creation of the visual scene. An example is her vivid realisation of the granite boulder on page 18. What makes the book an indivisible and integral whole, a marriage of two visions of the same world in two different mediums, is the one contemplative joy that infuses and inspires them. The poems have a rare visual quality about them and the paintings and sketches a lyrical eloquence as though each art was about to spill over into the other,

So that the old maxim of the sister arts,
Ut Pictura poesis, is true
Thus far, that both are grounded in the real,
Though in their transformations they are free,
and different.

It does not matter that Horace probably did *not* mean that a poem should be like a picture or subject to the same rules of art. In this instance the Renaissance mis-interpretation of the maxim is almost realised and is both true and fruitful.

Something is added too by reproducing the poems in James McAuley's beautiful script instead of in print. To me, who has known it for so many years, it adds a quality to reading the poems which is like hearing the actual tones of his voice. This is bound to be the case for many of his other friends and, now that he is dead, will be another reason for treasuring this book.

A. D. HOPE

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by James McAuley

(reproduced from the hand-written fair copies)

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from the original paintings by

Patricia Giles

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Preface

These poems and paintings and drawings come from a rather special part of Tasmania's east coast, which may be loosely called the Coles Bay area, as shown in the map at the end. It includes the sea and bay sides of the Freycinet Peninsula, which is a national park, and such adjoining places as the swan-haunt Moulting Lagoon and the long stretch of the Friendly Beaches.

Patricia Giles has known this area since childhood. My acquaintance with it has been of recent years, extending over visits when my wife and Patricia painted together and I wandered about.

When the first idea of the book as a joint project came, I intended to write some descriptive prose, which would run along with the visual material, without any requirement that the one should exactly match or illustrate the other. Subsequently I felt that I should and could make my contribution in verse. But the same rule holds, that the verbal and the pictorial elements are not meant to match so much as generally to cohere as a set of impressions.

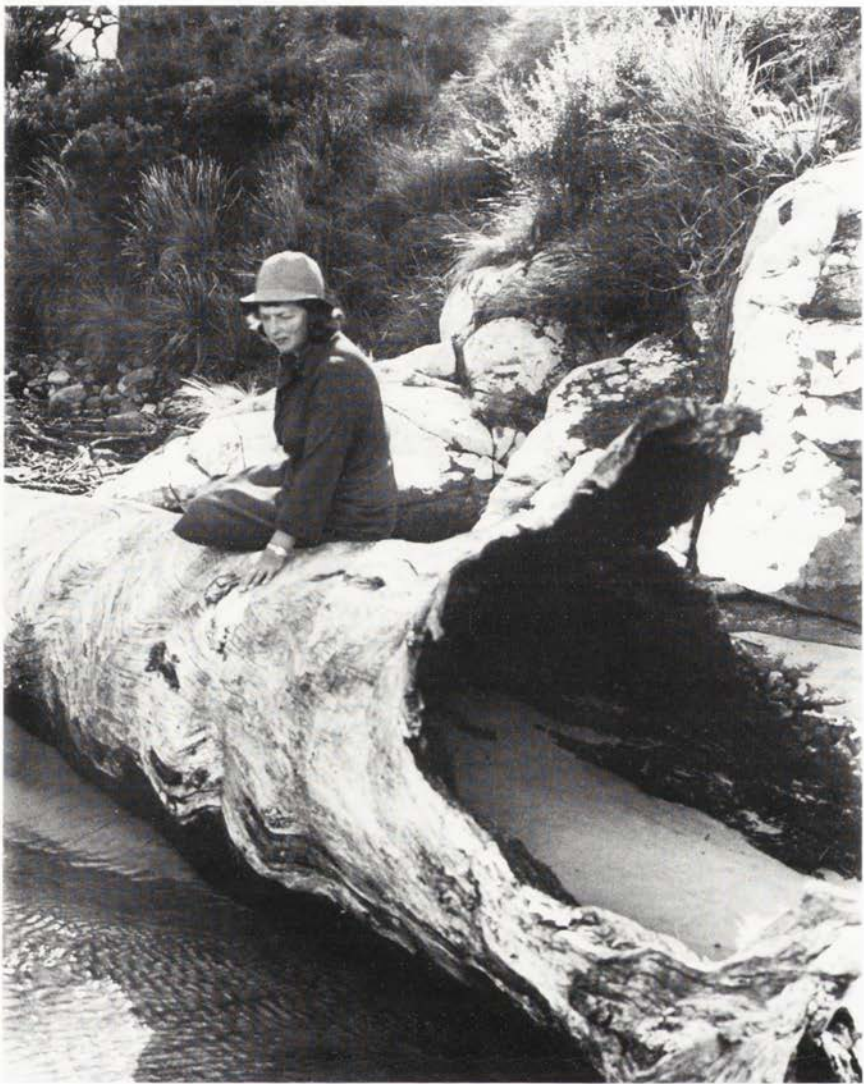
It has been a great pleasure to me to work with Patricia Giles. Her best work has a quality which everyone who has commented on it has been driven to call 'poetic' for want of a better term.

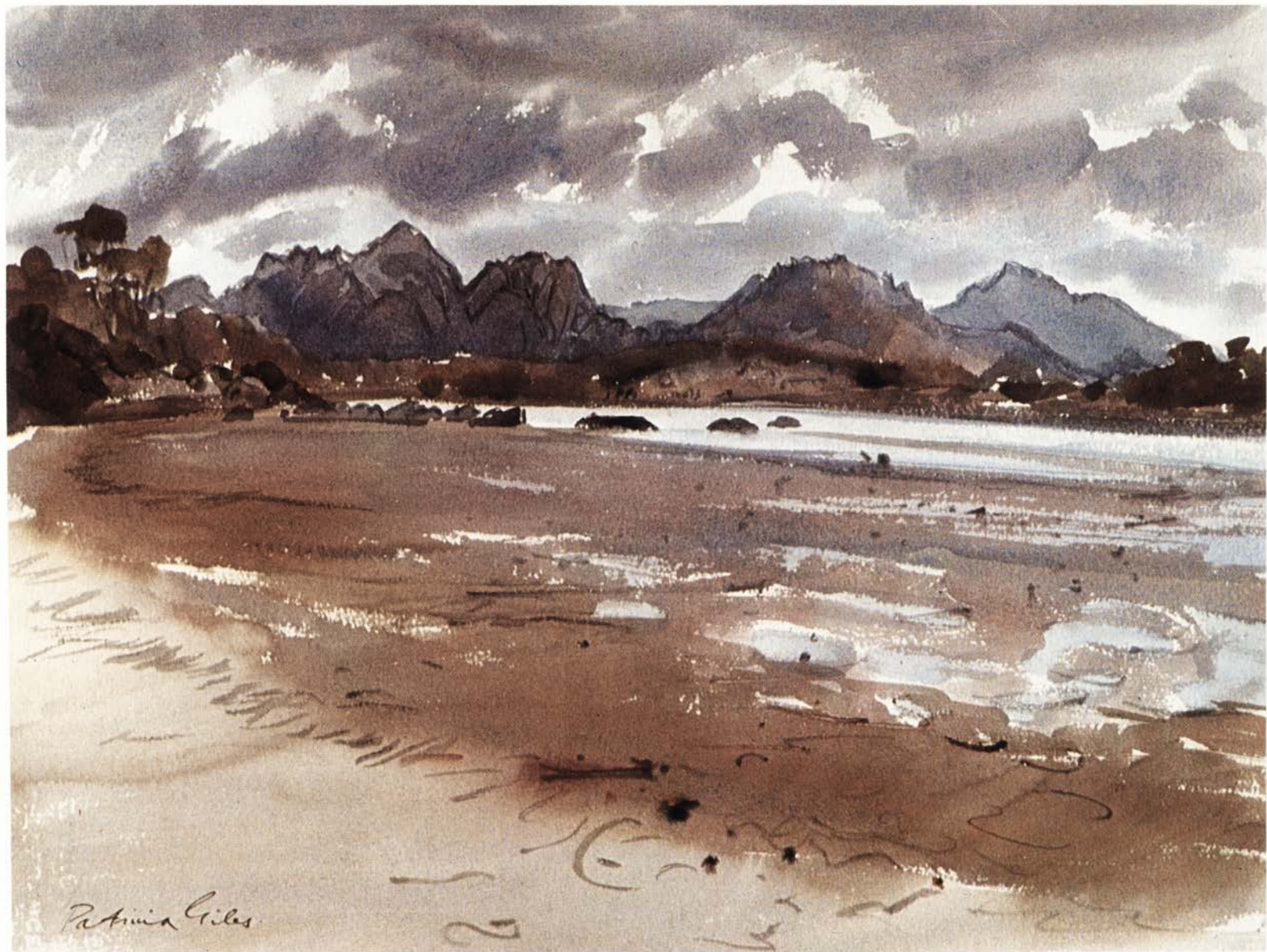
While Patricia and I supplied the required materials, we would have been helpless to

produce the book without a third force, genially supplied by Max Angus as designer. The text of the poems is reproduced from fair copies in my handwriting, which is the form my final versions normally exist in before they go into print. The script has no pretensions to calligraphy, merely a decent legibility.

Neither Patricia Giles nor I have sought to make propaganda for the cause of conservation in this work, but it is nevertheless instinct with the wish that this marvellous area should remain itself, for future generations to love it as we have.

JAMES MCAULEY





Patricia Giles

The Hazards from Swan River

COLES BAY IMAGES

These images were gathered at Coles Bay,
Pink granite peninsula of shore and forest
Crowned by the Hazards: Dove, Amos, Mayson;
Where the sea-eagle sails out from the bluffs,
And milky opal gleams in horizon cloud.
White iris, running postman, sun orchid shine
As the whole heathland flowers, silly with honey.
Turquoise-coloured waters in small bays
Shawling towards the beach say shalom, peace.
Gannets put on a diving display. A skate
Glides in the shallows. Sometimes violent wind
Drives rough waves up the bay, and powered boats
Break from their mooring. After a storm
The beach has ramparts of fine matted weed,
Brown, violet, green; and jelly-blobs like glass.
Pink bivalves not yet fallen apart lie empty.



Granite Boulder

GRANITE BOULDER

This boulder rolled and crashed and came to rest —
How long ago? — an isolate in the bush:
Pink orthoclase, black biotite, glassy quartz,
Coarse-grained from cooling underneath the earth.
Lichen began to spread in light-green patches,
And deeper green and a faded whiteish colour.
One face grew pitted like a honeycomb
Where wind and rain scooped the loose gravel out.
The base was cut in, leaving an overhang,
Shelter for spiderwebs and orchids. Rock,
Brute rock, a density of silence. A spinebill
Tracing its normal arc around the corner
Checks frantically at my immobile form,
Then darts off sideways through the scrub.

WOLF-SPIDER'S NEST

It made me pause along the track :
A perfect round hole fingernail-wide,
With a hinged trapdoor cover. A fan
Of tough green rush grew just behind,
And over it a straggled stem
Of the Sweet-scented Wattle arching.
But was the tenant in or out?
A probing grass-stalk provoked no grip.
Where was she on this sandy ground?
Mouse-grey, stick-grey — look, right there :
A large wolf-spider, inches away.
Feigning dead she wouldn't move
For any tickling blade of grass

Or twig that prised a foreleg up.
But, sick of being teased, at last
She scurried quickly down her hole.
Returning before night I found
She'd closed the lid against the dew.
There was no sign, a perfect fit.





Mount Amos from Honeymoon Bay

SLEEPY BAY

A dog barks from the fishing-boat at anchor.
Gulls float on the green and purple swell
That shirrs with foam the red-lichened rock.
A creek runs into a secluded cove
Right under Parson's Peak. Flooding has piled
With timber debris the stream-bed where we scramble.
Candles of banksia light the sunless gloom:
Bright-green and yellow-green; as they burn out
They change to ginger and at last to grey.
With loud whomp-whomp of wings in its short-flight,
A brush-pigeon breaks its cover in alarm.
And here on these large rocks that block the way,
In yellow clusters, most delicate enchantment,
Dendrobium hangs in flower, as creek-water gurgles.



A Creek at Sleepy Bay

BUSH SCENE

Harsh, dry, abrasive, spiky, rough,
Untidy, tattered, irregular:

Beauty is not a word you'd choose
For what's most characteristic here.

Although the bush has many things
Of perfect beauty — butterflies,

The graceful spinebill, tiger-orchids —

By no stretch is it a locus amoenus
In which imagination finds

Man's paradisaical garden or park.

Less easy attractions hold the mind.

Of all these varied eucalypts

Choose one — this one; and let the eye

Explore its rangy airy structure:

How long-stemmed leafy parasols make
A balance of asymmetries,
Sustained once only by one tree.
Three yellow-tailed black cockatoos
(funereus funereus!)

Screech harshly from the breeze-swept boughs.





Rock Pool

T I D A L P O O L

The rock-pool is a jewel-box, a garden,
Green sea-grapes fill one corner, tiny
Silver fish glide over coloured shells;
A patch of sand heaves; it's a restless crab
Half-burrowing its way under shells and stones;
A scarlet anemone has closed, ingesting
A trapped fish whose head's still visible;
A raft of starry eggs drifts on the surface,
But suddenly, from some motion of its own,
Spins and disintegrates in an outward flow.
The tide returning washes through the trance.

EARLY MORNING

Up with the dawn the butcher-bird sings
His full rich notes. As the sun rises
This patch of lighted ground repeats
A colonnade and traceries
And fine calligraphy of shadows.
Thickets of Thriptomene, Spyridium,
Tea-tree, heath, and Prickly Moses
Are bound by skeins of slender threads
Running with sheen in level light.
The wallaby, with dew in its fur,
Bounds off, then sits inquisitively.
Through trees the bay gleams blue and pink.

SKY AND WATER

Sunset closes a ragged autumn day:
The west is brightened by rose-madder cloud
With slender blue-grey drifts in front; lower,
A band of green light has a few grey islands.
The bay remains deep blue except the last
Few hundred yards, where backs of wavelets
Carry the sunset colours in reflection.
After dusk the moon and the evening star
Shine close together in the western sky,
Laying long parallel tracks of pure light,
One broad, one narrow, across the smooth dark water.



Sea-shells



Sleepy Bay

CLOUD , LIGHT

Long stillness of afternoon. The sky
Is ranged with terraces of grey.
The sun rides in the north, abstruse:
Above it, a narrow sinkhole brims
With blueish-white ethereal light
Intensely incandescent; below,
A wider opening pours down
Mild yellow rays dissolving to
An area of silver sheen
On the transverse grey-green subtle shifting
Textures of the waters of the bay.



Patricia Giles

Moulting Lagoon

SWANS ON MOULTING LAGOON

The green weed bordering the lake turns red,
As autumn brings the duck-shoot season in.
Thatched with brush, the hunters' hides are ranged
Like small square boxes over the wide lagoon.
And later for a few days there will be
The swan-shoot. Thus for all the year
The swans retain a nervous dread of man:
At even the most distant approach they move
Far out and keep in readiness to fly,
With anxious calls, and wing-beats flashing white.



Courting Swans

AFTERNOON

From Wineglass Bay there is a track that skirts
The reedy marsh, leading to Hazard's Beach:
A wattle-bird in the untidy scrub
From time to time uncorks itself to utter
Its quite peculiar metallic retching noise,
Made with an effort that hardly seems worthwhile.
Further along, two ravens desert their meal:
A young wallaby lying on the track,
Its eyes picked out already. But how did it die?
I never seem to have answers. Oyster-shells
Litter the long beach. Two sea-eagles veer,
Sailing the wind, and vanish into the crags.



A Track to the Hazards

FISHING

The morning water gleams. Out from the point
A straight dark line appears. Slowly it moves
Along the surface and then sinks from sight,
And reappears except it's scattered in three;
But then the pieces join back and repeat
The same manoeuvre time and time again:-
Fairy-penguins locked in close formation
For early fishing - listen, you can hear
Their puppy-dog bark; they won't come in to shore.
Along the low-tide rocks pied cormorants stand,
Filled with fish, and holding out wings to dry.

A flock of gannets floats in middle distance
While one or two keep circling high on watch.
A fisherman at the slip across the bay
Has emptied his bilges : oil drifts over here
And fouls the plumage of the silver gulls.





Coles Bay Bush

BEHIND FRIENDLY BEACHES

At times I'm absent from my walks,
Those miles of track behind the beaches.
Small dotterel run in marshy ground.
The heathland's thick with crimson and white,
Guarded by sentinel blackboy-spears,
And lighted by yellow banksia-cones.
A scarlet robin perches close,
A blue wren twitters in the shrub,
A chestnut-breasted spinebill flits;
The fantail cuckoo droops its trill
From further off where trees begin.
Such marvellous things, they ought to fill
The eye and ear, and still the mind:
At times I hardly know they're there.

SECRET LIFE

What's that metallic sheen along the twig? -
A slender lacewing couchant with folded wings
Catching the western sun's declining rays.
And here's a dimple in the sandy path,
A shallow funnel with smooth sloping sides:
Below his trap the ant-lion waits unseen -
A scrap of grey felt, armoured with sharp pincers.
The sun promotes a myriad purposes
As ant, wasp, beetle, earwig, cricket, fly,
Mantis and midge, intent, pursue their patterns.



Midden Shells in Dunes



At Honeymoon Bay



Across Coles Bay

AT RICHARDSON'S BEACH

Green sea-moss, Neptune's beads, a tangle
Of vegetation like a forest
Under rippled glass; silver gulls
A-whirr; the heron flies away;
Pink rocks have surfaced with a black
Mantle of tiny clustered mussels;
In the late light, at lowest tide,
Cunjevois contentedly squirting;
At sunset a Venetian sky —
A map of other, further regions.

LOW TIDE, SWAN RIVER MOUTH

The herons stand on their reflections
Or slowly wade along the shallows
Or fly to observation posts
On branches of a tall dead tree.
The tidal flats are still ; pied shags
Rest on islanded rocks ; the swans
Are motionless on far pale water.
Gulls are silent ; the only sounds
Come from the shore : a noisy flock
Of soldier-birds leaving a banksia,
A sharp-voiced honeyeater's note,
And now and then the wattlebird,
And now and then the wattlebird.
Bright sun breaks through the cloudy grey,
And all at once shadows appear,
Printed distinct on the moist sand.



Swan River Estuary

SISTER ARTS

As Dürer noted, all things visible
Become a treasure hoarded in the heart
Till brought forth by the artist's hand, transformed
Into an image: something which is neither
The original nor the impression stored within.
So that old maxim of the sister arts,
Ut pictura poesis, is true
Thus far, that both are grounded in the real,
Though in their transformations they are free,
And different. Different too this land:
Assimilation by the curious eye,
The experienced heart, the restless hand,
Is still a work for many years and lives.

In Memoriam, J.P.M., 1976

Sleep sound here , brother, by your tranquil bay!
What can the tongue we both served now express
Other than this ? All that is left to say
 Is loss and emptiness;

Empty as ocean stretches towards the pole
Beyond this island which you loved, my friend,
This island where at last you reached your goal
 Of landfall at land's-end;

The island which your lucid poet's eye
Made living verse: wildflower and sedge and tree
And creatures of its bushland, beach and sky
 Took root in poetry;

Until a world to which your poet's mouth
Gave being and utterance, country of the heart,
Land of the Holy Spirit in the South
 Became its counterpart.


It was my island too, my boyhood's home,
My 'land of similes'; from all you gave,
This I hold close and cherish, as I come
 To your untimely grave.

Where the great mount's apocalyptic beast
Now guards your bones and watches from the height,
Fixing his lion gaze towards the east
 For the return of light,

Standing on this last promontory of time
I match our spirits, the laggard and the swift;
Though we shared much beside the gift of rhyme,
 Yours was the surer gift.

Your lamp trimmed, full of oil, you went before
Early to taste the Bridegroom's feast of song;
Wait for me friend, till I too reach that door;
 I shall not keep you long.

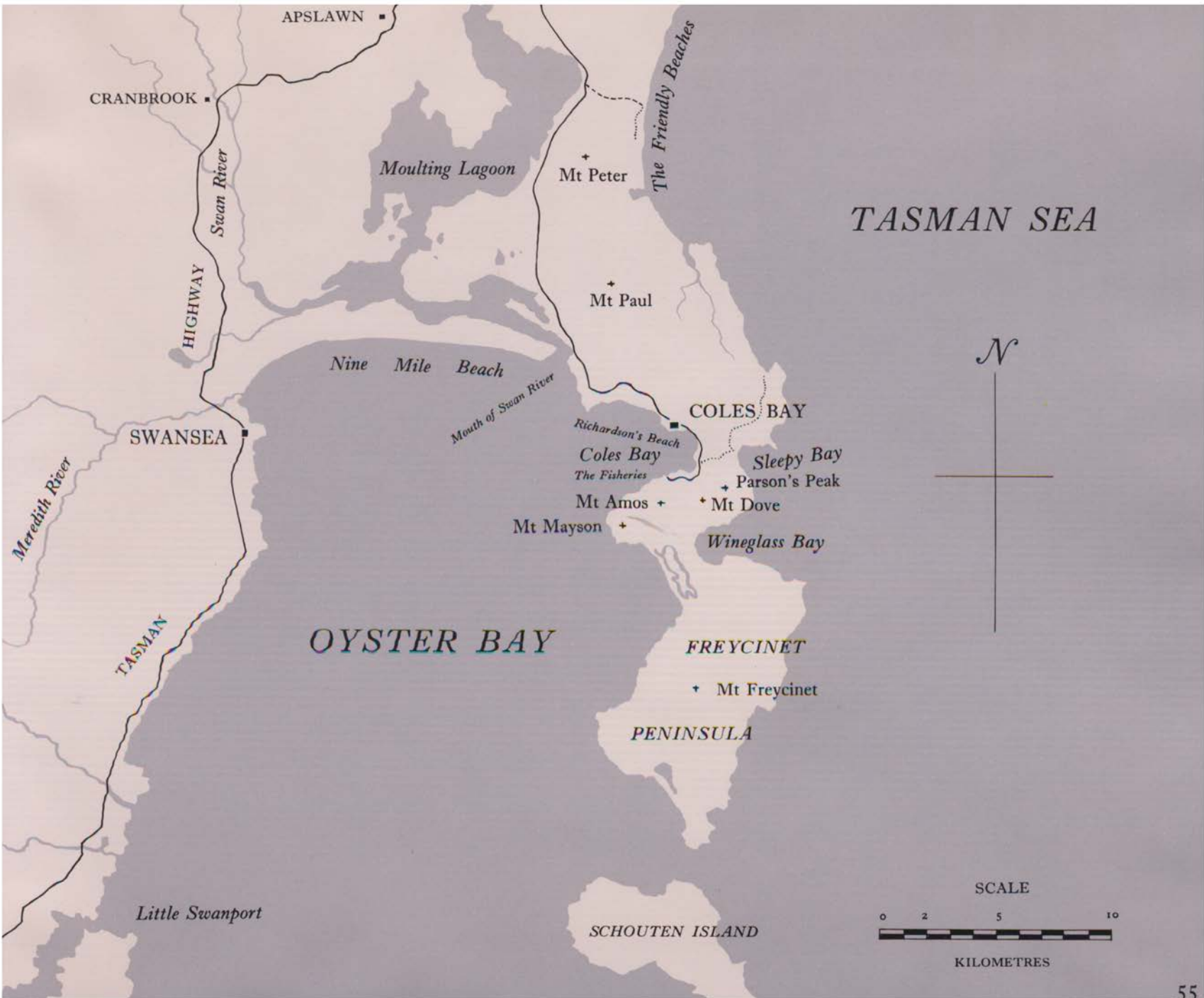
A. D. HOPE



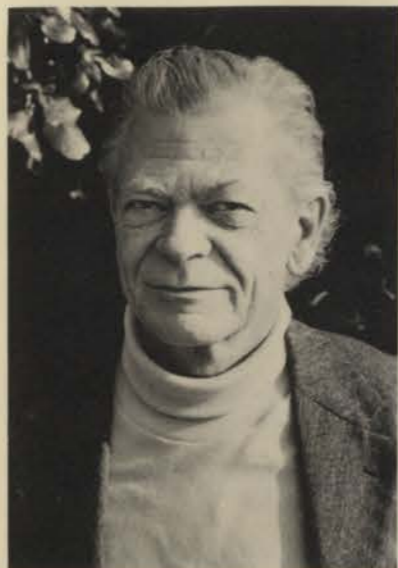
TASMANIA



LOCALITY MAP



James McAuley was one of Australia's most distinguished poets. His *Collected Poems 1936-1970* reveal his stature, and the wide range of his intellect. He was equally at home in both academic and literary circles. He was editor of *Quadrant* and after accepting an invitation to become Reader in Poetry at the University of Tasmania, he was later appointed Professor of English, a post which he held until his death in 1976.



Patricia Giles, Hobart-born, is one of Tasmania's most prolific painters of its landscape. She studied with the late Jack Carington-Smith, and completed a Diploma of Fine Arts before embarking on a teaching career.

The demand for her work became so great that she abandoned teaching for full-time painting. Her knowledge of the Tasmanian landscape, its flora and fauna, is remarkable.



Friendly Beaches