

PHILLIP HALL

Inheritance

Bigger than Christmas,
the Borrooloola Rodeo announces
 itself with a mushrooming of camps
 as show trucks and outstations
chorus below a starlit big dipper
out on the edges of town:

 I unroll my swag
with Buffalos—the Gudanji mob
 from Bauhinia Downs, Cow Lagoon
 and Devil Springs—where this year's mood
is a carousel cracker in acclaim:

at the camp centre
 a 55-gallon drum is suspended
 between the forks of two trees
 by ropes bound
 to their anchor points
 with the neatest of figure-eights;
a mastery of makeshift mechanical bull:

 out on the edges
the kids practice their hondas,
 an overhand knot with a stopper
 at the end threaded through

and tightened down
to form a nearly-perfect halo,
the lasso is a dream flung

bang-on:

throughout our camp
tarpaulins hover like magic carpets
giving shade and privacy
as ropes and uprights are fastened
with rolling hitches—
a season's banked domestic security:

and this year our ropes lash
together such calm relief
in the managed risk of a rodeo's spills:

this year we are spared
the dawn drop and swing
when the rope is laid down
in a wide sideways "S",
the end wrapped round thirteen
times to form a loop tightened
for the end:

this year
when dawn breaks
the bull rider's eight second rattle
is our only breathless
yield.