

THE US Review of Books



Rambling Ways: A Voyage of Discovery

by Thomas James Taylor

book review by Kate Robinson

“ | *I did not know it yet, but this was a journey of the spirit.* ”

It's 1975 on the south-central coast of Australia, an environment virtually identical to southern California. The internationally troubling Vietnam war is over, and as in the U.S., hard drugs begin to appear on the streets, taking a toll on many youngsters who previously embraced the light-hearted fun of the psychedelic era. "After a time, criminality began to seep into the equation" among law enforcement officers distributing heroin and the young addicts forced to steal for their fixes. At dawn one summer's day, Taylor and three friends flee the Adelaide suburbs with supplies and camping gear. Sobered by their incarcerations and the deaths of contemporaries, they head north, seeking solace, inspiration, and a new future on a lengthy road trip.

The author reviews his life with the wisdom gained as a mature man. The narrative voice is intelligent and personable, and the writing has a strong literary cachet. The storytelling style common to memoir and biography (i.e., lean on dialogue) changes around the book's halfway point. When Taylor settles into a job at a motor inn soon after the road trip ends, he meets a dazzling young woman. The writing becomes even more vibrant, with scenes and dialogue that make the memoir all the more novel-like. Taylor's examination of the mundane practicalities of life could feel clichéd, but his deep self-examination and writing skills add depth and interest. Taylor invites readers to enter his mind, a good place to reside with the author's uniquely inquisitive, self-effacing nature and creativity. The narrative moves easily from moment to moment through urban dramas, the youthful cannabis and LSD-fueled hijinks amidst the sacred beauty of the Australian outback, and on through the more serious pastime of creating a new life. This is inarguably a fascinating and insightful recovery memoir.

★ **RECOMMENDED** by the US Review

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