

Reflections

Paradoxically, while driving, I am simultaneously aware of an expansive exterior world with an implied sense of freedom and with the constricted interior world in which I must remain alert and maintain control. I'm entertained by cloud watching outside and radio listening on the inside. My attention is also frequently drawn to the awful effects of drought and road traffic on the landscape and wildlife.

The trip is defined by towns and the possibilities for coffee or an egg and bacon roll. I look forward to the unfolding of each stage of the journey as the landscape character changes: the sometimes lush Bega Valley, the steep, moist and ferny Brown Mountain, the flat and bony Monaro, followed by the pretty hills and poplars between Bredbo and Michelago. The final run takes me into another world of Canberra roundabouts and traffic.

We had a neighbour who told us that each time he was about to ascend or descend Brown Mountain (known to true locals as "The Brown") where, unseen by police, he would take off his seat belt and open a can of beer. I have not tried this yet.

Sometimes I travel with my husband who offers a running commentary on the skill level of other drivers on the road and the poor sequencing of Canberra traffic lights. Inevitably, we must make every effort to pass trucks and various vehicles acquire names such as the ubiquitous 'aluminium road block' aka the caravan.