

# THE HERDING OF THE SNAIL

by

Gus Ferguson

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gus Ferguson". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Gus" and last name "Ferguson" clearly distinguishable.

## **THE HERDING OF THE SNAIL**

an adaption in verse by Gus Ferguson

This poem is loosely based on "Bulls" by the 12<sup>th</sup> century Chinese Zen Master, Kakuan.

It was written for MOLLISC MANIA which was performed at the Space Theatre in Cape Town by Jenny Pichanick and Raphael Gamaroff in June 1978.

It is dedicated to the memory of Geronimo, the world's longest known snail.

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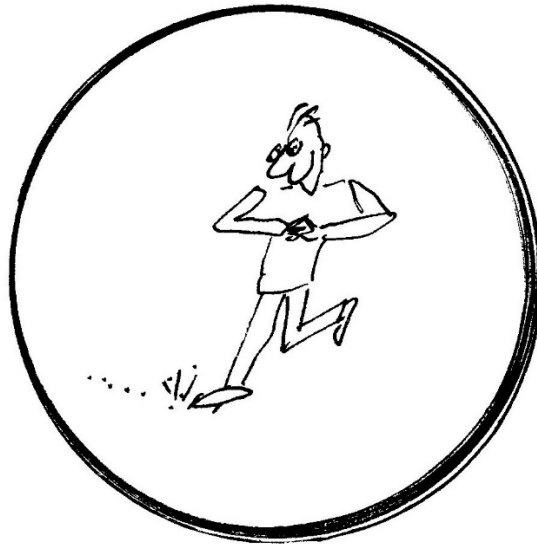
## THE SEARCH FOR THE SNAIL

I search and seek to no avail

The shy, elusive garden snail

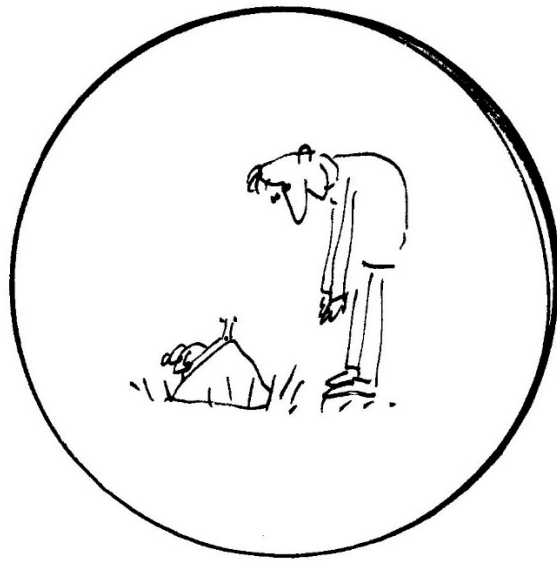
From dawn to dusk disdaining rest.

(The starlings mock my earnest quest.)



## DISCOVERING THE FOOTPRINT

Beside the path the grass is streaked,  
As if a tube of Bostik leaked,  
I've found a spoor, a certain trail  
That will disclose the occult snail.



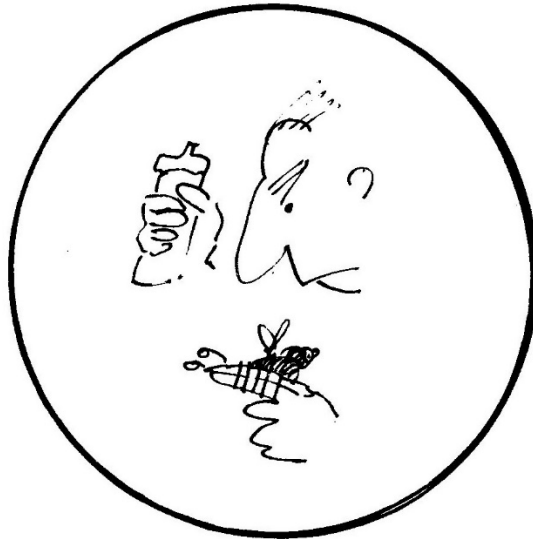
### PERCEIVING THE SNAIL

The starlings warble in the eaves  
The grass has grown translucent leaves  
The snail is seen! A zephyr sighs,  
That gorgeous shell, those stalked eyes!



### CATCHING THE SNAIL

With trembling finger, nervous thumb,  
My heart is thudding like a drum,  
In awkward grip I hold him fast,  
He can't escape, he's caught at last.



## TAMING THE SNAIL

At first a thread and salt I need  
To teach my captive Snail to heed  
My will, but when I've tamed him well  
He'll be constrained just by his shell.



## BRINGING THE SNAIL HOME

At night he sits upon my knee  
My flute I play in harmony  
With sounds around: The wall clock's chime,  
The kitchen cricket chirps in time.





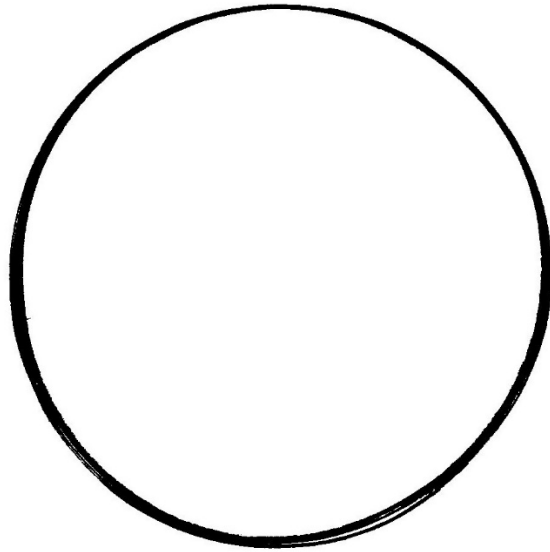
## THE SNAIL TRANSCENDED

My loved one tamed, I set him free

No longer needing company

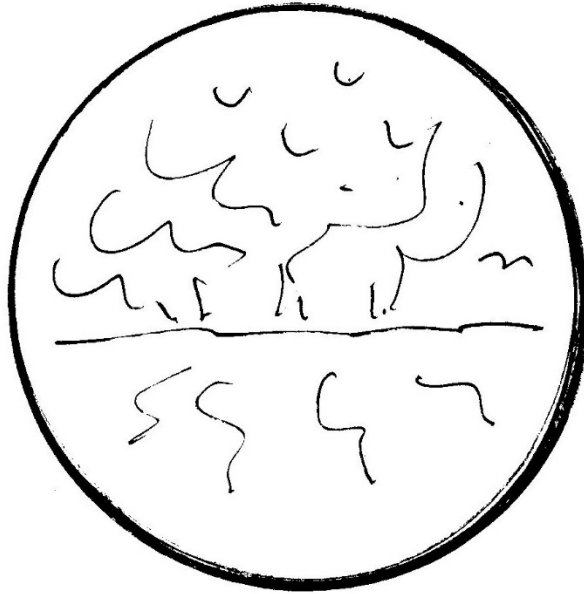
I am serene. Released from pride

I cast the thread and salt aside.



## BOTH SNAIL AND SELF TRANSCENDED

The salt and snail and self and string  
All merge as One, become No—Thing,  
Infinite, clear and heavenly blue.  
Desires or needs can't cloud the view.



## REACHING THE SOURCE

So many steps to reach the Source

A devious, exhausting course.

I should have stopped quite still instead

Where rivers flow and flowers are red.



## IN THE WORLD

I rise and mingle, simply dressed  
Amongst the world where all are blessed  
I use no magic, never strive,  
Before me trees become alive.