

My Black Heart

The question that occupies me most
these days

Is whether the invader can grow
a Murri heart
with which to see and be anew?

Time is of the essence
but cannot be forced.

In Murri time
these wise guides and elders arrive
as friends, sisters, teachers
to oh-so-subtly show us pathways
back to country
More generous to we whitefellas
than we shall ever understand.

The day I was invited into country
my soul arked skyward.

The day country conceived of my existence –
a tiny blind seed flailing on the surface –
my world began again
and I seek meaning and sight now through Murri eyes.

The way into the heart of this place
is an invisible songline that stretches from the
Beginning of Time to those blessed graceful beings
who have survived and live, today, with connected
souls across this land.

I sit motionless in the sun and walk the forests
to learn to see and hear again.

This is a quiet underground journey
with no clear destination
because there is no end point in a circle.

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May 2008

Bending Time

for the Drumley Walkers

I walk in the footprints
of the Elders
of this Country.

Time bends
into an infinite eight
as I meet their great grandchildren
and we walk as friends
United at last by our recognised history
and shared future.

A single word publicly spoken in the early year:

“Sorry” has set us all free,
Ancestors and the living alike.

Does Country know time?

Or is there only the present – an infinity of moments connected
by eternal energy?

I feel the connections here

Land, Life, Love

A latticework of roots reaching down through
volcanic soil – binding and holding.

Clap sticks ring out across this mountain

A heartbeat call from the Earth itself to awake
and we step together into our moment of truth.

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August 3 2008

Scar Trees: A love poem

Dotted across this landscape
of ridges, valleys and flatland
stand the scar trees
Alone
singularly mapping the ancient Yugambeh paths
connecting people and place.

They are deliberately charred and slightly torn.
Their scars mark them out as guides
for those with eyes to see them
And the knowledge of their presence
lives on in the hearts of Murri men who hold history in their hands.

We walked with them across Country
Saw one before we knew its purpose
Marvelled at its great height and gappy base
wide enough to crawl through from south to north.
Then we learned of its significance and gasped.

Middle aged, middle class white women
we love the scar trees
for their ancient purpose
But also sense their sacred symbolism
in the landscape of our lives.

They are, perhaps, a hint
that the pain of life lived full
Bears charred markers – the scar trees of our soul –

which guide us on our way
and claim our broken hearts as wise sentinels.

There is purpose to this scarring
for how else would we find our way across
Country and through life?
If we learn history's lessons well, these trees will see to our crossings
And we will arrive at the ground beneath our feet
to find ourselves at home.

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August 28 2008

Ode to Beech Trees

© Sally MacKinnon July 24 2008

Deep in cathedral green
Where golden shafts enter an underground world
through invisible canopy skylights,
Are the circles of Beech
Engaged in their delicate 2,000 year dance.

Nothofagus Moorei –
They are remnants of ancient Gondwana
when Australia, Antarctica and South America were one
and this country was cool and wet –
a more temperate time.

Now these slender beauties
who glide silently above boulders and noisy humans,
are beginning to bake in a world that's hotter, drier.
Global warming is incompatible with their temperance and grace.

What are we to do – mere humans –
When deep-time is broken
and ancient heartwood shatters
under the weight of wayward feet?

Beech maidens will dance to the end of their time
in this underworld womb of mottled green.
No horizons or views
But today, in the forest's oceanic silence
we exchange our breath and pray for life.

Armistice Day

The trees are shedding their skin
in time with the appearance of snakes and spangled drongos –
that unlikely, exotic name for the shimmering black birds
with mermaid tails.

Scrolls of bark
waver across the grass
while veritable rainbows emerge from within the newly-naked bodies
of giant gums.

Stretching to the sky
they free themselves from the year gone by
leaving ribbons of earth memory
trailing in their wake.

In the amphitheatre gully below the house
a galaxy of golden suns bloom
making meadow out of ordinary grass.

How could these dandelions
possibly be weeds
when they light up the everyday with such colour and life?
An audience of stellar proportions applauding the transformation of trees.

The mists of years begin to clear
and I see the blue and gold of summer returning.
Somehow, my own picture of family
has shifted in this time of trees and dandelions and drongos

and the eight-year war becomes
the best that we can do with what we have
Where no one is to blame and 'learning can come from hurt'.

Compassion emerges
as I carefully hold this revolutionary notion
Observing it widely, roundly
and I realise that
Armistice Day has arrived
heralded by the transformation of trees
in my own backyard.

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December 12 2008

Ancient Arts

I learned the ancient art of making string
in a glowing circle of women
this winter solstice eve.

We sat and yarned and twined and laughed;
cackled as crones have done
for millennia

While the embers and flames of the fire
tenderly stroked our faces with
life and shadow.

Twist one strand forward,
Fetch the other strand up
Intricate fingers – this is women’s work –
and we look exotic as we weave.

How seamlessly we modern women
sink back into these ancient arts.

It is a wonder but so natural, all the same,
and I notice how our eyes adjust to the world
of spirit, symbol, goddess, earth and grace
without fanfare.

Twist one strand forward,
Fetch the other strand up
Twist again and press tight.

Slowly the string emerges:
an elegance of textured turns
supple connections between past and present
a thread of earthly beauty stretching to our possible future.

Women's work is not to be rushed.

It's the yarn and the weaving that make us whole

Make the world anew each day;

The ancient arts of life.

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June 30 2008

Lifeblood

for Ruby Rose

Red is a rainforest colour.

In that sea of rippling green

red is to be found in

new growth as it stretches for the sun

and in the crimson breast of rosellas

spectacular in afternoon's light.

It's in the words of the Yugambeh:

Coomera

Blood

River

This land's life-giving energy

is the river that rises in rainforest green.

The eucalypts and casuarinas resumed

their whispered conversation with me

at sunset.

The words formed by wind,

flowed in a river of sound and movement

between us.

I walked to the top of the ridge

as sun merged with mountain tops

and in the valley below, those raucous whites

gathered

then flew south in a cacophony of

hard-edged wings.

Today dawns blue and green
and the world is at its best.
Across the valley where the Coomera flows,
the flame trees are stirring.
Soon, when the summer storms gather
in peaks of south-west cumulous,
their flashpoints of scarlet will light up forest gullies
and scatter exquisite bells
in grounded circles that melt into dust,
then wash into the river with the rain.

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27/10/08

blue is the colour of my love

in the utter peace of dawn
a world of hanging mist and forest blur
motionless
after night's mayhem
of tidal-wave winds
and squalling rain flung against shivering windows.
there in the deep shadows beneath exhausted trees
is midnight blue
the colour of my love.
silent mystery in pools of exhaled air
gasping, i climb towards the surface
on a ladder of streaming sunlight
and silver webs.
this blue of love is new.
never have i seen such depth and dimension
and all the while the casuarinas flower and lyre birds carroll
colliding in Yugambah-land language.

the day was still
poised on a cliff edge
as crows scrawled symbols across the sky.
reading bird talk is an ancient art here
and shadows mark the way.

how blue is my love?
as deep as the forest in this silent soil

as vast as the ocean of peace

home is the place my heart now sleeps.

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June 6 2008