

Haori

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Julene Cook

Seven Movements of Being

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Haori: Seven Movements of Being
Julene Cook

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This book is a work of poetry. While some poems draw on historical sources, they are creative works and should be read as such.

Acknowledgement of Country

The author acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which this work was written and pays respect to Elders past and present.

For those
who have gone before:
family, friends and custodians
of this fertile plain
of lava flows and cones
and lakes and ocean.
All thread together
in haori.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to Wendy Ward and my husband for their careful proof-reading and constructive literary feedback. Thanks also to the historical and current writers who have opened doors into Australian history I did not learn in school.

I acknowledge a deep debt to the Traditional owners of Country in which I was born and have lived. In particular, I pay respects to Gunditjmara, Djab wurrung, Girai wurrung and Jarwadjarli peoples and their elders, past and present.

Prologue

A haori is like a poem - a symbolic garment in which layered meanings and thread types are woven into images that surround the wearer. This poetry collection weaves threads drawn from lived experience.

Childhood constants included music, grandparents living on the same street and landscape: Budj Bim where my grandmother grew up; the car trip over cold lava flow to start beach holidays; the tail of Australia's Great Dividing Range, seeming translucent and magical as a child. I lived in a town but yearned for connection with nature in ways I later recognised as resonant with First Peoples' relationship to Country.

Hearing Wiradjuri musician Johnny Huckle sing, about his mother's life and return to Country in death, moved me deeply. Thus began much research, on the First Nation custodians of Country I returned to after thirty years.

The introductory creation myth is my own response to living on the Otway coastline. In contrast, the details of poems with First Nations themes come from early contact reports, diaries, letters, anthropological, historical and living First Nations accounts.

I offer these poems in a spirit of deep respect for Traditional Owners, past and present. Over thousands of years, they have cared for and shaped Country.

Their culture has endured through profound changes in landscape, climate and social conditions. It has much to teach us.

The book's movements, progress through cycles of ebb and flow in response to gradual and cataclysmic life events. The self gradually expands, distant mountain ranges become crystalline again and close-range details invite acceptance of everything the seasons bring.

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A Poet's Myth

The lustre of a perfect pearl
rises from this coast of nudes
reclining through their watch
across the edge of old Gondwana.

Palms down, the misty hands and fingers
of a low cloud lover
steal across her cool wet clay.

She quivers at the breathing
of his slow tide rising.
Wave on wave he woos her,
creeping close,
condensing over curves
until he brushes her
toward high water,
lip on lip
and presses his embrace
to seek the stream.
Swollen with his seed
her waters break across the breach.

On tomorrow's dawning
jewelled shells are left
to tell of their enjoining.

Movement One

Woven Origins

Part I

Cultural Legacy

Creator story

thirty thousand years passed down

...flying strong in land



Movement One



Part I — Cultural Legacy

Koroitj-condeet Country

Nights Like This

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Australia's First Touring Team: 1867-68

Between

Yoorrook

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Koroitj-condeet Country

Like a galaxy of new suns
the wattle has ignited
to thaw out winter.
Magpies gather stems
to cosy up their nests
and mallards dash
across the mirror flats
with heads bent low,
beaks clean slicing the glassy sheet
to strain out scooped gnats.

Waist high, a grey blur
skims across my eye
and disappears behind
a canopy of birds, twirling
from the understorey.

I loiter with senses wide
and then they reappear,
a fluid, leaping, grey Pietà
diverting to elude me
in the final instant,
with heads cocked, ears inclined
and nostrils twitching.
Then on they speed.

I settle back, face to sky
with she-oak wind-snares basting me
in warm sienna lime wash.

And there,
on high she sits,
a two-toned fur-ball
clinging like a burl or mistletoe
in the V of slender stems.
She grasps for better perch fit
with hands and claws around laterals,
face forward, like a baby in a pram
or an old-timer driving.

This is Koroitj-condeet Country.

Theirs,

without exception.

Nights like This

On nights like this
the moon is like an emu's egg
cracked across the head of Wiridgil.
A lounging, blue-tongued cloudline
quickly sucks and swallows
the huge, joined yolk.
But, on nights like this,
the higher night sky soon lays
a silvered, leather egg
that spreads a sheen across the camps
of Purumbete and Pomborneit
and the bora grounds of Keilambete.

On nights like this
Leura sleeps uneasy
by the watching eyes of
Knotuk and Bullen Merri,
for, on a night like this
the misty bunyip rose
to creep from lid to lid,
and on to meet the stream
they call Mount Emu Creek:
Tarnpirr, chuckling seam
between two nations.
On nights like this
the cloak of Girrae clan

unfurls from yellow elders of the sea
to weave and dart with eels,
at Bolac,
before its joined roll back
with women of two nations
slapping rhythm for stars that
dance along the mirrored light
of vast Corangamite.

Sing Merrijig

No more murnong.
All gone, murnong.
Yellow daisy not jump up.
Many fella white wools chew leaves.
murnong dig up
many, many four foots
eating faster murnong
than all Wurrung.

No wait for asking, Taylor.
No exchange.
Jump-up white fellas
take women,
take Dreaming cloaks for sleep.
No exchange.

Wurrung mia-mia, burn them, Taylor.
Baskets burn. Take eel trap.
Break boomerang and spear.
Brung brung carry, Taylor.
Wurrong dogs he kill, and birds.
Shoot emu, wallaby, and roo.
All Wurrung frightened now.

Wurrung hungry.
Water muddy.
White wools tramp rushes flat.
Eggs gone. Nests broken.
No fat. No fur. No dogs.
Wind and ice rain.
Wurrung freezing. Hungry.
Stupid fella white wools
stare, too slow.
Easy spear a few.

Sorry business.
Country breaks when jump-ups
tramp down sacred place.
Sorry business that.
Best we hide them good,
power ones with secret Dreaming
for him black, him white, cockatoo.

Then we sing up Country.
Sing Taylor.
Merrijig.
We sing up murnong,
sing kangaroo long time now.
Merrijig, we sing.
Jump up merrijig.
We sing.

Escape from Murdering Gully

There's safety in the sky
so, dart and dive for life.
Become the swallow, Wheewheetch.
See her dart and dive below,
her coiled basket slung behind
with pouched up child
and grease and ochre,
her murnong tossed aside.
In the reeds they hide
to smear their smell's disguise.
No tracks they leave, no smell
to guide the hunters' ride.
Dart and dive for life.
So swift old swallow,
that horsemen cannot close a fist
around you for you are Wheewheetch,
homing to the crack of Bullen Merri
where dropped mud nestles
in the crevice of the south-west side.
Then, swim. Swim like eels,
the child beside.
Weera, weera,
weera Wheewheetch,
Swallow fly, fly.
Weera, weera,
fly.

Australia's First Touring Team: 1867-8

Defying government and Chief Protector,
manager and mentor secrete thirteen
under gloom of new moon.
Easily, they ring-tail the rigging
near the rip of Phillip's jaw
with Mindye's mist low clinging.

Thus,
Unaarrimin captains cricketers in Britain.
There, the burbling streams
of intertwining homelands drown
under coloured caps and
running scores and English names.

Unpaid,
over a hundred days
they endure three seasons' play.
Forty-seven games in forty places
with drawn results
against the counties and the Lords.

In York
the toffs' refreshment door slams shut
until Unaarrimin calls a strike
on wowing recess crowds
with the fourteen-second hundred yards,

backwards,
a high jump walked beneath,
then cleared without a run
and demonstrations of
narrow shield and club
deflecting spears and triple balls
like echoes from a cliff of sandstone.

But Mindye slithers through the coal fog
to birth in virgin lungs,
killing Bripumyarrinim to begin,
and bowling unrecorded wickets
to returning players
and selected homeland kin.

Between

“This boy villain one.”
Tommie
caught between two laws
breaking
under brutal takings
by civilised invaders
and
revengeful escapees.

“Goanna, Go!”
Through swamp and bracken
navigate your space
between two dreams.

Go between
faster than horses Tommie.
Carry messages and news,
sleepy slow as snaky streams
or straight as eagle swoop,
fast as thunder follows
flash-light warnings.

Mediate between Tommie.
Interpret and translate.

Debate
and take the white man way
to Queen and Prince,
ending nowhere
but broken promises
to fall between,
sucked up
into that starless hole
of deep desire.

Yet
they cannot chain you,
elder still between
your zigzagged magic
hewn from scar trees.
“Cleva fella that,”
disappearing and appearing
in raised up claw of eagle.
Old-man lookout,
hovering between.

“Oh!
Sing him cleva.
Sing him over higher ground.
Sing him strong
and sing him
increase
into lake and land.”

Yoorrook

There's easy strolling
on this virgin land
for the dry has spread
an unexpected mossy carpet
over rock and sand.

Ants prepare for rain
with grains mined and piled
above colonies intertwined
with fungal webs
that still connect buried
cauls to red gum birthing trees.

At dawn, sprawling limbs
meander up through early mist,
their pouches filled with
sleeping possums
and waking cockatoos.

Despite fire and freefall,
forebears still feed straight new limbs
that reach for sky like youths
with eyes half open
to what their elders know.

This land was ripe for easy takings,
like a vast English park, Mitchell said,

and invaders had already claimed
deep loam remains
of uplift and eruptions
that birthed The Dreaming:
Country nurtured
over thirty thousand years
by kinship clans walking the land
with deep knowledge
and fire sticks in hand.

In one generation,
the props that held the sky
were shaken.

But these stately witnesses remain
to tell all they have received,
and all they've seen and suffered,
to swell the growing brief of evidence
in favour of their family's case
for recognition
and their rightful place.

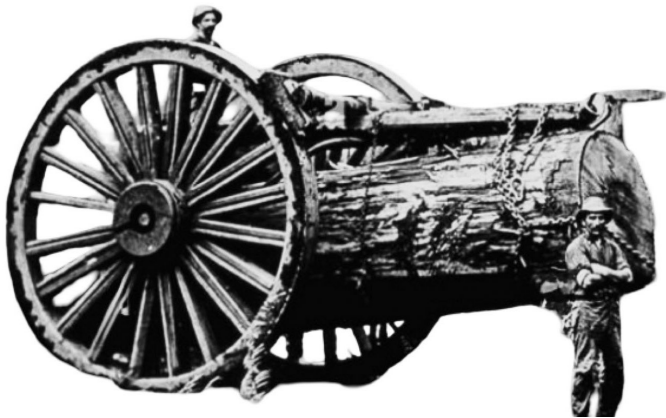
Movement One

Woven Origins

Part II

Family Legacy

*Ancient road Budj Bim:
vein for feet, bullocks and cars...
stomachs pitch and roll*



Grandfather

My father's father knew all
that mattered about engines and steam
and hauling Dunwul sleepers
down through the drained remains
of fish-trap Country, engineered
and tended over generations.

He plaited Turk's head whips,
squeezed out Irish jigs and reels,
blasted brass glissandos
and on average,
threw a hundred points at quoits.

In the lean years he bought
a block of virgin land
and cobbled up a sawmill.
He braced a splitting six-foot round-saw
and powered it with steam.
From bark-edged offcuts
he built a sleeping hut.
For the boys, beds under the stars
from hessian sacks
threaded along saplings
rested in sets of V-branched stakes.

Many, his outfit warmed and fed
till flames leapfrogged overhead
as the family stamped out embers
with wet potato sacks.
Days later, Friday Thirteen burnt it black.

Unlike fire, water terrified him
with flashes of drowned sailors,
washed up before he was a man.
And before he was a man
he stumbled over Boonong bones
beside their plundered, pink saltpan,
where sky and land merged,
reflecting journeys of star-map lights,
unseen by others except
through modern telescopic eyes.

With Gunditj mates
he walked cold lava Country
to court his bride,
Kolloror to Budj Bim
through swamps and stone-flows
hungry for intruders.

He spoke in story strings
unfathomed by those
who should not know.
His sons were, the big fella
the old fella and the young fella,
while others he might call
a dark horse or useless coot.

Decades on, this old bushman
still announced himself,
shouting from the distance,
 “Cook here. Where are you?
 I can’t see you. Cook here.”
And with a wink at table
he would declare the meal,
 “A good bit of bull,”
as if to share in plunder.

All this made me wonder
what else he learned
from First Peoples
on their
unceded ground
of this great south land.

Nightfall

Time slips through the cracks of rusted
days
and yellow armchair evenings
beautifully etching patterned age.
Above the hearth,
a clock and boomerang
return time when collars were starched
and her man carried white gloves.

There she stood, erect and strong,
a single blade, a stem of wheat
swaying in emotion's breeze.
Beautiful.

Now, the dew has spun a sheen of skin
that lines her veins and hands
with patterns like sea makes on sand.

These hands remember baking bread
at twelve years old and
roasting meat for shearers,
boiling water,
warming towels and underwear
for boys on bath days,
loading wood,

battling snakes and fire in sawmill days
and being tightly clasped, in sickness.

It is harder now to write
for she remembers only distant times
spreading watercolour washes
from her mind.
But her fingers stumble on
making spider marks
for a son so long gone.

She drops them to her lap,
playing with the pen
as legs cross and uncross
to ease the places that have frayed.

Now, she trembles
like a sprig of Shiver Grass,
quivering
with emotion's gentlest movements,
being weighed down,
as new dew clumps
in tiny pinheads.

Still beautiful.

Above the hearth, the wedding clock
and boomerang mark time.
Very soon now winter's winds will come
and bear away the shivering grass.

Two generations on
I come across
her tiny tin of family snaps.

I find a portrait postcard there
from two shearers,
arms linked.

One white. One not.

The words begin,
“Dear Ivy,”
and it's signed,
“With love
from Bill and Jack.”

Movement Two

Adjusting the Model

Part I

Myopia

*Crystal mountain blue
hard winding road going there
but it's only dirt!*



Movement Two



Part I — Myopia

Desk Mate

Secret

Elegy

Moth

Jigsaw

Find

Gums

Mingling

Part II — Measuring Up

Venture

Journey Home

Frank

Saturn

False starts



Desk Mate

Under water
with a breathing reed,
the boy waited
for a break in webbed paddling.

His hand circled the legs
and both shot up
like a waterspout.
The bird was enough
for one boy's feed.
He took no more
and waded out towards the
smoky wisps on shore.

I still join him
in that fifties' celluloid,
feet pressing wet sand,
searching for
bivalve double breath holes,
forcing shells
and threading
wriggling flesh on the hook
to lure a biting jab of dinner.

Just driftwood, crumpled paper
and matches.

Perhaps a foil-wrapped spud,
butter, salt and
fingers to pick the flesh.

Toes play in sand silk.
Gulls beg for scraps.
I scan high cloud wisps on blue
as the manes of waves flow back.

My desk mate had all this once,
inland, on the banks of the river
dividing two states,
where yabbies build mud tunnels
and mussels are as big as a hand.

Yet here she was with me,
in the dual front desk of 6A,
her first name
just a letter away from mine
and two surnames
I never asked about.
I did not think there was need for talk.
We just knew, I thought.

The next year she was missing
without mention.
I did not mull on reasons.
Just missed her.

At fifty I returned for a party.
Guest connections were wide
but the one I wished for
had declined.

A woman with shared memory
filled me in.

I thought my mate was poised,
like the boy under water.
Now, she seemed more like
the duck, or my pipi,
threaded and served up for a fish.

Her shell had been opened
but its hinge had never been broken.
It was still clammed shut
on memories buried deep
under damper sands of the beach.

Secret

I, to you became a secret
because you told me nothing
till I bled.

In whispered tones,
you left me unenlightened,
full of guilty dread.

Times of innocence when I asked
and you recoiled, I blame you for.

I blame you that in childhood
you encumbered me with
fear of swollen women.

And I blame you that for me
there was no looking forward,
just child-abasing adult light.

Elegy

The creaking walls,
with footfalls, echo empty days
and dust in corners where old lino lies.
Untended gardens.
Blistered paint outdoors
and I still expect their voices,
sounds for me, that echo from the boards.

In the lounge there are
the empty hooks of Nana's pictures,
now dispersed. Open spaces
where the out-of-tune piano
used to stand with snaps of children, family.

And there are pictures now of Nana
sleeping after lunch,
bandaging an ice-cream stick
to Maggie's broken bird leg,
fussing, that barefoot
you would catch a chill
or fall and break your spine
if sitting on the wooden table.
I see them still.
He, retired and up again at six,
foraging for mushrooms,
fried with eggs and chips

and thickly buttered toast.
“Dr Sawbones,” he said,
come with castor oil to make his visit.
I hear his wheeze in evenings,
seated by the woodbox
on the bench out back,
legs outspread, with knees supporting
outstretched arms and hands and head.
And I hear them argue
at the marble by the sink,
creating pasties, making sauce
or bottling green tomato pickle.

Gone, the sagging bed
we sometimes slept in.
No ancient hats on racks or walking canes.
Bare walls where painted roses hung
and knick-knacks on the dresser
lay with past lives long unstrung.
Pillaged, all the maidenhair
and fishbone fern.
Abandoned now.
A passion fruited,
memory trellised tomb.
New carpeted, the room.

Moth

A smoke-clad desk
and chords that trill in flesh.
Memory serves up
fights in beach nights
with sleeping bags zipped too tight.
I have come, I said, from a valley
filled with bones where I am alone.

“Sit down and I will flit about your mind.”

Such seeing serves me up on a plate,
with no escape.

“I know I shovelled dirt on tears
but I am no reflection of the sun.
Soon I go abroad.
When I return,
I will teach you how to learn.”

Through long, smoky nights
a moth makes endless circles
around my light.

Jigsaw

Scooping the sand
with forgotten kelp
I search for what is missing
in pieces carved from
twigs of conversation,
news chips, fabrications,
the lilt of a voice, words becalmed,
cloth that yields, questions asked,
answers turned over like shells,
again, and again.

You slump in your chair.
“Are they so painful,
these words you write?”

My “Yes,” leads you to, “Why?”
In my silence,
your word, well defined
strips danger like a surgeon’s scrub
and my knife is free to whittle.

I remember parting that same night.
I lingered, waiting for some final phrase.
Silence.
I walked away, still searching for
the missing words to say.

Poet's Block

At one-thirty,
with wind rattling
venetians and nerves,
I want to write a poem
but
am not enough
a poet.

Find

I am an empty room.
Windows smashed.
Walls cracked and blistered.
Hope dissolves and
disappointment divides
and multiplies like cancer.

I've stood.
I've answered calls,
and called
but only wind blows in.

I've seen those who claim You
hide behind stained glass
or drift among the organ pipes
debating compass bearings.

Eventually
I acquiesce
and think I've found You
waiting for me,
underneath the carpet.

Gums

Sun splits sheets of
water-blown reflection
into wisps of silver smoke,
painting moving lines and stripes
on trunks of river gums.

The trees are strong and old
and have their twisted roots exposed,
holding understanding of the sun,
the water's rage and gentlest bathing.

In among the praying river grasses
I am just another gum,
not without torn bark
and missing limbs
and nodules of old pains.

Yet, still a sapling,
reaching up towards the sun
and down
into the river's bathing.

Mingling

i

I am tired of your nameless faces
with hurrying jaws
pulled up like business ties
and I am tired of this frozen hall of doors.
There is never time to understand
the names beyond your faces
and closing doors explode.

ii

We played blues for the night,
legs crossed on the road.
Fog crept up on its haunches
and separate selves dissolved.
But fear lay waiting with bricks
so each could hastily retreat.

iii

Listen for the footsteps.
Candles mutter softly in the grey.
They do not speak to me.
Hear the highway strumming.
Listen hard for footsteps.
The whine of wind and trees
is closer now than fingers,
alone and loudly beating.

Movement Two

Part II **Measuring Up**

*Along the tideline
lone search for keepers...
precious wentletrap*



Venture

She clammers down the southern path
step by step, sideways like a land crab.

Down.

Down.

Wide step.

Down.

Another step.

At last, a sojourn.

A straight track.

Level.

Then down over limbs torn from trunks
by squalling winds.

Everywhere, bark, in great long strings,
stripped away by early spring.

Glints of wattle. Yellow.

Buds through green.

Down.

Down.

Stick on greasy rock
and roothold.

Down.

Suddenly she wonders
If I should slip, would I be found?

Journey Home

After fired, reborn forest,
past the border
through the Great Divide,
the Gippsland green and beaches,
after city, suburbs freeway passed
and mullock dump reminders
of a goldfield's long dead miners,
I map at last, the vast,
the dry grassed yellow flat.

Here four-per-acre trees
are thinned
and four-per-acre crouching sheep,
some shorn,
clump, huddled by the dams,
withstanding heat like rocky outcrops.

We slow through landmark one-horse towns
with pub and post-box-general-store in one
to first greet Grampians,
vague and stained in grass-fire haze.

Across the yellow packaged flat,
portioned by unstable fences
lie the farms of all the soldier settlers.

One in twenty paddocks
are arranged in grass-cut abstracts,
cubed or rolled.
Half shorn, crutched for fire,
the roadside's ribboned scar
still wraps the west
with guards of honour -
windbreak lines
of cypress, gums, and pine.

Clearing now,
veiled only in reverberating heat,
blue-uniformed,
the ranges jut their caps and hats
in giant front-line ranks
with one deserter
still turned towards
the twin-spired beckon of the town.

So, I come
to face the dry grassed child
and fathom depths of past
with adult eyes,
to search stone landmarks,
peel emotion's rind
and trace the mapping of a mind.

Frank

Twisted vines entwine
around your native tree
like tangled years, in mats
around the timber of your mind.

Unremembered,
only now assumed,
a sometime,
somewhere knot of birth
still grafts your seasons,
by circumstance
to Mirawinni's trunk,
and earth.

These dried-out vines
spread even now
in early summers,
seeming like your age
to have no ends at all.

Saturn, Bringer of Old Age

Treading soft,
he follows
in a constant thread of days.
Slowly
by our heels he goes,
cunning,
waiting for his time,
not wishing now to be disclosed.

Our only wonder then was
“How could we the young,
become so changed, so unapart
from every ancient one?”

In the middle years
his every step is like a giant's tread
forever keeping pace
although we turn our heads away.
We wonder if he will come
much closer,
that close, to us.

A sudden turn and there he is,
beating on the kettle drum.
Our ears begin to ring with him.
We know that we must run,

but we are old and
he is yet still young.

We feel his stick
break through our skin of sense.
And we are deaf.
How is it then?
How is it then?

False Starts

i

Pressing heavy
with the sentience
of gathered thunder,
two shadows waited
by adjacent doors.
Their eventual tread was deep,
leaving patterned prints.
But the flap closed
and sealed them in a letter
sent, without address.

ii

We have known them all.

Springtime flowers
blooming under winter sun.
Blue hills clearing
from rain and fog,
reappearing in green
like giant caterpillars,
disappearing
in a backwards glide
of slowly creeping rust.

And we have felt the lead
of sleepless hours
and known the morning's frown.

Movement Three

Cutting and Stitching

*Unbroken gaze sucks will
beyond breakers and swallows,
like hyphae strangle*



Movement Three



Horizontal Falls

Undertow

Unconscious Sleeper

Clipped Pieces

Widow

Poppies

Ruach

Slow Tide's Turning

Birth

Rootbound

Carved Box



Horizontal Falls

I come to see the fall of water
over chains of split-rock riverbed,
to know like days of lives,
the inches of its length
and watch the struggle
of its pain acquired strength.
I stand in wonder
because no earth around it cracks.
No grasses wilt
nor waters flow less calmly
after flinching under split-rock blows.

From tiny pearls
hovering in spray,
sun frees coloured streamers
wrenched from white light
by the river's might.

Undertow

Unbroken gaze,
drags me over rocks
and tangles me in kelp
sucked out by undertow.

Undertow:
the surge of scratching words
and chords on empty staves,
the brush on Vincent's early palette
mixing only browns and greys.

To you,
who have known the ache
I am
carried
in the
undertow.

Unconscious Sleeper

I, in vigil, wait,
silent by the hiss of waves
inhaled and spent.

I, protective like a mother,
helpless earth embracing sea
as if I have the power to
avert a sudden squall
or calm the ocean
with a lifted finger.

Which others know the solitude
of land in stormy weather?

Do you hear
the moan and crack
of wind on rock
and feel the pounding rhythm
crash on us
together?

Clipped Pieces

Lies.
At first believed.
More lies.

The current strengthens.

Then the SOS.

I answer.
Red light goes unnoticed
and suddenly I am drowning,
cannot touch the sand,
no hope against the swell.
Legs fight to reach the beach
but thought is frozen.
Body flails,
finds a footing
but it's knocked away.

Please.
Just let me reach the beach.

Eventually I wash up.

At once the creeping tangle
of the stomach's pit,
adrenal beat at night
and clipped pieces
that will not fit.

I am trapped in silence.
Everyone's a stranger
and to myself,

I
am just
a
name.

Widow

In the days that pass,
a wreck of whalebone stays
returns to haunt her -
a maze of dreams and memories
that shuffle through the rooms,
guarding all the past,
scratching paint from passageways,
dipping into tins of now
and prying out the future.

She, speaks her griefs,
shorn and spun to threaded yarn,
in downward pricks and upward draws
that stitch the eyes of masters,
and reflect herself,
reborn.

Poppies

The dark of earth's enclosing sponge
draws strength to tend a single stem
with bud coaxed slowly.
Petals spread and fall.
From her maiden head,
seeds spill, swell and ripen
to a succulence
that bursts caged joy.

The rest plod on.
Shrill bird cries
through shortened days
still searching for its fill.

Ten years pass
and sun brings forth
a blazing mass of
fully opened flowers
to greet the warmth of
summer showers.

Ruach

Soft light sparkle of the afternoon
refracts from dancing leaves
in copse of native trees.

Not now
the whisperings of morning,
the heads inclined, limbs entwined,
pungent musk
of foliage freshly crushed.

Not now
the wind chimes,
kookaburra's laugh,
breakfast bask by budding place
in courtyard's fern-clothed greeting
space.

Heavy head of sun
drops down
beneath its brim of winter cloud
and glowers now.

Thud of axe splits stumps
in sharp reminders
that evensong's begun.

Soft maracas of the mountain,
distant bark of dog
and soon the warming crack of log
as dusk draws up horizon's rug
around the feet and legs of gums
and night,
in stealth,
to chilly winter comes.

Slow Tide's Turning

Two upturned insects
struggling.

Ephemeral
we drift
in silhouettes
on pool's reflection.

A floating world of shadows,
ours,
with quickened life
now memory
on the silent pool's still floor.

Where,
the spectrum of translucent light
on bright glass wing?
Dart and hover
of the nuptial flight?

Birth

Wounded,
you have made of me,
a tapestry,
framed.

Your thread was rich.
Your stitch filled unworked spaces
with burgundy of deep drunk times
and awe-filled places.

But I have come alive
and stepped into the room
to mingle.

Your wound lies open
and my thread has broken
in the stretch of seasons.

If I could break your frame,
we'd fly,
If I could stitch up joy for you,
we'd dance.

Wounded,
you have made me and adore
but I cannot be your reason.

I am object to be watched,
no more.

Rootbound

The plant of me is rootbound,
nurtured in the closed indoor
and I can no longer shade you.

Release me to the ground of being
or I shall shrink.
My roots will tangle, swell,
and knotted,
break the case of you,
my filigreed container.

I long to flower.
Let life prune me and transplant
so I can burst from spreading root,
so leaf can flourish,
fruit can nourish
and seed to earth restore.

Carved Box

I have grieved, and grieve
for what the years have robbed us of.

We have chased the thief
together and alone,
but cunning,
he has returned,
removing grain by grain.

I have lain in wait,
fought, and argued,
cast shafts of will and waiting.

He beats me all the same.

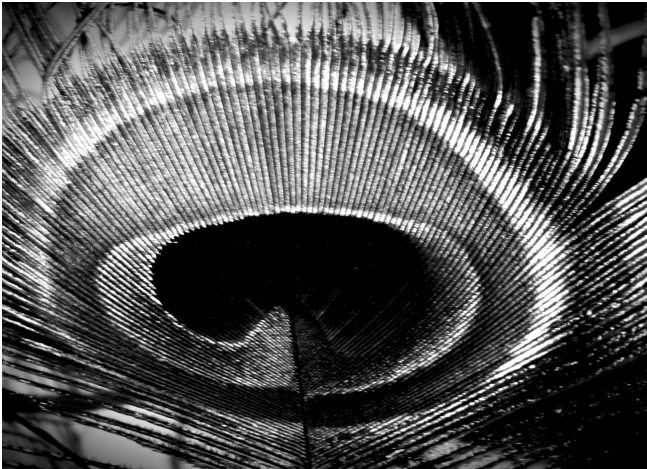
Let us box our store of memory
before it too is eaten.

Let us not in final battle
now be beaten.

Movement Four

Breakdowns

*His rope tightens...breaks
her clipped wings flap and struggle
bird trapped now, in glass*



Movement Four



Windrise

Tsunami

Knowledge

Late Autumn

Thread

Book Shop

Echo

Judy

Survivor

Late Winter



Windrise

Sudden wind-rise,
buffets self,
all loose,
like refuse.

Heavy drape of grey sweeps past
the beacon masts
to clot the fluid of creative pace,
blot its lighted face,
grind its action to a paste.

When over sodden ceiling breaks,
ruptured sorrow spills,
infusing every secret space
till hills, and sand and sea
distort
and false horizon
darkens natural balance
of the wind and water's
meeting place.

Tsunami

Letter on the bed.
Twenty rambléd pages
from the break of wave.
The long, slow tsunami
building since forceps breech,
accident with bolting horse,
questionings in court.
Then, unbridled neurons bucking,
again, and time again.

Now this letter,
at the head of a bed
spread with the debris of
life left for dead.

The tsunami drowns me.

After charcoal,
he wakes to say, it was
a way to keep the memories safe.

His mother asks
if now, I'll stay.

He will see no other visitor.

The cracked window,
the urine whiff,
rubs the message in -

The cause resides in me.

He tells the shrink
she has delicious legs,
blocks his ears to what she says
and urgent need of mine
for plain sailing.

No other person will he see.

In the years that follow
he stalks me
with whatever he can reach -
more rambling letters,
songs and messages,
calls with silence,
envoys sent

and prowls about places
to seek and apprehend me.

On every hook
he threads the same bait.

That I am not the caring person
I have been
and
will always be.

Knowledge

We have lost our innocence
like eucalypts shed bark.

Storms peel us,
strip by strip.

The blossom tree
shakes.

Our fruit is spoil
for bees and wasps
and what remains,
the worms take.

.

Late Autumn

In warm years,
where virgin soils live
unspoiled by herd hooves
and demobbed pilots,
drenching rain calls up
companies of fungi -
Field Blue Legs out with
Parasols and Saffron Milk Caps
and from forest margins, weighty
Phlebopus
with Lawyer's Wigs and Ink Caps,
arraigning *Suillus luteus*, the interloper
commonly known as Slippery Jack.

And between the strewn stone-flows,
centenarian bora rings
spring out from shadow black
to dance the words of Daramulan,
still awing boys into men
under swing-circling bullroar
of more ancient articles of Lore.

Sternest voice,
gravest warnings long unheeded,
and these old men still weep new spores
on early winter's porous earth sleep.

Thread

Brown beads of days are strung
and clasped around my neck
too tightly,
pressing at my throat
with wooden regularity
and the stubborn endlessness
of days and nights and days.

Threader of the ages and the age,
designer of the clasp,
the beads,
the silver thread
that holds these loudly beating days,
please, come at last,
and cut the thread
on which they're strung.

Book Shop

A wall of poems,
all with oblong labels
flinging the price of words
like water from the wheels
of a sudden city flood.

The society of poets slapped me
for dress-up games
and I walked away,
would not pay, because
the wall of written words
was full.

Echo

Over Kuung-ah-naali-will
south wind sends wave-spume
wide across the bay
from long slow-breaking smiles
that nibble the sand dunes
in a constant feast of metres lost
in a single generation.

In prelude to our gluttony,
first settlers plucked clean,
the coastal forest's body feathers,
leaving shifting, silken sands
to the discipline of
wind-lashing Marram Grass.

And to control it
invaders rearranged the river's face,
plugging up its southern nostril
in exchange for drilling out the east
and block-pack-dressing the new canal
with cubes of blue-black basalt,
arranged precisely.

In consequence,
the long, curved ibis beak of land
that hunts between the sea and swamp
of tribal meeting ground,
is sharpened.

But above the eyes,
strewn throughout her tamed warm
down,
ancient flints are still contained
in broad shell heaps that hold remains
of several thousand generations
gathering in summers
over beached whales.

Today I see them feast
on fat of eels, drawn up
from woven reed and stone-placed traps,
eggs of swan and glass-winged sweets,
plucked flash fast, from sea's salt breath
and lightly broiled en location.

Between the sand and sky today
ravens strive against the whining
wind.

I hear them crying
for the bands that perished here
and all throughout these used
Gunditjmara lands.

Judy

Letter not received
Fragment breaks from heart repair
Makes fifty years...forever.

Survivor

Feline hunter creeps slowly,
watching,
paw on paw.
Frozen stealth,
then sudden dare
that makes the prey aware.

Instant heart race
spring-starts
beating hooves
in massed confusion of escape.
Hunted one,
too lame to win the race,
fair game,
stops still.

Defy it!
Mesmerise it!

Cast the shaft of will!

Stony eyes
can also kill.

She crouches,
poised,
but jolted,
slackens back.

Then overpowered,
she slinks away
to breeding place,
where pride is hungry still
and distant Jackal's call
is shrill.

Late winter

The month is yolk yellow.
Magpies sing till dawn,
engraving clan tunes
on hatchling brains
like soil sucks rain.

In late winter,
the swell of sap rising
starts the crack of bark
and clean-shaved winter trees,
grow stubble underclothes.

Hopeful Blackwood elders
pull up yellow wattle waders
to fish for early spring
and bees store honey
in the socket of a ripped limb.

Movement Five

**Repairs and
Reimaginings**

*Sleep, the fog blanket...
day gnaws its way through neurons,
wings lift in free flight*



Movement Five



Break through

Regrowth

Spring

Grandmother's Clock

Tea House

Possibility

Symphony



Break Through

From the dead of an ice-wet night
a grey and yellow robin
raps the pane
in urgent letter strings.

For three days
he has drummed me awake
to my cut log load,
dragged out in chains.

Now the two-stroke of his wings
beats wild against the glass
and the teeth of his
high staccato cheep
chew through
the
bundled nerves
of striding feet.

Regrowth

Gum trees bleed red blood
that dries transparent
like half-sucked raspberry jubes.

After fire, they are peasant widows
dressed in black,
but by flower harvest
they dress in green
and paint the country's cheeks
with pink and russet tips
of new-growth leaves.

Spring

All the season's stains,
its tears, its bleeding,
all its fears, its needing,
fall away.

Expanding trunks
crack all the past.
The season's bark
is peeling.

No more the silent grey,
the winter coats,
all uniform.
Now in pink and russet
every separate trunk
is reaching high,
in salutation
to the coming summer sky.

Grandmother's Clock

The warming flame ignites.
It draws to roaring heights
and I have found again
the restless part that paces
for some start
of aching art.
The hearth is naked
bearing all the marks of
glowing coals and leaping sparks.

Monet's brush paints twilight
in a haze of apprehension
where nothing now is clear.
The bright of day,
its brilliant daubs of light,
wither into night.

The urgency to guard some brittle truth
has passed.
The world, in all its lights
can wear its many masks.

I will touch them all -
their textures,
tender trace their
ragged mellow charts.

For the mantle clock ticks on.
Eventually its slowing chime
winds down
and in some final stretching moment
ceases instantly its movement,
its pendulum of memories,
its sound,
everywhere it's been
and everything it has seen.

Tea House

Just like drops in time,
love hangs limberly
on loose connecting syllables
and least expected rhyme.

Its sheen sheer-buffs all things,
like dawning sun on spider's pearl
strings.

Yielding fig flesh nestles in the lifeline
as I weigh it
in the balance of a cupped hand.

I raise it slowly and tendons slacken
under trance of smell.

Dare to taste?
Oh, what if we should leave it?
Let us trust and make a meal,
slowly taken with savoured tea,
enveloped in the light of paper walls
that fold round framework,
trimmed and neat,
tested strong and buried deep.

Possibility

After long deep sleep,
and at the end of a half-day ramble,
I stumble over treasure.
The Glauberg Celt
melds aeons and hemispheres.
A touch of lip on lip
reels in flapping logic
as sure as the earring hook in
Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl.

What tyranny is distance?
It is only as far as graylings swim,
Near as doings that boomerang
space each instant.
Take me through music of sages
and I will unfurl a running bass
dreamed from the edge of the ice.
There is no tyranny in distance.
It blurs out faults
and blends unworkable difference.

Threaded Gold

My friend from childhood was fully
Australian
yet also yin and yang
with a Palestinian mother
and German father
who fled Bethlehem in 1948
after her mother's sister
died at her desk in King David Hotel,
bombed
to destroy records of Zionist terror.

In an Australian country town
there was standing room only
at my friend's farewell,
renowned as she was
for nursing generations of children
and hospitality surpassed only
by her mother,
who at ninety-six,
still fed all comers from her garden:

Pickled vegetables
with flatbread and labneh,
sliced cucumber in salted yoghurt
with garlic and mint.
Steamed vine leaves
rolled around lamb
with freekeh and herbs.
Wild rice with chard stalk,
pine nuts and za'tar.

Then, tea or coffee with
halva, baklava, hazelnut torte
or a chocolate and rhubarb number
gleaned from the
Australian Woman's Weekly.

The pièce de résistance!
In autumn she beguiled us
with the steady gaze
of split blood-plums,
glazed in sugar sweated nectar
and snuggled into cream custard
on a springy biscuit bed.

Before napping,
Irene watched the news
sound-muted,
drawing flowers
that wound up memories
from a well of Ottoman respect.

With this water
she tended roots of transplanted
Germans, Arabs and Jews,
intertwined and thriving
in the rich, loamy terrain
of the ancient elders'
volcano-studded plain.

Symphony

Like me,
the swallows have returned,
cheeping
after long, deep sleep of winter.
Broad-beaked hatchlings huddle
in a dropped-mud nest
above the laundry ledge,
squeaking out for midges
foraged in the dart and dive
of almost peeping evening.

Cattle soon come running
as tractor rumble resurrects
first taste of hay in summer.
Unfulfilled today, they stand together,
brute baying deep protest and demand.

On open ground,
magpies gather grubs
to satisfy the “airk, airk gobble”
of gaping fledgling beaks.

Kookaburra lands,
laughing over duckling’s dawdle
on the flat green curves of creek.

Upside down,
rosellas hang and swing,
strip-snapping
crimson tips and flower heads,
while honeyeaters
flutter
over sweet wax brushes.

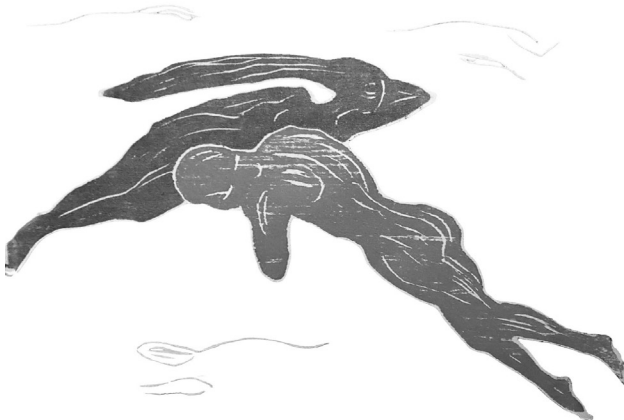
Everywhere, they feast.

In time I shall join
their symphony of feeding
after sun drops low
but my egg has filled already
and I am now contented
and
replete.

Movement Six

**Second Roll
of the Cloth**

*A mid-air meeting
swept up in light and thunder
melts to mirrored sky*



Movement Six



Westminster Bridge

We Could have Flown

Breathing Place

Wormwind

Red Fuji

Waterlily Pond

Mourning

Phoenix — After Saint-Saëns

Brother Grief

Quake



Westminster Bridge

We were above Derain, in London,
hovering in lighted sky
suffused and laid by rainy joy.
In stillness, flight.
In movement, rippling, stippled skin
of flowing river's gentle might.
Below, two figures
waiting, walking,
meet as we did,
joined by curved Westminster,
one dreaming,
deep in post-squall peace,
the other seeking,
striding to expanded sight
from dark of temporary night.
What joy in dart and hover
flecked by unexpected
breakthrough light.

The frame of air is endless
but sparkle dulls to pewter
under weather's
fickle spite.

We Could have Flown

We could have flown,
joyously,
been pilgrims
to the ground of geese,
rising.
We could have covered miles
of ice and desert,
in starlight.
There, the dart, and hover,
here the home cry, unreserved.

What bird spits buckshot at a mate wing?
Magpie mother sat three days
by dump where offspring lay
after boy's revenge
at elsewhere not belonging.

I, am afraid to home
and
we could have flown.

Breathing Place

Bending, sweeping,
wind-strokes of Apollo
caress her skin of seeding grass.
Contoured flesh enlivens
under touch of music
breathing into hard-worked landform,
easing aching tendons.

Birds withdraw,
reverent of this intimacy,
north wind's heated moment.
Their earth will rise to feed them
after slumber of her seeding.
Intertwining limbs, sensate startings,
leaves of rippled water sparkling.

All is change.
Stream meanders.
Lightning splits willow.
Sea-change carves coast -
Motion's fluid greasing
of the joints of Earth,
sustained.

Wormwind

Slowly Wormwind goes,
chained to earth by what it knows
of shadows gathering deep below.

Slowly,
Wormwind stows the residue
of feelings unexpressed
in entrails' larder -
angers and impossibilities of must,
a thousand petty failures,
perfection's mound of shards,
a wall of blame,
a ball of fear wrapped tightly.

Slowly Wormwind goes,
knowing, hoeing, blowing softly.

Expectant,
now well fed,
Wormwind shows its head
above a tangled thread of flesh.

Spies of life,
with light and camera
find tunnels of the enemy
now too vastly spread
and Wormwind
arm outstretched
to instant dread.

Then, the goose-step tread
with Wormwind singing.

And yet,
the final blast through bleached ribs
strums a dirge of lost dominion
as black birds fly
beyond the edge of ocean's morning
to hover on its breath,
piping songs of
innocence
and
lived experience.

Red Fuji

The silence of it,
that absence of a breath
drawn sharply.

The thud of it,
dumped like comprehension
of a fortune spent.

And the piercing pain,
as sharp as paper's slash
across a thumb poised
with the point of life
grasped firmly.

Oh, the dread of it.
Spider's morning web
swept clean, touch broken
in a brush of fingers
left sticky
with persistent thread,
that absence of a breath.

That break of wave,
explosion of the line
to an anarchy of white
that tears the aching calf
from tendon.

The iron of it,
faithless crush with cut
as harsh
as a snapped trap.

And the face of it,
that absence of a breath,
punch of broken blood.
The breached brink of it.

Mere,
absence

of a
breath.

Waterlily Pond

After, comes the lilac and the blue,
blind arm's scrumble
over dark of deep water.

Wade slowly.
Softly glide amongst the wildness
with fluted light's full flask of
colour
poured and floating there, like
old stained windows of you.

Full-lipped lily pads
daub the deep
with warm smudged kisses
and roots stretched down in me.
Their petals gather
in the gleam of hair
that wraps warm day
around us.

Your lids are open
under lash of curling willow.
Lilac, iris blue beams,
flickering.

Mourning

Sometimes, he saturates me,
Currawong with penetrating eye
and one intention.
He distills the sum of us.
Black bird gleaming, gone
from gum's gaunt gantry.

Some spurn the gall of him,
black bird beggar,
bringing only caws and trouble.

I implore him,
"Bring stories bounteous bird
from crags I cannot visit
and valleys much too deep
for me to reach."

Phoenix - After Saint-Saëns

Softly, awakes my heart,
my fettered heart
to feathered freedom.
Gather, all those gentle yearnings
rising up to greet the sky.

Now, I can tell you in the echo
of the morning song's refrain,
and you can hold me
on the early wing, again.

Rising once again,
my trembling heart
on winds of mourning.
Rising once again
to meet a future life's restoring.

I, to world's adorning,
my soul, with you, adoring,
my life, entuned to you,
voice rings out with you,
encumbered not, encumbered not,
as I,
love
you.

Brother Grief

At first, Relief,
presenting knowledge
of your final last found peace.
Only later comes
the black-cowled brother,
Grief, who silently, moves us,
inward, deep.

So we no longer know
your waiting.
We no longer greet your essence
of extended dignity,
no longer meet your gaze.

Our sky cloud memories
change and rearrange in
winds and storm
and clearing days.

Yesterday,
depressions deeply felt,
massed darkly
till the swollen loss
burst open
into rain.

And yet new morning
brought fantasies
in nearer dreams -
swirling recollections,
wisp-wind white.

We reach
for fragment touches,
meet, and then
the poignant moment's
drifting,
fast disintegrating
into distant haze.
Tomorrow,
all the cloud will clump
on far horizons.

But now we reach you
not in time,
nor circumstance,
nor pain.

We find you now,
reclined, womb-warm
within mulled memories,
unconfined.

Quake

In that abundant past,
love's rain fell heavily
with rhythm's warm anticipation.
Its lake was deep,
with trees drinking there
on all those Myall Mungo
still mornings.

And yet,
all parched, your ochre body
sucked the brackish
last half-year of us.

Under tremor, ash and quake
the solid ground gave way
and gulped up life
until it lay in belly's canyon,
old and fetid,
feeding poison algae.

In that last half year
your risen water table
cycled through a hundred seasons
of swallow, rise and sweat,

leaving salted, burning consequence
of body worked too long,
assumptions slumped in slag,
anticipations wrong.

Visions of the grove,
dissipated, rose
and still we chose
to track illusions
until your final, panting breath's
repose.

Over time,
cataclysmic rents in earth,
do settle into landmarks -
rivers, lakes and fertile slopes
of darkened loam
where roots take hold
and grow.

Movement Seven

Recycling

*I, Me, You, They, There:
the short melody of now
hums in constant Tao*



Movement Seven



Blewu

Corryong Morning

Buying Poetry

Penguin

I, Me, You, They

The Dreaming

Waterfall

Illawarra Tao

Epilogue



Blewu

We came down from there
in a deaf descent
of low gear, loose-brake winding.
Down from Crackenback -
forbidding ridge above the snow
where gods of stone stand watching
in hard command
of prohibitions and demands
that carve consciousness and
caveats on day's blue calling.

Across the valley now
we still remember it,
hard Crackenback.
Its scars remain in decoration
of those ritual woundings,
fazing us into a daze of blue
that rises from
thick forest's thin-air breathing.
This high land harnesses the snow mist
and bathes the bones now
of broken windowed houses
in blah-oo, blue,
Blah-way. Blue. Blue...
Blay-wee, blue
Blay-oo...

Corryong Morning

Softly comes the creeping dawn
across this mother-of-pearl mountain,
in an effervescent haze
of palest lavender.

Sudden penetrating cackle
of our broad beaked iman
throws a strident summons
to new day's
plein air prayer.

Above the nearer
snow-shaved fuzz
of translucent summer lime tufts,
on splash of indigo,
vermillion and green,
lorikeet bell and kisses
break through the swelling tinkle
of smaller birds.
Parrots waddle
to extremities of leaf,
wiping beaks,
deaf to whip bird's
curved whistle sweep.

Relieved of sustenance,
milk cattle ruminates
beyond silk spider lines
of gleaming wire and gate,
warmed by sparking ledge of light
that brightens
as the sun ignites.

And from painted snow gums
magpie melody
of warble and response
refracts from mate to mate
between wide
wind-whir sweeps and survey
of this cleaned
north-east of state.

Buying Poetry

Idly you flick through pages
of malaise and praise
examined and excised in type.

What entices? A known face?
A friend embraced tightly
or some nipple of description
glimpsed between the sheets?

Do you challenge and compete,
judge the parry of technique
on points and jabs,
or resonate
like deaf hear music
through their feet?

How do you decide?

Do you seek a deferential face
to smile through
sarabands of fancy dress,
or do you know
when flesh of deep emotion
lies between your fingers,
tucked up neat?

Penguin

On the last high tide line
we find her, loose and air-dried
as though reclining.
She's as warm as sunbaked slumber,
with Royal Navy feathers
thickened to the plushest fur
as soft as kittens, but denser,
so much denser
to deflect the cold of ice flow.
Across the swimming wings,
rows of tiny feathers overlap,
sleek and shining
like azure mosque tiles
or mosaic angels, Byzantine,
folded on her white silk breast
like a blessing
from the gilded glow of evening.
Sudden minute mind-flip
and her chest still rises
just perceptibly,
like my dead mother,
refusing to be gone, still admonishing.

But one dull eye is crawling white
and flops me back again,
upended.

We consider ornithology,
eschew the vivisection and
fix on burial,
allowing transformation
through a birth canal
of sand mites.

But in adoration
we brought her inland,
back behind the guarding hill.

Given dislocation,
next time will she fly or waddle?
Will she exchange her shirt and tails
for multi-colours
underneath the apple tree,
where parrots crack and glean
and scattered seed-fall shoots
to knot a praying mat
of green?

I, Me, You and They

What drew two children close,
not knowing what each would later be?
What seeds were planted in soil
too deep to see?
Can we be more visible
to childhood friends
than to the Me?

An eight-year-old
I sometimes walked with
stunned me half a lifetime later with
unimagined childhood acts of mine,
that freed her from
a bullseye on her back.
My memory still is blank, but hers,
hums with deepest Me.

You too, must have seen more than I,
because you held our thread
through scores of busy years
that cast my part as
deaf and almost mute.
Looking back, I recognise
the constant Me, directing.

At first invisible,
indivisible from muscle and blood,
its contrapuntal glide
makes us all virtuosos,
vanishing, closed-eyed
into music we play
in the keys of each day
with fingers pressing out time
in fast running lines
laid down and carried through an
opus of axons and neurons.

To see the score,
press pause on I,
and just as contour drawing
corrects imagined line,
savour now with mindful eyes,
the child,
absorbed in favoured doings.
Converse, and question every bar
of that child's how,
so natural, that till now
you overlooked it.

Ask what strengths and values
each bar reveals, and blend them
to a portrait of the constant Me,
on which I
can safely now rely.

This portrait's steady glow
can correct distortions
forged by troubled times,
and crippling masterclasses of They,
where at best, approval trickles
through applause,
to silence.

Try asking how the world would be
without the strengths in Me.
Then gift yourself
the value that you find.

For good or ill, I falls in love
when another person
slides the lock to relations
once depended on for life.
Whereas Me draws in friends
who hear its music
in visceral connection
that never severs,
whatever happens or
how much separated time elapses.

The Dreaming

In The Dreaming,
pewter-polished mud flats
shimmer on,
in intimate embrace
of giant mother river snake
who slithers through
the mangrove's oxidising might,
polished, smooth and glimmer bright.

And in The Dreaming,
sand plains wrinkle tightly
in the drag and slack of aging skin
all parched and thin,
and ancient ranges
scar the chest of desert
with initiation welts.

All these elders of the land
live long
in drone and stick of song
and hands that finger out
their actions in the sand

or paint clay patterns on the leaping
crouch and stamp of dance.

In The Dreaming,
Being is in numinous surround
that lifts life high -
Massive spire and domes
of banded stone.
Desert's teeming dot and line.
Black night's star shine.

In rhythmic flow,
The Dreaming modulates
in changing forms and keys.
Blood of lava cooled to stone.
Plains fed by ash and breath
of spouting fire.
Seas that build tsunamis
also dim and slow to mirrored sky.

And the country glows or glowers
in early morning light
and glows or glowers once again
as twilight fades to night.

Waterfall

From Dreaming to dreaming,
tracks to waterfalls know
every kind of step,
each tread, a signature -
webbed or clawed,
pawed or shod.

Each track is narrow,
often overgrown.

And each track
must be walked
alone.

Illawarra Tao

You
are the blaze of Illawarra flame
on green,
against bright mountain's
blue suffuse.

Black and white egrets tag you
in the cattle's footholds,
picking in the clod
from bands that search
in lines across the land
finding fragments of You.

You
are the sheen
that grows between
old world's drought
and floods
that swell new shoots and buds.

At the face of
salt and river water's meeting,
You are the white foam spiral
of their whirling,
slow embrace.

Above the sea
you are sun shimmer.
In surging tide
you are the salt spray,
and sparkling eddies
of The Great Wave.

And at thought's blunt end
You are blue wren,
wagtail wing, that scutters
on expiring breeze
with dancing light,
all fluttered
on flowering,
flaming Illawarra trees.

Epilogue

When I am laid,
am laid in earth,
remember me in sun on trees
and boots that crunch in snow.
Take me through high places
where I could not go.

Notes to First Nations Detail

Koroitj-condeet Country

This poem refers to the Tower Hill volcano and its surrounds between Warrnambool and Port Fairy. Its eruption 35,000 years ago, dates aboriginal presence, as shown by oral history, place names and archaeological evidence of longstanding occupation.

Nights like This

All place names in this poem refer to volcanic cones, lakes, and a river in the Girrae Wurrong Country that approximates Corangamite shire boundaries. The poem incorporates elements of the creation story of Camperdown's twin lakes and land to the western border of Girrae Country. Women hit rolled up possum-skin cloaks as drums to accompany dance. The inside skin of cloaks was covered in pokerworked designs.

Sing Merrijig

Recorded indigenous usages of *merrijig* suggests it is associated with supernatural power. To "*jump up*" meant to revive after death as plants appear to do. Initially, the invaders were thought of as dead relatives who had come alive without skin. Indigenous food sources, including the staple tuber of *murnong daisy*, were destroyed by the introduction of six and a half million sheep to Victoria, over the first ten years of occupation. *Brung brung* refers to firearms.

Escape from Murdering Gully

Murdering Gully is on Mt. Emu Creek (*Tarnpirr*), thirty-two kilometres north of Camperdown. A woman and child escaped a massacre by men Frederick Taylor led. After being pursued by horsemen to Lake Bullen Merri, they hid in a crevice there before swimming across the lake.

Australia's First Touring Team: 1867-1868

The cricket team in this poem was a 'for profit' private venture that left Victoria against Government directive. On behalf of investors, these First Nations cricketers were recruited from around present-day Harrow. Unaarinimin, the captain, was born five years after the first explorer, Mitchell, passed through and 18 months after the massacre of up to seventy at The Hummocks, a little to the south. Native dwellings in the region were described in the diaries of Mitchell and the chief protector George Robinson, as large enough for forty or fifty people and strong enough for a horse to ride over without damage. *Mindye* was the local name of the being who punished lore breaking. When Robinson enquired about apparent smallpox scars on the faces of local aborigines, he was told the scars resulted from tribes north of the Murray River sending Mindye in mist.

Between

Tommie Brown was an aboriginal boy used by landholder, Thomas Brown (ie. Rolf Bolderwood), as a messenger across Budj Bim lava flow, which was too treacherous for horses.

My great, great grandfather, whose mother was unknown, had the same name and had arrived in Port Fairy in 1837 as an eight-year-old. The poem also alludes to petitions made by Gunditjmara women to government authorities and visiting Royalty following the 1886 decision to remove all mixed-race residents from the Lake Condah reserve.

Grandfather

Budj Bim is a nested volcanic landscape that includes the volcanic cone and lake (formerly known as Mount Eccles), the original Condah Aboriginal reservation and a 6,500-year-old indigenous aquaculture system. My grandmother grew up on the top of the Budj Bim volcano and developed friendships with aboriginal workers she later cooked for at the local sheep station. Gunditjmara cultural knowledge includes memory of the volcano's eruption and views its lava flows as the blood vessels of Budj Bim. The last section of the road to Port Fairy from Hamilton crosses one of these flows. Before being straightened, it was a torturous roller coaster, first travelled by First Nations ancestors, then bullock trains and cars. *Dumwul* is the highest peak of Gariweird (the Grampians), Mt William. *Koloror* is the First Nations name for the Mt Rouse volcanic complex at Penshurst. It was the site of the first regional, aboriginal protectorate, which quickly failed.

My ex-convict ancestor moved there in the 1860's after seeing the country as a bullock train carrier.

The Boonong were clans whose country was Lake Tyrrell, near Sea Lake, from which pink salt was carted via bullock train over 400 kilometres south, to the coastal port. My grandfather recalled his horror at seeing bones said to be a poisoned clan, on such a trip in about 1900. Clan Lore regards the lake as a meeting of earth and sky realms and includes astronomical knowledge verified by modern telescopes.

Echo

Kuungahnaaliwill is the clan-name for the strip of land between the Port Fairy East Beach and what was once extensive marshland. The marshland contained a substantial fish-trapping weir and First Nations congregated there in summer. From the 1950s Kuungahnaaliwill became a favoured holiday camping destination for Western District families.

Movement Three Haiku

Nematodophagous fungi are strings of single cells that, on touch, instantly trap specific species of microscopic nematode worms. In one species, three cells instantly inflate around the worm, enabling its consumption.

Spellings

Spellings of aboriginal spoken language vary between transcribers, clan dialects and over time. Eg. Bundjil's punisher spelt Mindye or Mindi. Murnong is a Woi Wurrong word used in English to cover the yam daisy's multiple names in different language locations.

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