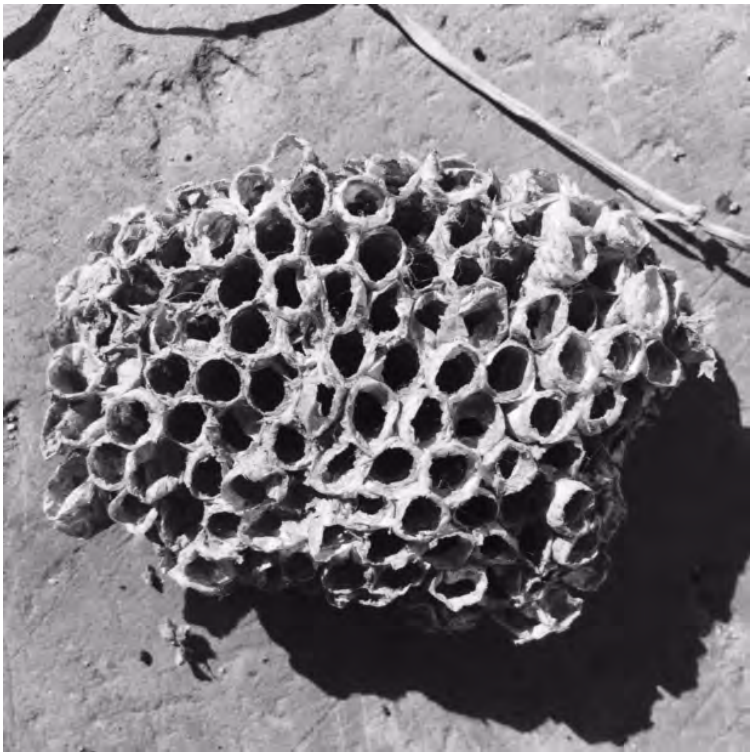
Mind Moon Circle

Journal of the Sydney Zen Centre



HOME • SPRING 2017

HOME

Editors: Helen Sanderson & Jason Koh. Cover photos: Helen Sanderson.

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The theme of the next issue of Mind Moon Circle (Summer 2018) will be "Humour in Zen" edited by Philip Long to be published in February 2018. Send your article, poem, art, photo, joke, etc. in Word to philiplong@bigpond.com. If you have any questions you can contact him on 0403 901 063 or 02 9489 7096.

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‘HOME’ IS ...?

CAROLINE JOSEPHS

Uncle Max, Yuin Elder Dulumunmun, and a small group of us are sitting around the picnic table in the National Park.

A wallaby is lolloping by, and occasionally, nibbling. Two bush turkeys scuttle by—one chasing the other aggressively. Kookaburras are creating k-k-k-k-k-kkk in the high eucalypts. Our small group draws in together.

Uncle Max asks, *What is your favourite place? Your favourite wind? Your favourite mountain? Your favourite water? Your favourite time of day?* His question seems to imply, ‘Where is *home*, for you?’

I muse on how differently Indigenous people experience ‘home’. ‘Country’ is home ... where you were born, where your mother’s people were born, your grandmother, and so on ... and you ***are*** that country ... not just living in, but *being* it! (A ‘self-portrait’ only exists as *landscape* ... in *Yolngu* Country and language there is no word for ‘self’). Kinship with all, relationship of special kinds—this is what it is ... without that, ‘you’ are nothing ... But kinship includes many aspects of the environment.

I recall at a meeting of whitefella people in Sydney with Uncle Max ... A questioner asks, “Do you people have genealogy, Uncle Max?” Uncle Max responds, “Aah, yes ... certainly we do ... However our genealogy goes back and back to ... kangaroos, trees ... rocks, grasses!”

So what is my favourite place, where I feel ‘right’—as close as I can to a realisation that we are not separate from any living or inanimate being? A sense of real *belonging* ... and where I long to return to, or reside in, over and over again ...? It isn’t where my grandparents came from ... Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Poland ... I have visited the former two ... I wanted to have some sense of the places, acquaint myself with landscape and history. (They were refugees from pogroms). I won’t return ...

Or Scotland? Where my paternal grandparents lived for a time ... I do love its cragginess, its lochs, its people, with their lively grittiness.

I know I love a dawn time of day ... What wind? A gentle summer breeze. A favourite water? The ocean pool nearby ... always the ocean ... What mountain? (I muse on mountains I have climbed, in Kosciusko, in Scotland, in Nepal, Bhutan—but it is *Gulaga* Mountain—which holds really special experiences—opened up over numbers of years—with Uncle Max. With its awe-inspiring rocks, its stories ... Where from the Energy Rock my universe broke open into an explosion of coalescing, overlapping all ...

I have had that experience some other times at Kodoji—after days of retreat.

And what place is home? Now?

I ponder further on this … My 'favourite place' at this moment? Where is home? … First springing to mind – where I now tap away on the laptop … my living room with its French doors leading to the deck where the full moon is be viewed, or a sunset orange-pink, or the first rays of dawn creeping into the huge eucalypt tree that flurries into the sky … holding parrots and magpies, rosellas, kookaburras, lorikeets … A deck leads to the garden and the painting studio at the end of the greenery, with wide folding doors—my morning work space in the winter sun … the 'pavilion'.

There I *become* painting, immersed, for the morning—deeply engrossed in the next brushstroke, the next colour mixing, the next texture, the movement of line … stepping back from the work at various intervals—to view and reflect, to sit and see, the next change. Sun spatters across the white pebbles in a strip along the ground at the opening of the 'pav'. My artwork hangs on studio walls, too big and too much to go any more under beds …

Around the garden in between the pav-studio and the living room—tree fern, bird's nest ferns, palms, herbs, climbing jasmine, and small structures encased in black or brown bamboo, receding into vines of greenery … Small shrubs tussle for space, pots with seedlings – forget-me-nots, *Kumato* tomatoes, sunflowers, orchids … and the tiny square posters among the flowers indicating resting places for ashes of Mushin and Zelia … our two cats that died (at 18 or so) within a month of each other, early this year.

To the side of the living room—again tucked behind two bamboo-encased doors … the wood shed—houses the logs and pine cones for the slow combustion heater in the living room (a modern version with a wide large glass window to view the flames and keep grandchildren safe). I love the ritual of choosing kindling, paper, pine cones (collected with my grandchildren in bags from parks) and stacking with pieces of split hardwood for the fires in winter … so gloriously flaming, smouldering, glowing in the cold evenings …

I love my coffee table hand-made by an artist friend some years ago, white distressed timber. On it, an arrangement of small smooth stones…some with words painted on them ('emergence', 'Maitri', 'remember', 'wisdom', 'transience') … the words hidden. I love Jizo on the wood fire … an 'accident' of firing but to me quite lovely, revealing partially its tessellated layer of orange and terracotta with its ragged edge black overlay over some of a deeper fired layer. It was said (by Janet) to be a 'reject', but to me it is a wonder of Zen expression and life! Cracked, imperfect, but still smiling, grateful hands in gassho!

There is a saying, 'Home is where the heart is' … I wonder whether it is 'where the ***hearth*** is'?

As a child I grew up in a home with an open fire … it was where the family assembled with 'Chummy' the fox terrier … after dinner … to read or play games … In most of my houses I have had an open fire … Once it would have been where we cooked … There have been many camping trips where I have done that in the past … The fire is the place that draws us in to its leaping, dancing, evanescent flames, enduring warmth …

Now my wood stove beckons on cold nights … The fire suggests the source of life, the transience of the present, ever moving, ever in flux …

This living room has my long large desk, clutter and debris of all the current 'projects' in a melee of detritus on top, with camera, printer, scanner, sun-

glasses, notebooks, diary, sticky tape, stapler, clock, mobile, decorative holders of scissors and pens, nail files, blu-tac, as well as earphones, business cards, phone, speakers, papers, music, quotes, contacts, 'New Yorker' article, and more ... beside the lounges, one of the many book cases ... stacked with favourites ... Indigenous storytelling, culture—*A Place for Strangers* by Tony Swain, *Nourishing Terrains*: Deborah Bird Rose, Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers*, Howard Morphy, *Ancestral Connections*, my dear friend, Burnun Burnum's *Aboriginal Australia*, Philosophy—David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Art—Judy Watson, Andy Goldsworthy, Klimt, Klee, Chagall, and many more, History—Greg Dening, *Performances*, novels indelible in the mind: *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, *Kavalier & Clay* by Michael Chabon, I have met most of these authors and have worked with some, chatted, heard their talks, the books are 'old friends' reminding me of all that richness and an ongoing and endless searching ...

A colonial dresser stands in bare pine, holding many memories and stories...my collection of tiny jugs picked up in different markets, shops, and different countries, the Russian dolls, family photos, a collection of very tiny baskets, a large mug my grandson brought back for me from France this year ... bearing a message: *'Je suis allé à la montagne et j'ai pensé à toi!'* even though he didn't understand what the words said! The olive-coloured Chinese dresser beside the colonial is a bit of a different cultural mix, but why not? It came with D. I maintain it is 'becoming friends' with the colonial dresser! It holds some Aboriginal artworks dear to me ... the sky, bark painting by Gulumbu Yunipingu, a *Yolngu* sculpture of a heron bird, my own 'ancestor boat' ... holding some words and images crafted, and an assortment of photos of four generations of women ... from my family – great grandparents, grandparents, grand-daughter ...

On the wall my paintings ... of Matisse's villa in Vence where we stayed and painted for a week, the recent portrait I've completed of a dear friend sporting a rubber duckie on his head, the favoured portraits of my grandfather with childhood-self with my mother, in his tailoring shop, and another of greedy child-me on his knee in the big lounge chair—diving into the Darrell Lea chocs he always brought. 'The Honey Wind': wanting the challenge of painting the wind, and at the same time evoking a tiny fragment of a *Yolngu* sacred story, a painting of olive tree and roots done in Puglia in Italy, and a small painting of a scene of mountains in Scotland, in Ullapool.

Ron Chan's 'Heart Sutra', in his impeccable Japanese script. A reminder of his last days as well as our conversations, and this a lasting memory and reminder of the heart of practice ... coming home each time to the sutra.

Around the living room ... the Natuzzi lounges I bought in a minute of decision, years ago, knowing they would complete my living space perfectly, the old baskets containing pinecones and wood for the fire.

It seems to me that this 'home' is of the particular, the unique specifics of my life ... a fragment in time, in space ...

There is another 'home' which expresses a universality in its magnitude—where 'I' become a speck, a merged being, in the home of the ocean ... the ocean pool where I swim each day of the year. In its watery depths, sometimes with waves washing over, I delight in my kin—the multitudes of tiny fish—garfish, damsel fish, sometimes a bigger school of hundreds of 'comma' fish (looking like punctuation marks), and many more in the summer, the seaweeds wavering in the tides, the crustaceans – molluscs, sea urchins,

periwinkles, limpets, barnacles, cart-rut shells, anemones, sea slugs, crabs small and large on the rocks, including once my grand-daughter finding a hermit crab, sometimes octopuses, an occasional blue groper, a wobbegong or carpet shark, washed in on high tide and disappearing at another high tide ... the weathered rocks, magnificent in sand and ochre colours ...

Over many years now and even from childhood I was immersed in ocean ... I have become familiar with changing light, tidal shifts, swells, the greys of overcast, the brilliance of sparkles on the ripples in sunshine, dawn yellowing and brushing everything, the stillness of a glass surface of water, sometimes the rough and tumble of huge waves, fear of being sucked out over the wall (it happened to me once)—and the utter delight of the changing colours, clouds, ever-changing white and grey, tinged with colour, the thrill of viewing a pod of dolphins outside the pool, or the breaching of a humpback whale between the pool and Wedding Cake Island! Here I am not separate, looking in, at a distance – 'I' am immersed, in the great depth of the ocean of Life!

Then there is always this home to return to – an ***inner 'home'*** ... A place of resting, stillness, where sounds and memories, thoughts dispel, where breath is fore-fronted, where body dissolves. Where 'monkey mind'—darting and sparring, thinking and planning, recalling and forgetting, judging and appraising—begins to settle into a steady present of ... just this moment, inhale ... just this sound, exhale ... just this sensation in a particular part of the body, inhale ... beyond space and time, exhale...just this breath, just this ... Presence ...

Just this ... ***Home!*** Silence ...

HOME BASE

BRENDON STEWART

I can recommend the film *Ali's Wedding*. This film tells us a little more about living here, being at home here in the land of blue skies and wide brown golden expanses. It isn't a film in the tradition of Chips Rafferty in his khaki uniform and patrolling on horse back or even Bryan Brown extolling with his Balmain contrived ocker voice an Australian glory. This film takes its lead from the concerns of One Nation. Sometimes, when strangers come amongst us there is some pushing and pulling at the history we may have come to think of as ours. Reshuffling our part of this history in ways other than "them and us' requires quite a leap of imagination.

A home fulfils so many needs. It can provide a place for self expression, a bank of memories, a refuge from the outside world, a safe place where one can relax, letting one's hair down as it where, unhappily too, home can sometimes be a place of abuse and fear. For many of us home is the centre of the world, not only

in a geological sense but rather also, in the way a home makes sense for you. I spend some time with men for whom home has stopped making sense. It is as if by way of so many different mishaps these men have migrated and left behind their home. In Graham Greene's novel A Burnt Out Case, Querry, an architect, searches for the opposite of home, an 'empty place' that holds no memories. And yet even as he walks into empty places he finds that it seems always necessary to begin at once to reconstruct the familiar, a routine that helps him survive.

Linkedtohome is the NSW government's go to app for the men who come along to one or other of the many acute need shelters in the metropolitan area of Sydney. Each day at about 9 am they ring through hoping to be accommodated that evening on the floor of a church hall. Some may get lucky and find a bed in a motel. Conversation with the men I meet is often halted and circumspect; not much is discussed. But sometimes a convoluted theological review is opened upon and God gets a mention; probably because we are all meeting up in church. *Linkedtohome* is a clever allusion to the emotional complexity that involves these men having left 'there' home and come to settle 'here'. This is the migrant's tale. Sadly for these men 'here' can be a train carriage over night to Lithgow or a park bench in Woolloomooloo, while the link back home has been lost in disappointment.

This awkward, somewhat offending migration that troubles this big city, leaves me with mixed emotions and does seem intractable. Commonly we refer to this form of journeying as homelessness and do-gooders like me lift a finger to offer consolation. Governments and NGO's discuss in expert ways matters such as affordable housing, safe shelter and health care. In all of this I have never heard a discussion about affordable homing.

I began this with mention of the new film *Ali's Wedding*. This is a feel good movie, reviewed as our own Muslim rom-com that takes the experience of various Melbourne Muslim families and sets them in our collective contemporary experience. It involves a sweet and bold leap of imagination. The tangled nostalgia for a different – and left behind—certainty is dismantled. Love is in the air with this film but to jump from that to the predicament of our cities homeless 'migrants' may seem careless. Pulling at this shaky bow of comparison as to why a film about a young Muslim love tryst and the homeless men who I meet can be made has something to do with how so many of us have categorised them. There is fear abroad; the streets of our cities and minds are unsafe because of Muslim terrorists and drug addled derelicts. This anxiety born of contempt and fakenews, plays out in the game of "them and us".

There can be a resigned and dulled imagination with many of these men that come to Christ Church each Saturday evening. And the language of the street isn't inclined to good will or kind thoughts. Churches and church organisations have traditionally been the way through to a possibility for so many, whose lives are difficult. For me the most potent and heart felt moment comes on the Sunday morning as we hassle the men to leave because the church wants the hall back for their Sunday work. A brief moment of homeliness comes to an end about 7.30 am. Ali, an Iranian and his Lebanese girlfriend Dianne look for a way out of the tight prejudicial world that contains and directs their every move and desire. I have no idea as to how the homeless on our streets or the prejudice that meets a young Muslim man or woman can be truly remedied; yet what happens as Ali and Dianne's romance succeeds is that their community begins to change and a different way of being takes shape.

DWELL

SALLY HOPKINS

"Could this be you?" a big advertisement shouts by
the railway track.
Returning to Bexley in the early hours I see-
"2 COLD TO SLEEP"
above five bodies
lying on the pavement by the stairs.
In the railway tunnel, beggars,
caps out, one trying to whistle,
and more, disconsolate, sitting
in the warmth by the entrance.
The workers plod past , up from their beds,
heading to their jobs in the dark.

I'd never seen beggars until 1956 on the way to England, in Ceylon, in Bombay—"the mendicant hands that beggared all pride/ the squalor—scoured bodies/ thrown down in the gutter to sleep." A shock.

I didn't see them again until San Francisco, so many old men there panhandling. A Sikh at university had told me how, in the great Indian famine, he'd seen corpses in the street and people just walking past, like we walk past the homeless.

I have never felt homeless. Motherless child! Yes. Alone in the world! Yes. It took many many years to learn that I can never be alone. It is an impossibility—Indra's net not just a fanciful metaphor. But never Homeless.

IN my beginnings my parents were living a peripatetic life in England with youthful enthusiasm. One term, in 1934, (the Depression) my teacher father could not get a job, so they bought an old car and moved around England and Wales living in it, camping beside it. Back in Australia, until I was 9, they would travel from Adelaide to Victoria to see their families over Christmas, camping on the roadside and when there, and when returned, leasing another place, thus saving over a month's rent. My mother never wished to own a house, and they had no possessions other than car, clothes, and children until 1942 (in the War) when they had to buy furniture when Dad got a job at a big school and we had to live in the front rooms of the Boarding House. We still often camped—the best family times.

I've slept on beaches, country town parks, verandahs, the bush, sides of the road – it has never been a problem. I was attracted to a gypsy life, the life of the nomadic tribes. But I have never been seriously homeless and in need, or been seriously hungry.

Bound as we are by our experience and ideas of life, it is hard for me to truly understand how it is for the street people with hundreds and hundreds of people walking past unseeing.

It makes it even harder to really understand refugees, and asylum seekers, not just sentimentally. It seems that at present it is readily accepted that "ends justify the means", just as hanging , drawing and quartering were once accepted in the interests of keeping social

order, or keeping the Protestants/ Catholics at bay, or x, y, z. But Indra's Net?

We vow to save the many beings, to embody the way. This is not a feel good path. We are called to DWELL HERE, in each breath. To open, to really hear the cries of the world, be the cries of the world. To be at Home in the world, as the World, and to RESPOND. It is never just me, or you, or them, always US. "We are all in this together" as Aitken Roshi used to say.

A very great challenge.

HERE WE ARE

SALLY HOPKINS

Last year gravity waves were detected, which was like seeing something the width of a human hair in a space from here to the nearest star. So my brother John tells me . This is thought to prove the Big Bang. There is now speculation that there have been many Big Bangs, that Big Bang worlds are infinite.

The vertigo this all induces reminds me of when I first read the Hindu-Buddhist scriptures with their millions of worlds, kalpas on kalpas. So many stories we humans have told ourselves through the millennia ,trying to make ourselves feel at home on this ground, in this group, in this skin. Rich wonderful stories. Terrifying stories of hate, revenge and punishment. Stories of love and wonder and awe.

Sadly we continue to hate and kill for our stories—in groups and as individuals—for in all this vast mystery of life we desperately need certainties to steady us, to give some balance to what is endlessly puzzling and giddy making. We need a home base in an endlessly changing world, an endlessly changing social situation, an endlessly changing body and mental grasp. Too terrifying otherwise.

Each of us has the ability to choose our response, moment by moment, for all that Things are as they are, usually beyond our understanding.

From the home base of this breath, this step, the whole whirling mystery can as it were become entuned, harmonized. Not in any set way, but so that this tiny spark right here can be a note in the whole. There can be joy and beauty and love despite the ugliness and sadness and uncertainty. There can be a moment by moment dance in this Not Knowing, this vast mystery of life. The day starts in a burst of colour, the first bird sings. Breath comes in and out, feet touch the ground, and we greet our neighbor. This great mysterious LIFE.

Photo: Glenys Jackson

HOME AT LAST IN UTTER HOMELESSNESS

DANNY BANYER

There is no home for me
in this world.
Though I have longed for
a place to call my own;
a place to put down my bag
and plant my roots,
I see now: there is no such place.

For the sands are endlessly shifting,
and from the cradle to the grave
we go naked through life.

Finally the search is ended -
home at last in utter homelessness.

I wrote this poem at a time in my life when I was very unattached. I had no steady job, no relationship, and no commitments. I lived more or less out of a backpack and would move on as opportunity or fancy dictated. I might live somewhere for six months, buy cheap furniture or use whatever was left behind by someone vacating a room in a share house, and then give everything away again before moving on. During these precious years of my early twenties I spent some time travelling on the north coast of NSW, did my first meditation retreat, spent two stints in Tasmania, lived and worked for a time at a Vipassana retreat centre, all the while plumbing the depths of life, friendship, philosophy and the dharma. My childhood was also nomadic—my mother, my sisters and I moved many times, never staying in one place for more than a couple of years. These days (my early thirties) I'm a bit more settled. I've been living in my unit with my partner now for nearly seven years and have been working full time all the while. We rent our unit and don't have any children, so I still don't have those big financial or parental responsibilities, but this is the most settled I've ever been. When I look back it's easy to see how a carefree life of few possessions and no fixed abode would foster the kind of attitude in my poem. Nevertheless, the poem's words still ring true for me, and I hope they always will.

The Buddha identified three kinds of suffering: suffering of suffering (physical and mental pain), the suffering of change (losing things we love and getting things we don't want) and suffering of conditioned existence (an inherent inability of conditioned phenomena to provide permanent satisfaction). When we become very settled in our lives there's a risk of becoming dependent on having things continue in the same way. Routine, and the way we perceive time, causes us to imagine permanence in the people and places around us. Day after day, year after year, things seem to plod along more or less the same, and it all sort of congeals into a static picture that we settle down into and take for granted. Of course, it's

not really like this. Imagine those short years of human life in contrast to geological time—of mountains rising and falling and continents drifting together and apart. The stability of home, in the sense of a safe and comfortable house, an income, enough to eat, loving family and friends, appears very fragile when we take a step back a look at the bigger picture. A home is an oasis of calm in a sea of chaos and, relatively speaking, must be a very rare thing!

All Buddhists know about impermanence but it doesn't seem to stop us from settling comfortably into the illusion of permanence, or indeed from longing for it if our lives are less stable. It's good to have a home, of course, and the sanctuary that each of us carves out in our short lives is necessary for our flourishing—it's a beautiful expression of our humanity and we should treasure it and protect it. The challenge for us is how to remain grounded in the truth of impermanence—of homelessness—despite the persistent illusion of permanence. Firstly, I think we need a good conceptual grasp of impermanence and then we need to apply mindfulness—in the 'remembering' sense of the word—to keep bringing it to mind. This means looking for and meditating on the outward signs of impermanence in our lives—noticing the changes that take place in ourselves and in the world around us—and even thinking about impermanence on the scale of lifetimes, nations, cultures, civilisations, geological changes, planets and stars. We can cultivate an attitude of acceptance and even reverence toward impermanence. Even in our sadness or disappointment, there can be joy and a sensitivity to the way that departed things make room for new growth. Though we recognise the struggle and the desire for good things to remain unchanging, we know that we must be gracious and find the space to let them go.

In the Buddha's time, 'going forth into homelessness' was to take up the way as either a wandering ascetic or, in the Buddhist context, as an ordained monk in the Sangha. It was to leave the domestic life and devote all of one's time to spiritual practice. We lay people too should see our practice as going forth into homelessness. Though we do not leave our domestic lives or our physical homes, we take up the way of spiritual and psychological homelessness. That is, we make a deep commitment to the acceptance of impermanence—the surrender to impermanence—turning away from the usual state of refusal and aversion to it. There are many ways and places that we try to make a home in the ineffable stream of experience that we call life. Finding our home in utter homelessness really means to see things as the Buddha asks us to in the Diamond Sutra:

"As a lamp, a cataract, a star in space
an illusion, a dewdrop, a bubble
a dream, a cloud, a flash of lightning
view all created things like this."
(Red Pine translation)

Can we find our home in a world like this? Amongst the insubstantial cloud? In the momentary flash of lightning? In the evaporating dewdrop? The impossibly distant star? I think that this is the only kind of world we'll find it in. This is what our practice is all about.

NEW STORIES OF HOME

DAVID POINTON

When astronauts sent back images of Earth from outer space, for the first time we were able to see our home from the outside. Picture it now: a blue sphere suspended amidst an infinite ink-black backdrop, swirling with oceans, clouds, forests and deserts. Home is where the heart is, and each time I picture this image, I feel warmth and love.

Recently at a conference I attended, hosted by the New Economy Network Australia, the keynote speaker deftly unpacked the madness of our current economic system: designed to grow perpetually on a finite planet, extractive and linear in its function rather than cyclical like nature, generating toxic waste into our oceans, rivers and land, widening the chasm between the haves and have-nots, re-framing us as consumers and not citizens, and drawing down a massive debt on future thrivability for all species, ourselves included. Then on the screen, up flashed an image of our beautiful home amidst the stars. He paused for a beat, and said, 'If you look at Earth from space, you can't see the economy!'

How have we ended up with this problem, in which our systems for living are at odds with the truth of our existence, namely that we are all of the Earth, we have only this home, and we are all in it together? If we love our Earth, why don't we live as if we do?

Underlying the systemic challenges we face in these turbulent and unsustainable times are deeper cultural issues. Culture can be experienced as the differences we see between regions when we travel, or the norms of behaviour and etiquette of any group. Yet under their surface, cultures are underpinned by a set of stories, world-views, beliefs and values that answer fundamental questions about who we are, how we got here, where we're going, and how this world works.

From these shared narratives arise our ways of living together.

Whilst there are 7.5 billion unique world-views, there are common patterns and dominant narratives that have lead to our complicity in current systems. For example, in one way or another, we all play a part in the story of perpetual growth that underlies our economy. We also have stories of how we relate with our Earth home. Whilst we might love nature, it seems the dominant narratives that have emerged since our hunter-gatherer days see us as separate from Mother Earth. And the modern story of 'me' has begun to supersede the story of 'we', as we are conditioned to pursue self-interest ahead of what is good for the whole.

Fortunately, our stories, and thus our systems for living, are created by us, and so we have the opportunity to change them in order to find ways of being in harmony with Earth.

But changing stories isn't as simple as closing the book we have been reading from and opening a new one. Our own world-views are deeply embodied, entangled with our own identities, the habit patterns of our minds, and our somatic knowing and being. Our collective stories are reinforced and perpetuated through the outer world constructs of our societies: our businesses, politics, economics and media, as well as the social norms of our conversations and daily interactions. We are bombarded with messages to consume, for example, and then we delight in each other's new consumptive purchases.

This is where the work of cultivating inner consciousness becomes so relevant. As we pursue the path of Zen and awaken to our true selves as well as to the world around us, we can become more aware of our own subtly-held stories. As our awareness becomes more fine-grained, we begin to observe the impermanence of our thoughts, and the recurring habit patterns of our mind and emotions. We can notice where we hold on tightly to our existing world-views as if they are solid objects. We can feel more acutely the anger or resistance coursing through our bodies when our world-views are triggered. Zazen sitting meditation becomes a valuable practice for transforming our own narratives.

The Great Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra reminds us that 'Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness no other than form'. This non-dual wisdom reveals the dependent co-arising between our thinking and world-views, and the outer world we live in. It invites us to practice suspending our attachment to the way things should be, and to hold more lightly the stories we see as truth as we also begin to see the world around us anew.

As we do so we become more able to participate in transforming shared cultural narratives through our conversations, modelling and behaviour, and through actions and projects we might pursue toward more life-giving systems.

Zen has an important part to play in bringing forth new stories about how to live in this world in harmony with all of life, so that together, through our inner lives and our systems for living, we can love and regenerate this blue Earth, our one and only home.

CREATIVE COMMONS: SHARING AND NON-ATTACHMENT

SEAN LOUGHMAN

After years of resistance, I recently bought myself a “smart” phone. As a result, I have been listening to some fantastic dharma podcasts from various Zen centres and religions around the world. This has also led me to read some of their publications, available on their websites. As well as opening my eyes to new viewpoints, it made me realise that Sydney Zen Centre's contributions to the Dharma, in the form of MMC and dharma talks are (in my very humble opinion!) as good as the best of them. I have greatly benefitted from the creative contributions from home and abroad and this led to me wondering how we can best return the favour.

Copyright is probably the last thing you think about when you enjoy or even submit work to MMC or zazenkai, but how an organisation chooses to license its creative work says something about its values. At present, ownership and permissions surrounding SZC-published work is unspecified and ambiguous. Does the contributor own the work or SZC? You won't find any copyright notice in this issue of MMC, for example (although by default, copyright is conferred to the creator by Australian law).

I think most people would agree that clarity is a good thing. And if we are to make intellectual property rights clearer, it is worth also considering the most appropriate rights for SZC’s works. There are copyright licenses which I believe better reflect our values and serve our goals of sharing the Dharma than Australian copyright. You may have guessed that I am talking about the Creative Commons licenses.

The Creative Commons licenses are a flexible and permissive family of licenses that complement traditional copyright and can be mixed and matched to suit one's needs. There are four main conditions that can be applied and combined.

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There is also the option to apply none of the above conditions, but still reserve some rights, or even abrogate all rights[1]. Full details can be found on the Creative Commons site[2].

I believe that an *Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike* license[3] would be most appropriate for SZC. *Attribution*, because it creates a paper trail to the original source, which has numerous benefits. *NonCommercial* ensures spirituality remains uninfluenced by financial considerations in future work. *ShareAlike* ensures all future work preserves the same rights.

This may seem more restrictive than Australian copyright. However, Creative Commons allows for the full or partial reuse or even republication of a work without express permission. Like the medieval commons, after which they are named, such licensed works are intended to be shared responsibly. Making it easier for others to share and build upon our work through such a license is closer than traditional copyright to what I consider to be the spirit of giving and non-attachment of zen. I also find using Creative Commons work is a no-brainer in comparison to traditionally copyrighted work.

The essence of zen is unwriteable and in some ways it is better for copyright also to be left unwritten. I feel like I have let the genie out of the bottle and popped your copyright beginner's mind. It is a delicate issue, since nobody wants to see MMC littered with various copyright notices, or impose a license against a contributor's will. However, I hope after consideration, we can again "forget" copyright and arrive at a deeper and more engaged "beginner's mind".

If you have any thoughts on this issue, please discuss them on the SZC mailing list, confidentially with Kerry Stewart before the next board meeting or at the meeting itself.

Naturally, this article is published under such a license.

1. https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain/cc0/

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3. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/

"GOING AND COMING: NEVER LEAVING HOME"

ALLAN MARETT

Not falling into being or not-being—who can be in accord with this.[1]
Everyone longs to leave the mundane stream,
yet finally you return and sit in the charcoal heap.[2]
(Dongshan's Five Ranks, Series 1, Mode 5)

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1. The translation of the first line is taken from: Aitken, Robert, "The Five Modes of Tung-shan" *The Morning Star: New and Selected Zen Writings*, Washington: Shoemaker Hoard, 2003, p.158.

2. The translation of the second and third lines is from: Bolleter, Ross, *Dongshan's Five Ranks: Keys to Enlightenment*, Boston:Wisdom Press, 2014, p.4

Dongshan Liangjie [Tung-shan Liang-chieh] (807—869), whose name we chant as part of our sutra service, founded the Caodong school of Buddhism, which was transmitted by Dôgen Zenji to Japan, where it is known as the Sôtô school. The two series of poems, known as Dongshan's Five Ranks are amongst our foremost treasures.

Dongshan's poem speaks of returning home to sit in the charcoal heap—a traditional image for Nirvana, where the flames of passion have completely died away. A heap of charcoal and ash is all that is left of the fuel with which—through our addiction to the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance—we feed the fires of those passions. This image seems to implies that in order to realise Nirvana we must quench those flames by managing or even curbing our passions. Dongshan, however, presents a different view: that we encounter Nirvana not by leaving the flux of life, but by embracing it.

We might well imagine—and such views are not uncommon among Buddhist practitioners— that in order to realise that which is beyond birth and death (beyond being or not-being) we must somehow leave the relative world (the mundane stream—the flow of everyday life), but nothing could be further from the truth. Our Essential Nature lies right there in those very difficulties—in the very grit of our lives—not somehow outside them. It lies right there in our joys and passions, not in some other place.

Here is where we find our true home, where form and emptiness, mundane stream and charcoal heap, are inseparable. This is the bodhisattva path. As Ross Bolleter explains with reference to Dongshan's verse, far

from leading to quiescence or withdrawal, realising this path should enliven our practice in the world.

> *"Returning" carries the sense of coming home, and "coming home" carries the sense of accepting life as we find it ... Sometimes Buddhist practices of acceptance and equanimity might seem to encourage [giving up on working for change in the world], but here "return" surely means that, freed from the preoccupation with ourselves, we can now invest our live and energy into encouraging others into changing our world for the better. Whatever else the charcoal heap may represent, here it definitely represents a place of work, where we ought to be prepared to get dirty.*
>
> *For me, "returning" or "coming home to the charcoal heap" also means that we allow our woundedness, and thereby minimize unnecessary suffering for others and ourselves; and also that we recognize and allow our darkness, without letting it loose on those around us. We can't sustain luminosity through all this, and if we try to, we're not really in our lives; we end up lacking laughter, and making others uneasy.*[3]

Our true home lies not just in equanimity and joy, but also in the exigencies and difficulties of our life, and in particular, within our responses to them. It lies at the heart of our struggle with issues such as global warming and injustice, as well as our management of our vulnerabilities and our fears, which we work to contain so that they do not spill out and add more grief to an already troubled world. As Dongshan says, we think that what we want is to get out of the flux of everyday life so that we can enter a calm place beyond birth and death but the true home that we actually seek—where we are from birth and death; free from being and non-being—is to be found right here in the very flow of our life: the squawks of the parrots storming through my garden; my concerns as I read in the SMH that by 2040 Sydney will be experiencing 50-degree days; the newly arrived mango that sits in my breakfast bowl; my baseless resentments and fears. I vow to bring them all home!

* * *

In the late 1970s, when I was living in Japan, I met a monk from the Rochester Zen Centre, who gave me a copy of their sutra-book (which I still have). I was particularly struck with their translation of one of the phrases of Hakuin Zenji's Song of Zen. Where we chant, "going and coming, never astray," they chant, "going and coming, never leaving home." At that time I took that idea of "going and coming, but never leaving home" very much to heart, and it's often in the back of my mind as we chant our version of Hakuin's song. Hakuin challenges us to realise that home in our own lives; that home that we never leave, even as we come and go—even as we negotiate the joys and difficulties of our lives. Aitken Roshi used to say, "the song of the Cardinal calls us home." Right now I would say, "home is the roar of the aeroplane passing overhead."

But however attractive and evocative the Rochester Zen Centre version is, we should perhaps ask whether "never leaving home" is an accurate translation of Hakuin's words. What Hakuin wrote was *iku-mo kaeru-mo yoso narazu* (行くも帰るも余所ならず) and there is indeed a sense of "home" implicit in these words. It is expressed primarily by the verb, *kaeru*. which rather than meaning simply "coming back" or "returning" actually means "returning home." *Kaeru* can signify coming home to your house, or to your home town, or to your home country. When the form of returning does not have a sense of a homecoming—for example, coming back to the car, returning to the su-

3. Bolleter 2014: 134.

permarket—we use another verb, *modoru*. And incidentally, Dongshan uses the same character 帰 (*kaeru*) when he talks of returning to sit at the charcoal heap (還帰炭裏坐).

Moreover, it's not just the word *kaeru* that evokes that sense of home in the phrase, *iku-mo kaeru-mo yoso narazu*, it is also the words *yoso narazu*. *Yoso* means "another place" which here is rendered negative by the suffix *narazu*: thus, "no other place." So the way I understand the whole line is something like this: "Going and returning home: no other place." I think the Rochester Zen Centre's take on this line—"going and coming, never leaving home"—captures that sense of the original at least as well, if not better than our, "going and coming, never astray."

The idea that home is nowhere else but right here in the midst of our going and coming—in the midst of the "mundane stream" to use Dongshan's words—brings to mind the story about Layman Pang that is recounted in The Blue Cliff Record as Case 43.

> *Layman Pang was leaving Youshan's temple. Youshan ordered ten of his monks to see him off at the gate. Layman Pang pointed to the falling snow in the air and said, "Beautiful snowflakes! They don't fall in the other place." Among the monks was one named Quan who asked, "Where do they fall?" Layman Pang gave him a slap.*

Why did Layman Pang give Quan a slap? We might say that he was bringing him home. Slap! There is no other place but this! Just as he was leaving the temple to return home—in the literal sense of returning to his wife and children—Layman Pang showed the monk how to return to his original home: "Going and returning home, no other place."

In his comment on this case, Xuedou, the compiler of The Blue Cliff Record says, "At the first words, I would just have hit him [Layman Pang] with a snow ball. How glad he would be." As usual, Xeudou is being somewhat ironic, but nonetheless, snowball is as good as a slap to bring you home. The words you are reading right now can bring you to this very same home, as can the warmth of the spring sun, the call of the butcher bird or an aching knee.

* * *

Some of you might recall the *wangga* song that I sometimes sing at funerals or at the end of *sesshin*, when we are on the point of returning home: "The wind is blowing on my back, bringing me to my true home". The "true home" in the original song is Badjalarr or North Peron Island, the ancestral country (*rak*) of the singer. The word *rak* signifies both your ancestral country—the living entity from which you emerge as birth and to which you return at death—and your campfire, that place of charcoal and ash, which for nomadic people also symbolises home. Even today, when most Aboriginal people are no longer nomadic, the identity of home, camp and campfire is still understood and cherished. People still refer to their home as their "camp."

Last week I was in Melbourne for a memorial symposium and service for my dear *Yolngu* friend and colleague, Dr Joe Gumbula, who once played didjeridu for me when I sang "the wind is blowing on my back" at Kodoji (see photo below). In his memorial lecture, which was also published in The Conversation, Professor Aaron Corn passed on to us something that Dr Gumbula had told him about the intergenerational significance of ash in the singing of ancestral songs, known as *manikay* in Gumbula's part of the world.

> *... the Manikay [song] tradition is both a creative and an intellectual medium, as well as a sacred one. Singers become seasoned thinkers who curate and extend the contents and contexts of their performances to mediate ancestrally-informed understandings of the nature of existence and theorise their relevance for today. It expresses a balanced interplay between tradition and innovation in thought and practice that* Yolngu *typically liken to an ancestral campfire site, where [by singing, dancing and performing ceremony] each new generation of the living adds its own layer of ash.*[4]

Gumbula's words draw attention to a "balanced interplay between tradition and innovation"—where "tradition" refers to "ancestrally informed understandings of the nature of existence," and "innovation" refers to the ceremonial enactment of these deep understanding in the relative world of here and now. The image of an ancestral campfire unites both these perspectives: the ash created by present action adds to and mingles with the layers of ash already laid down by the ancestors.

This image resonated for me with Dongshan's lines: "Everyone longs to leave the mundane stream, yet finally you return and sit in the charcoal heap." Something quite profound is shared between Dongshan's charcoal heap and the image of ash laid down through ancestral action. In each case there is an intersection between deep eternal truth and action in the present moment. In the case of manikay the intersection of the present action of singing sacred songs with ancestral knowledge is expressed in the mingling of ash within the ancestral campfire; in the case of Dongshan, the flux of everyday life intersects with the charcoal heap that lies beyond being and non-being.

For me—and perhaps this is where I've been heading all along in my rambling meditation on the theme of "home"—these resonances between the sacred and profound insights of an old Zen teacher from ninth-century China and the wisdom and beauty of our ancient-and-at-the-same-time-contemporary indigenous traditions is something that we—as people living in Australia today—can take up and freely use in order to realise our true home on this ancient ground.

4. Corn, Aaron, "Friday essay: Dr Joe Gumbula, the ancestral chorus, and how we value Indigenous knowledges", The Conversation 29 September 2017. Aversion of this article was also given at the University of Melbourne on 27 September as "The Gumbula Memorial Lecture".

A DREAM WHILST ON SESSHIN

JANET SELBY

This year had been a big one for me. Selling the family home I had lived in for 17 years meant decluttering on a huge scale. Putting it on the market meant creating a magazine style interior, and having open days meant keeping it tidy (don't open the wardrobes!)

The stress of selling and finding a new place to live was relieved by a trip to Central Australia where I had the opportunity to centre myself quite literally—feet on the ancient ground, walking the path—during the six weeks' settlement period.

After having relocated from Jannali, Place of the Moon, to Kirrawee, Place of the White Cockatoo (based on local Dharawal language), I attended Spring Sesshin with the feeling that the inside of my skull was coated with glug and other yukky stuff, in need of a pressure hose to scour it off.

After a few days settling into the rhythm of practice at sesshin, the opportunity to let the glug dissolve, appeared in this dream:

I had a supervisor.
We were preparing for a development.
I was clearing away the dry grasses and uncovered something.
'What's that?' I asked.
'It's Jannali'—Ahh! HOME!
I had uncovered my beloved bush rocks:- the rocks I had grown up scampering upon as a child in Jannali.
—I touched the rocks.

Then I woke up and was smiling.

YEARNING TO BE AT HOME

KIM BAGOT

(Remarks honouring Robert Aitken Roshi on the centenary of his birth (1917), at the shakuhachi concert given by Grand Master Riley Lee on 29 August.)

Riley has just played Shingetsu or, Heart Moon; I am trying speak from my heart and so this might sound a bit corny and like pickings from a “rag and bone shop”.

I simply want to say that Robert Aitken was the wisest and kindest person I have ever met ... with the possible exception of Ann Aitken, who had a natural serenity about her character. Indeed, there was a joke in the Hawaii sangha that Roshi was just a front man and the real teacher was Ann Aitken!

Robert Aitken showed that the way of nobleness of character (recall our vow to embody the noble eightfold path), is the way of humility and the way of not knowing. Personally, I felt completely safe with him as with no other person to unburden myself of the most painful and intimate things.

Although he was very erudite and had a big intellect, Roshi didn't have a “big head”, or big ego. He said casually once that he had resigned himself for a long time to being a kind of junior leader in Zen because he didn't seem to be progressing in the koan curriculum; bear in mind that he had first encountered Zen with R. H. Blyth in 1941, and was sitting at monasteries in Japan from 1950.

In the end he became a doyen of American Zen teachers, the one referred to in times of crisis. Tears welled up in his eyes spontaneously when he told us in a teisho at the first sesshin in 1979, about his debt to Yamada Roshi who had inspired him to move along the path after decades of faithful practice. I never tire of re-reading Robert Aitken's writings and still find something fresh within a page or two.

His integrity and high standards extended to his own work and writings. In his last published Teisho for the 50th anniversary of the Diamond Sanhga in Hawaii,

he made a point of correcting something that he had written 30 years before; this was not unusual for the old boss!

I think Robert Aitken Felt at home in Australia. Michael Keiran, now the resident teacher in Hawaii, said he was “different” when he was in Australia. Roshi joked more than once that he wanted to be reborn as an Australian.

I first met Robert Aitkin in April 1979 when he and Michael Kieran emerged at Sydney airport through the customs door. I had been listening to his voice giving Zen talks for two years prior, on dinky little audio tape players. I guess my first impression was his “noble walk”, like some long-legged water bird; his upright posture.

His suit looked somehow old-fashioned; I later told us it was hand made in Japan, and the pinstripe was very clearly handsewn. His shoes looked somehow odd- he told me later that he had been trying to be “Buddhist” about shoes but was giving up on non-leather materials as they tended to fall apart. In any case I felt instantly at home and safe in his presence.

Roshi “walked his talk” and early on told us that a good Zen teacher will go out of their way to discourage a guru relationship and “transference”; he was quite frank about his personal foibles. When I call Robert Aitken to mind my impression is—as well as his shining integrity with deep, expansive wisdom—of his sparkling, ready sense of humour.

For example, one evening at an early question-and-answer session someone asked him about his views on reincarnation. Roshi replied straight away, “can I get back to you on that!” ... (it was late in the evening, and it seemed to me that that person was hung up about it and a long discussion could ensue).

Also, 30 years after his first visit to Australia, in Hawaii at the 50th anniversary celebration of the diamond sangha, he was mentioning things about each of the countries where his students had come from. He said, “ ... and I came to Australia to learn a sense of humour!” and then retold the following humorous episode, (retelling a joke can often kill it but the old boss did so I will have a go).

In the first week in 1979 on the first car trip, to the Blue Mountains, he had offered, fairly insistently, three times, to pay for the petrol. At our third time one of us in the back of the car straight away piped up in mock sotto voce, “Typical Yank ... he comes down here and tries to throw his money around!” We all laughed joyously led by Aitken Roshi.

When I was collecting my thoughts for this presentation I happened to hear another great teacher, B B King, on the Stormy Monday Blues & Roots radio program singing,

“ ...music is love and love is music ...”.

Listening to Riley perhaps we could say,

“ Music is awakening and awakening is music ...”

Finally, Riley's first piece tonight was, “Yearning for the Bell”. I still deeply yearn to hear Roshi’s bell—like wisdom, always ringing true, awakening me to the truth and bringing me home.

JUKAI VOWS

BRITTA BIEDERMAN

Taken diring Spring Sesshin with Gillian Coote Roshi at Kodoji, 6 October 2017.

VOWS OF REFUGE

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I vow to listen to the birds, crickets, the grasses, the wind, the rain, and the ancient ground. I vow to be curious about my true nature and the true nature of other.

I take refuge in the Dharma.

I vow to the mysterious unknown, the unfathomable ancient, the subtle synchronicity, and the wondrous sounds. I vow to be completely present to the here and now.

I take refuge in the Sangha.

I vow to contribute to my community, cultivating warmth, inclusion, openness, and practice of the way. Community is nurture, nurture builds community.

THREE PURE PRECEPTS

I vow to keep all precepts.

I vow to all beings to establish and maintain a steady practice. The daily sit brings subtle change. This little window of calm tomorrow, that less defensive response next week.

I vow to practice all good Dharmas.

I vow to keep my heart open, even when experiencing anger, abuse, and mistrust. I realise that many of those who abuse or mistrust, have received abuse and betray. No one to blame. Compassionate hearts are opening for trust and warmth.

I vow to save the many beings.

I vow not to fall into resignation and avoidance of all the suffering around me. I am grateful for the geographical randomness I was born into and I vow to share my good fortune.

10 GRAVE PRECEPTS

I take up the way of not killing.

I recognise that non-action contributes to killing as much as action does. I greet the caterpillars in the nasturtiums, the beetles in the rose bushes, and the rats in the roof.

I take up the way of not stealing.

Sinking into this country, acknowledging the ancestors of this land, being attentive to its dreaming: song of the red-tailed cockatoo, the sound of the curra-wong and the magpie, the dance of the blue wren, and the call of the boobook. The longer I listen, the more I

care. The longer I listen, the more I am humbled by 'budja' [Noongar for 'country'].

I take up the way of not misusing sex.

I acknowledge my attractions, and desires, while I respect boundaries. I am grateful for the trust that is given to me and recognise its fragile preciousness.

I recognise that my white heterosexual mindset gives me privileges that are dominating the law, easily causing entitlement. I stand up for every being who is discriminated for whom they love. There is no right or wrong love. Love is love.

I take up the way of not speaking falsely.

I speak from the heart when wrong accusations are made. I don't join in when invited.

I take up the way of not giving or taking drugs.

I choose not to reach for the iPhone or bury myself with work when insecurities and vulnerabilities arise,

Breathing in – I lean back slowly,
breathing out, a pause.
Breathing in, I let those unwanted feelings enter.
Breathing out, I let them go.

I take up the way of letting go of the urge to control others, knowing that this can push them into addiction.

I take up the way not discussing faults of others.

I am curious about my need to judge. If an action affects me, I gently speak about my own experience.

I take up the way of not praising myself while abusing others.

When I hear blowing my own trumpet, or putting myself down, I let the bird call enter, the air dance on my skin, and the rough ocean shake up my existence. No one, nothing to praise.

I take up the way of not sparing the Dharma assets.

I take in the sounds of the drums at each end of the day at sesshin. This peaceful, freeing mind—full of clarity. Time passes quickly away. I take up the way to maintain this mindset, allowing me to connect with and enrich every unique being around me. Diamond python, guana, moon, vast, peculiar, beyond measure.

I take up the way of not indulging in anger.

Recognising my state, I pause, feeling the heat rushing through this body. This body signals some unmet needs. Old and new energy come together. One moment here, next moment gone. I take up the way to use this energy wisely.

I take up the way of not defaming the three treasures.

I dare to let go of behaviour, people, and circumstance that separate me from my true nature, the Dharma and the Sangha. I take up the way of practicing self-care, so that this body can support others. I trust myself and my guiding teachers to follow this wondrous melody.

* * *

Erin Hansen, a Brisbane writer, finds words that express my self-doubt when attempting the 'way':

"There is freedom waiting for you,

on the breezes of the sky, and you ask
"But what if I fall?"
"Oh darling, but what if you fly."

HAIKU BY CARL HOOPER

Magpie carolling
Under stars slowly fading
Wondrous melody

HAIKUS BY BRITTA BIEDERMANN WRITTEN AT KODOJI

In every stich
Community and bird song
Rakusu complete

Dawn brings rising song
Layers of sound and vastness
Wondrous melody

Bird's morning orchestra
Sitting with caring Sangha
Wondrous melody

ON THE CATWALK AT KODOJI

MAGGIE GLUEK

(Presented, with hyperbole, in the sharing circle at end of Spring Sesshin)

Welcome, everyone, to Spring Fashion Week here at Kodoji! This once-in-hundreds-of-thousands-of-millions-of-kalpas display is happening right now. Once again, doors are opening to reveal what the many beings are bringing to the show. Aren't we lucky?!

A big bow of thanks to our hosts: the ancestral peoples of this land, the valleys and cliffs and all their

denizens, the avian throng that weave such a marvelous temple of song. They've rolled out the green carpet, yet again, and brought us all back home.

And let's have a big hand for this year's special guest—Henrietta Spider! She's something of a recluse but has come out of retirement this week (now and again) to premiere for us her unique, never-before-seen arachnid style. It's all about the stripes![1]

Staying with the Mahasangha lines, this season the reptiles have brought out their New Skin collection, featuring earthy shades of of ochre, brown, black, dark green and brilliant yellow. Modelling this attire, among others, are Tree Goannas and Diamond Pythons. They'll stop you in your tracks!

As usual the human dojo rats are sporting all kinds of variations on the theme of BLACK. The "old school" (Chan school) Sung Dynasty robes are still in evidence, along with the contemporary modest black pants and black tshirt look—casual but respectful. One young person has pushed the boundaries excitingly, with splashes of orange and royal blue appearing in the dojo and an unforgettable b&w slimline bubble coat. But ragged clothing has never gone completely out of vogue either.

The highlight this year, as ever, is the parade of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Thanks to the meal sutra publicity, their names just roll off your tongue, don't they?

First up, we have Vairochana Buddha, clothed in radiant, transparent light. Actually, that's all there is. If we want to talk about the material of this Buddha's garment, we have to say it's immaterial.

Next up is Lochana, dressed in fantastic garb you can only dream of. It's made of netting studded with endless glittering jewel mirrors, each mirror perfectly reflecting all the others. Completely ingenious and ingeniously complete.

Shakyamuni has, well, an infinite variety of styles on show. I can see him here in his traditional monastic yellow robe, rather niftily draped over his shoulder. And over there—tall, thin and goat'eed--in an Aloha shirt. And she's just behind you in a slogan tee "There's no way to peace/Peace is the way." Oh yes, and looking good in a "plus size" fur coat waddling down a large hole. And off in the distance, superbly attired with feathered "tails" like Apollo's lyre. We could be here forever buddha-spotting.

Maitreya hasn't showed up yet. Typically, we're waiting on him. But when he does come, you can be sure he'll surprise us with something we've never seen before!

All Buddhas Everywhere—Past, Present, Future? Fashion Week can't even begin to comprehend, let alone discriminate, them. Forget fabrics. In the language of the industry, they are the fabric of the universe.

Mahayana, Lotus of the Subtle Law Sutra, of course has gone floral. Lotus flower accessories are raining down and the entire outfit blooms everywhere. Certainly with each step she takes. And –wait—I can just make out the peak of a thought, blooming. What a colorful, fragrant reality!

Now we have three of our big-name, celebrity bodhisattvas coming into view. Manjusri wears a robe

1. Henrietta was resident (along with Gilly!) in the hojo during the spring sesshin. It may be her permanent home. Her species has not been verified, but she is probably a giant Huntsman of some sort.

from the Palace of Emptiness label. It's hard to describe in words. Now you see it, now you don't, kind of thing. Let's just say his robe is the dew, the fog, the cloud, the mist.

Samantabhadra always favors the "work clothes" look. This year it's from the Bush Regeneration collection—brown shirt, khaki trousers, sun hat, tool bag. Endearingly practical, isn't she? She always has jobs cut out for her!

One of our very favorites, the ever elegant and serene Avalokitesvara, impresses in a gown created by the House of Kuan Yin which features—wait for it—1000 sleeves. Brilliant! The garment is of a rosy lunar sheen and is marked with the characteristic tear stains. Reminds me of something my mother used to wear.

All Venerated Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas? They're around but you can't see them as they are passing unnoticed in the world. I believe some are down at Wiseman's, helping folks onto the ferry.

As for the Great Prajna Paramita—gone, gone, truly gone. No fashion, no show, no sutra, no sesshin, no Kodoji, no assembly. That's it, folks!

RUMINATION ON THE THEME OF HOME

HELEN SANDERSON

My first home was my mother's womb. Though I myself haven't borne children I imagine that place as a fluid filled environment of blood and tissue, full of bodily music, the whooshing of breath, the gurgling down the digestive tract the beating of the heart and the blood travelling along the various highways and byways and tiny laneways of the body, my mother's cough, words and song. A place too of movement as I grew and swam and filled that space attached always to my mother's umbilical cord. An intimate home. And then at birth the coming out into the world of my mother's arms and breasts and stomach. And the wider home of brother and father and later sister and cot and house.

When I was thinking of home, of when I feel most at home, it is those who have accompanied me through life who enter my mind. My original family with all its struggles, not always peaceful, my husband's hand holding mine, eating dinner with him and arguing the toss, my friend Dimity coming to my door and saying, "I need a hug." All these dear ones now gone or moved away. Sometimes life empties out as we age. But still I have enduring friendships that contain long

ago memories. and new friends that have become like kin to me.

When I feel lonely, I need to be like Mary Oliver and ‘see everything as a brotherhood and a sisterhood” so the world itself feels like home, the trees, the rocks, the grasses, the rivers, the goanna, the diamond python, the white breasted sea eagle and the superb blue wren. And there are buildings that feel like home. Is it the building or what goes on there that make me feel at home? When I go to church, I see people I love. The singing and ritual contains and holds my spirit and reminds me of my childhood. On-going threads and connections to faith. When I sit in the dojo, chanting and meditation nourish my life as surely as a good meal and lift my spirit. The space itself is clean, peaceful and beautiful. And the fellow meditators are like kin to me. It is intimate so I feel at home.

Unlike many people worldwide, I am very fortunate to have a secure home. I don’t have to shelter in a cardboard box, or sleep under a bridge. I don’t have to run for my life as bombs and shells explode around me. I am not a victim of domestic violence. I am not poor and unable to pay rent so needing to couch surf. I don’t have to worry in my Island home as the sea water rises because of climate change. I am not under threat because of my religion, unlike half a million Rohingya people.

I can enjoy my garden, chat to neighbours, walk with Coco the poodle, wave to George in the fruit shop, say hello to the old Greek men playing cards and drinking coffee outside the paper shop. I feel so safe I always have several windows unlocked and the back door is often open. If I go out at night I feel at ease walking from the bus stop. I know my local streets and feel at home there.

When my friend fled to Australia nearly 4 years ago, because of religious persecution, he wanted me to be his Australian mother. I was quite taken aback. I did not feel like the mother of a forty year old man I had only just met. I think however he was trying to re-build the protective structure that good family and home provides. After my husband died, he and another refugee friend needed somewhere to stay so they lived for a time in my husband’s house. This place became a symbol of safety for them, and of beauty because of the garden and also family as they had adopted me. Although it might have seemed as if I was the one helping them, it also helped me through a very lonely time following my husband’s death. They have indeed become like family to me.

A year ago my friend married a woman from his home country and is waiting for her to be permitted to come to Australia. Who knows, in the fullness of time, I might have grandchildren thanks to my adopted refugee son. All people can indeed become kin.

I see the ability to offer hospitality as one of the bene-fits of having a home. So at the moment I am plan-ning to change my house so I have guest room. It will be a pleasure to offer visitors what has so often been

offered to me. Somewhere to stay and rest a while to renew relationships and catch up.

Going home is a metaphor often used for our last great journey. When my mother was dying she was very tired and knew she was dying. She repeated over and over "I want to go to sleep, I want to go home. I want to sleep, I want to die, I want to go home." When my husband.'s body was being carried from the church to be taken for cremation, the congregation heard Paul Robeson singing 'Going Home" from Dvorak's New World Symphony. Do we go home after death? Or do we become at one with the earth, which is our true habitat, our one true home.

We can hopefully say with Dogen Zenji

'But do not ask where I am going,
As I travel in this limitless world,
Where every step I take is home.'

2 POEMS

NYOGEN SENZAKI (OFFERED BY GILLIAN COOTE)

Nyogen Senzaki, Aitken Roshi's first Zen teacher, was interned with other Japanese people in Heart Mountain Camp during the war. Afterwards, he offered zazen in California in a series of rented apartments, where Roshi first sat in the late l940's.

ALONE ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

Like a snail I carry
my humble zendo with me.
It is not as small as it looks,
for the boundless sky joins it
when I open a window.
If one has no idea of limitation
he should enjoy real freedom.
A nameless monk may not have
New Year's callers to visit him,
but the morning sun hangs above the slums.
It will be honorable enough
to receive the golden light from the East.

- January 1, 1946

MOVING DAY

A snail leaves the kendo
carrying his own shell.
He goes along the old road
passing under the Bodhi tree,
stepping over fallen flowers.
On his way, he calls to spring
speaking softly to the breeze
"Three thousand worlds are my home!"

- March 2, 1947

A PILGRIMAGE IN JAPAN

JILLIAN BALL (WITH PICTURES BY JANET SELBY)

Zen Master Fayan Wenyi once visited his teacher Zen Master Luohan Guichen. The teacher asked 'Reverend, where are you going?'. Fayan said 'I will travel around on pilgrimage'. Guichen said 'What is the meaning of pilgrimage?' Fayan said 'I don't know'. Guichen said 'Not knowing is most intimate'. Fayan suddenly was greatly enlightened. (Eihei Koruku, Vol. 1, p. 88)

What is the meaning of pilgrimage? What is my intention for going? Why walk by foot as a pilgrim garbed in sedge hat, vest and staff rather than as a tourist? I had sufficient time to contemplate these questions earlier this year when I joined Zen teacher and dear friends Allan Marett and Janet Selby to walk The 88 Temples Pilgrimage in Shikoku. For many years I had been intrigued by this old pilgrim route, strengthened by Allan's stories of his many travels to this sacred place.

Feeling the build up of stress from a number of losses in recent years, I was drawn to a place of reflection and healing far away from the ordinary narratives of everyday life. Walking in nature has my life passion. As soon as I made the commitment to make the outer journey, I realised that the pilgrimage had started long ago.

Zen teacher Eido Carney[1] describes a pilgrimage as having a sacred intention for the one who steps forth and inevitably meets unknown, life-changing situations that bring a clarity of seeing and being in the world. At its core, Carney says, it is the bones of earth meeting the essence of mind. In accordance with Dogen Zenji, she proposes that the true nature of pilgrimage is found within oneself.

The 88 Temple Pilgrimage trails around the whole island of Shikoku. The founder of Shingon Buddhism in Japan, Kobo Daishi (Kukai) (774-835) was born in Shikoku and is said to have established the pilgrimage before he went to China. Pilgrims walked in Shikoku in the 12th Century, but the route taken today became popular in the 16th and 17th Centuries. It is believed that Kobo Daishi accompanies pilgrims along the way. The route passes through towns, highways and tunnels as well as isolated villages, primeval forests and mountains. My fellow henro (pilgrims) had walked tirelessly for several weeks before I joined them in Kochi to walk Temples 28 to 33. Walking part

1. Carney, E. "The Practice of Pilgrimage", Ancient Way Journal. Vol. 4, September 2017, pp 1-4.

of the pilgrimage at one time is common. To walk the entire Shikoku circuit is a distance of over 1200kms and takes about 40-50 days. Allan was walking his third Shikoku circuit as a pilgrim.

The first day we set out was wet, very very wet. We walked through heavy rain for 25kms. Yet such beauty and wonder—misty mountains, villagers planting rice in immaculate rows and Henro Janet crying out 'WET!!' in a breakthrough moment. Spiritual companionship on the path provided our container to fully let go and embody the simplicity of the here and now and the mystery of the unknown.

Each time we arrived at the ornate temples we engaged in timeless rituals; bowing at the main gate, purification at the washbasin, ringing the bell to mark our arrival and chanting sutras at the Main Hall and Daishi Hall. There was dignity in these traditions as we renewed our intentions to purify our minds so that we may awaken for the benefit of others.

Generosity is an important part of the Shikoku culture with people giving material or non-material gifts (*osettai*) to pilgrims. In doing so, they are giving to Kobo Daishi. Rest huts (*kyukeisho*) for the pilgrims have been built by the local people and are mindfully cared for with flowers and refreshments. It was an unspoken knowing that we were all walking together. So many special moments—a butterfly learning to fly at the women's shrine; the bows from villagers as they planted rice; an old woman chasing us on her bicycle to offer jelly drinks before we boarded the ferry. The many beings along the path provided a sense of belonging and fullness of heart.

Each temple has its unique history, significance, sacred objects and aromas. It was while ringing the bell at *Dainichiji* (Temple 28) that I truly came home. Ringing was all there was. All my senses were awakened at once. *Kokubunji* (Temple 29) was perhaps the most beautiful with glistening raindrops on cherry blossoms full with the joy of spring. The Buddha's footprint (*bussokuseki*) was engraved in stone at *Zenrakuji* (Temple 30) as well as many small clay statues (*jeshua*) tenderly clothed by those grieving for lost children. *Sekkeiji* (Temple 33) was one of the few Zen temples along the route. An impressive statue of Yamamoto Genpo Roshi (1866-1961), a Rinzai Zen priest who followed in the footsteps of Master Hakuin Ekaku, stands near the main gate of Sekkeiji. Aiten Roshi sat his first sesshin with Genpo Roshi at Ryutakuji where he was the abbot at the time. We paid homage to these Zen teachers whose influences lead us to be in this sacred place at this very moment.

Dogen Zenji said that the way into the mountains is the way into the realisation that 'the mountains are walking'. The place is walking in us. For me the pilgrimage was a spiritual rejuvenation. I felt renewed enthusiasm for my work and zazen practice as well as a determination to become a wiser, kinder human being. Recently I was asked, 'Do you think you'll return to Shikoku someday?' 'I have never left', I replied.

Deep gratitude and bows to Allan-san and Janet-san for sharing this inspiring journey.

RETURNING AND SITTING BY THE CHARCOAL FIRE

SUBHANA BARZAGHI

Shorelines and beaches rolled into summer and stretched over the school holidays. Mum had flats at Southport which brought in a trickle of income through the year and one was reserved for us over the long summer Christmas holidays. Southport did not have the Ritz and glamor of the golden beaches and rolling surf of Surfers Paradise, this was the down market quiet bay end of town.

The receding tide opened up the wide sand and mud flats that teemed with scurrying crabs, yabbies, grand pelicans drying their wings and flocks of seagulls flying in for a crustacean feed. That liminal fecund space where sea and land meet offers an abundance of life forms. These tidal flats were our front yard, a natural playground for us kids. A large sand-bubbler-crab colony lodged itself on these sandy flats long before they dredged the bay in the name of beautification, promenades and progress. Sadly the developers and dredgers were oblivious to the colonies of crustaceans that had lived there from Gondwana lands earliest shaping.

The twins and I spent all day from dawn to dusk down on the sandy flats occasionally heading home when hunger gnawed at our bellies. We headed for the flats at low tide to do crab spotting. Sometimes we crept up on the crabs with stealth, mesmerised by their industrious homemaking achievements and other times we raced around creating havoc terrorising the colony as we tried to catch the crabs before they scurried back down into their holes. Even with our youthful agility we were large clumsy two legged creatures compared to the nimbleness of the crab. I think we would have completely freaked out if we had actually managed to catch one.

The sand flats looked like a moving, undulating, oriental rug that had a million tiny legs. An eight- legged army darted along the wefts and warps of the beach making their daily sand mandalas. I decided it was my mission to inspect every crab's garden entrance like a Sargent major inspecting the troops. Sometimes I would bend down and fall on my knees spellbound like a pilgrim reciting her morning prayer. We spent hours crouched on the sand and I wondered if that was why adults who were so towering and upright overlooked this miniature wonderland? Perhaps they had forgotten how to bend at the waist and fall on their knees in wonder. They glassed over small things, their gaze was taken up with gathering and casting towards the alluring horizon.

I peered over hundreds of little spherical sand balls perfectly engineered and arranged into unique flower patterns around the entrance to each hole. All these sand flower patterns were a product of their daily ritual that has been practiced for millennia. Their

yoga is to chew up sand, sift and digest its microscopic nutrients then busily throw out little wet sand balls with their hind legs and meticulously deposit them around the entrance. They then scurry back downstairs and repeat their salute to the sun over and over. Crabs are proud homemakers; they spend a lot of time maintaining their burrow, which protects them from predators.

I wondered why as child they went to so much trouble to create perfect little balls? I found out later that this was the waste product from their burrowing; they could have just as easily dumped those tiny balls and created untidy junkyards. Those tiny sand gardens looked like miniature galaxies as if the starry night sky had fallen to earth and replicated itself, as above so below. Heaven on earth is a sand-bubbler-crab colonies handy-work. The fact that it would be washed away in the next high tide only made it all the more precious. This changing kaleidoscope of sand sculptures appeared and vanished and re-appeared down through the generations of this eight-legged colony. Somewhere inside of me, I felt a kinship with this reenactment of the daily endeavor of reconstructing ones home; it's beauty, loss and transience.

A perennial and literal question for me was ... where is home? Our family moved residence up and down the eastern seaboard of Australia numerous times like shifting sands of relocation and resettlement—from Gladstone on the Capricorn Coast of Qld to Ballarat in Victoria and back to Brisbane again. I lived in at least eight houses by my 16th birthday. My sense of home came and went with the tide. My whining lament, 'but why must we move again Dad?' fell on deaf ears.

I dreaded entering a new classroom, my gut churned and did somersaults every time. I hated being the new kid on the block. I so wanted to just slink into a corner unnoticed. I would eventually drum up enough courage to reach past my fear and make some new friends and just in the budding stage of inclusion it would again be abruptly thwarted as if in mid-sentence and I was flung onto to the next school. This wrenching left me shy and awkward. When would this restless urge of relocation, upheaval and disconnection stop? I longed for stability. I envied those students who had a well trodden route to school, who could invite their playmates over to the house who hung out in the school yard and chatted about the latest football teams winnings. I so wanted to belong; yet I ate my sandwiches on the wobbly school bench alone and walked home silently down unfamiliar streets.

I longed for a sense of belonging and to put down roots. In hindsight, I realised that this basic urge and unmet need to belong was part of my unconscious desire to set up a spiritual community. I finally put a stake in the ground at 22 and with a couple of friends established the intentional spiritual community of 'Bodhi Farm' in 1966.

My partner and I built a rustic cottage made out of tallow wood poles logged from the old growth forest along ridge above Bodhi Farm. The cottage had mixed hard wood floors and second-hand lead light windows gathered from the wreckers in Brisbane. We built the houses by hand; there was no electricity, no power tools, just simple string levels and a belly full of youthful enthusiasm. Like the sand-bubbler crabs we took pride in building our hand-crafted funky houses.

Living in a community in a sub-tropical rainforest with organic gardens and orchards was my home for twenty years. My two children were born there and they spent their formative years growing up on the community. Finally I had a stable sense of place where I forged long enduring friendships. The spiritual community created a sense of belonging that was

deeply healing of that childhood wound of feeling I was an outsider. 'Bodhi Farm' was a wonderful, successful, social experiment in communal living that operated by consensus decision-making and is still a thriving community today.

A house is not automatically a home; a house is a piece of real-estate, an investment, a roof over your head with four walls for security, a place to lay down and rest and have a fridge full of food. For a house to be a home it needs to be imbued with; heart-fullness, a place to be held and nurtured, a place of braided relational connections, a place of belonging.

Yet still a deeper perennially question kept emerging 'where is my home?' This became a koan; where and what is my original dwelling place? This sense of 'home' exploded way beyond the need for a homey house. Walt Whitman encouraged, "Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from the jambs!"[1] Ones true home is beyond the door and the gate it opens up a window into eternity. The true hearth of ones original dwelling place is that which is here—today, yesterday, tomorrow and every when.

In the poetic treatise of the 5 Ranks, Tung-shan sets out steps to deepen our understanding of the interpenetration of emptiness and form and bring it to its completeness. "How we all long to leave the eternal flux, not just to live in harmony but to return and sit by the ancient charcoal fire."[2] I remember spending many wintry nights over those decades sitting in front of my slow combustion wood stove gazing into the fire and longing to leave the mundane stream of comings and goings. Returning to sit by the charcoal fire is a metaphor, which speaks to me of the deep longing to come home and accepting things as they are. This ancient charcoal fire runs through each one of us and through the whole universe. Zazen is a pilgrimage to the hearth of ones original dwelling place. Gradually we give up clinging to the temporary walls of duality fed by ignorance and craving where we become entangled in our dramas. Over and over we return to this empty one ground of our original dwelling place. Maya Angelou, poet and memorist said, "You only are free when you realize you belong no place—you belong every place—no place at all."[3] When we arrive at the threshold of our original dwelling place, then everywhere you go, there you are.

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1. Walt Whitman, cited in Robert Aitken. *Original Dwelling Place.* Counterpoint. Washington, D.C.

2. The Five Modes of Tung-shan—The phenomenon and the Universal, in William Powell's Record of Tung-shan (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1986).

3. Maya Angelou - ideas.ted.com/finding-our-way-to-true-belonging/

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