

Mind Moon Circle

Journal of the Sydney Zen Centre



Renewal

SUMMER 2022

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Photos page 3, 29 and 33 by Glenys Jackson

The next issue of Mind Moon Circle will be edited by Ameli Tanchista

"This Life -

Living and Dying in an Empty and Complete World -
In loving memory of Thich Nhat Hanh"

Please email your submissions to ameli.tanchista@gmail.com by the Autumn Sesshin.

Summer 2022 Renewal

When I proposed Renewal as a theme we were emerging from lockdown and a long wet winter. It was a new year and I was thinking of the balm of practice, the delights of summer swimming and I was hoping for a long reprieve. But the raw circumstance of life quickly asserted itself. The next wave of the virus hit unsettling community confidence. Then came the loss of treasured teacher Thich Nhat Hanh and Yin elder, Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison. World news was filled with reports of violent weather events and politicians threatening war. It didn't feel like a time of renewal.

But Subhana made her submission on urban retreat, renewal, practice and community. It was very uplifting and her piece arrived just a week before her father passed away. I am very grateful for this offering. January rolled forward and folk rallied. Tender poems, great prose, photos and paintings filtered in. And again and again the work was accompanied by an image of a gum tree shedding its bark. Our noble gum, wreathed in rough scrolls with gleaming, silky, new skin had lodged in the collective imagination. It was like a symbol of renewal urging us on.

As part of the tribute to Thich Nhat Hanh, Gilly kindly offered a brief account of her rich engagement with his teaching.

I'd like to thank all the contributors who generously shared their work, the readers who opened these pages to discover it and Brendon and Janet who unstintingly craft and deliver the final draft.

*Zoe Thurner,
Editor*





Painting on the side of the house at Ceres



Organic market garden Ceres
Photos, Subhana Barzaghi

The Return of the Sacred Kingfisher

Subhana Barzaghi

I was so delighted to touch down in Melbourne to teach a 5-day non-residential Rohatsu Sesshin for the MZG at CERES. Unfortunately, the Melbourne Zen group had not been able to hold a residential zazenkai or sesshin for 2 years due to Covid lockdowns and border closures. Fortunately zoom dojo has kept us in touch. There are long-term endearing warm connections that I have formed over the last 20 years from teaching in the community. So, it was all the more special to seize the window of opportunity to reconnect in person with the Zen community.

The Learning Centre is a hub within CERES's grounds and is used by various spiritual, educational and community groups and the MZG. CERES is a unique environmental educational park spread over 4.5-hectares (11-acres) in urban East Brunswick. CERES stands for Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies and acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional owners of the land. From 60,000 BC to 1835 the Merri Creek was a meeting place for the Wurundjeri people who cared for these lands over millennia. Today it is a green oasis right in the heart of the city bordered by the bubbling Merri Creek that meanders down to join the wider stretches of the Yarra.

The name CERES also connects with Ceres the goddess of agriculture in Roman mythology. The goddess definitely has a green thumb and inspired handfuls of volunteers over 40 years to establish, manage and nurture an urban farm, community organic gardens, plant nursery, bakery, grocery stall and fair food market. The Merri Café is CERES purpose-built organic café supplying mouth-watering delicious food straight from the garden to the plate. Within the grounds there is an Eco-solar house, bicycle repair workshop, corroboree circle and a dam with waterfowl and bush turkeys that scrounge around the surrounding banks. 200 clucky hens and silky bantams roam, graze and forage across 1600sqm at Honey Lane and produce organic eggs by the dozen.

CERES is managed with the principal purpose of "protecting and enhancing the natural environment" by providing education and workshops on the human impact on the natural environment and strategies to combat climate change. All the activities at CERES contribute to system change through creating healthy ecosystems, resilient communities, regenerative food systems and local wellbeing economies. Without a doubt CERES helps people fall in love with the Earth. It is hard not to be deeply fond of CERES, it is rejuvenating and divine to be able to sit sesshin in a community oasis in the middle of suburbia. There is simply nothing comparable to it in Sydney.

Zafus and zabutons tumbled out of the cupboards and were dusted off and puffed up by Colin and Peter who laid them neatly across the carpet ready for sesshin. The 24 participants were as keen as I was to enter into a non-residential Sesshin. Sesshin is a time of reflection, a time of renewal, another deep dive in the boundless heart mind. The invocation and theme of our non-residential sesshin was, "Returning to the Marketplace with Open Hands" which was so fitting for the location. It is the final image of the 10th Ox-herding pictures, which is an expression of returning and awakening right in the market place. With a non-residential sesshin there is a greater emphasis on applying mindfulness, generosity and loving presence in the social

interactive spaces of our daily lives. One of the comfy benefits is that we can sleep in of our own bed; a good night's sleep is a blessing for clear minded zazen and the ageing body. Mindfulness can shine a light on challenging old and automatic habits, for example watching too much TV or scrolling through social media, that are not conducive to living an awake, mindful life. Awakening is a verb an action to be realised and lived. We hold this intention in our Bodhisattva vows to wake up over and over to the timeless, vastness of our true nature.

CERES was established in 1982 on the former Brunswick rubbish dump. The Sacred Kingfisher a spring-summer migrant bird that had always nested in the trees along the banks of the Merri Creek had disappeared from 1940 – 1970 when the site was a rubbish tip. Gradually over the years the community reclaimed the area with bush regeneration a eucalyptus grove and protection of the wildlife corridors along the riverbank. The bird was recently sited nesting once again in the trees along the Merri Creek. The return of the Sacred Kingfisher has become an icon for the success of CERES. Each November and early December all the CERES folk celebrate the return of the Sacred Kingfisher with a ceremony and give thanks to the community for its rich cultural diversity, its commitment to sustainability and care and renewal of the land.

The return of our blue green-feathered kingfisher offers a ray of hope in the light of the latest conservation report. Professor Garnett and Birdlife Australia have collaborated with bird scientists around the country to conclude that 96 of the nation's 314 most threatened Aussie birds have become more endangered over the past decade. But there are hopeful stories of pockets of conservation recovery. "Protection of forests has increased Albert's lyrebirds and removing feral predators from Macquarie Island has helped the black browed albatross recover. Around the country, volunteer groups have also been working to build nest boxes and help protect the habitat of birds at risk. On Victoria's Surf Coast at Airey's Inlet, Janice Carpenter and her conservation group Friends of the Hooded Plover are protecting nests and chicks." (abc.net.au, by Jane Bardon, 1/12/21)

The significance of the Return of the Kingfisher festival held at this time of year added to our sesshin, a deep sense of connection to place. The perennial spring of renewal offers itself to us every moment. We sat, surrounded by communal gardens, serenaded by the chorus of common birds of the Merri Creek catchment right in the midst of the market place of suburbia.

On Sunday morning, Sophia's Spring, an eco-feminist community of the Uniting Church, hold their regular service at the Learning Centre. So, on that bright clear morning we vacated the Learning Centre and gathered at the bend in the river down at the Corroboree Circle to listen to walking meditation instructions. Carrying our day backpacks filled with a water bottle, nibbles and lunch we huddled in the corroboree circle shelter to listen to the walking meditation instructions. The round rudimentary shelter evoked an atmosphere of respect and connection to indigenous wisdom of caring for country, it felt a fitting place to start our walk. Aladdin Jones who was Tanto for our sesshin, started us on the right note by 'singing up the land.' In a loud confident singing voice that seemed to come from the ancestors deep in the belly of the earth itself, called to us, to wake up. It was like an ancient call to prayer that sent shivers up my spine that emerged from a bottomless well inside that had no name, shadow or form. My heart quivered in the recognition of the truth of this ancient song and how

disembodied and disconnected we often feel from this sense of place and true belonging to this ancient ground.

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh gave simple yet poignant walking instructions. In his book, *Mindfulness in Everyday life*, “Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet.... make each step a step of peace.”

Some extracts from Zen master Dogen’s ‘Scripture of Mountains and Waters’ (*Sansuikyo*) also set the intention for our mindful walk along the path.

“The mountains and waters of the immediate present are the manifestation of the path of the ancient way of all Buddhas. Because they are the self before the emergence of signs, they are the penetrating liberation of immediate actuality. The green mountains are forever walking: a stone woman gives birth to a child by night. Mountains lack none of the qualities proper to them. For this reason, they forever remain settled and they forever walk. That quality of walking should be investigated in detail. If one doubts the walking of the mountains, one doesn’t even yet know one’s own walking either. If one knew one’s own walking, one would know the walking of the green mountains. The green mountains are not animate, not inanimate; the self is not animate; not inanimate. One should not doubt this walking of the green mountains.”

Dogen’s scripture presents an intricate and highly symbolic study of the interpenetration of phenomenal existence and emptiness. Dogen begins with stating that ‘mountains and waters’ are the way of enlightenment. He goes on to emphasize that the way of transcendence of liberation is none other than the ‘mountains’ of this world. In this spirit we began our mindful Yatra along the Merri Creek for 2klms up to Joe’s organic garden.

Walking practice is a mindful act of being present with each step. Each step is a movement of falling forward into the unknown, which in and of itself is an act of renewal. Walking meditation is an embodiment of a lovely rhythm of breath and energetic fluidity through space. We walked in a silent single file along the grassy banks of the Merri creek, following in the footfalls of generations who had walked this ground before us. When we unite with our walking and kiss the ground with our feet, there is just walking peacefully. The walker and that which is walked upon, the duality of self/ other collapse, they are one and the same. The path walks us, the mountains walk with us, stones, pebbles, muddy tracks and barking dogs walk as one with us.

A monk once asked Master Nanyang, “What is the mind of the ancient awakened ones?”

Nanyang said, “Fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles.”

The monk asked, “Aren’t fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles non-sentient?”

Nanyang said, “Yes.”

The monk asked, “And they can expound the teaching?”

Nanyang said, “They expound it brilliantly, without ceasing.”

Our walk was blessed with a stunning day with perfect 20 degree temperatures for Melbourne. Hundreds of Melbournians also thought the same and were out and about. The Merri Creek track is a favourite track for bicycle lovers, dog walkers, men and women jogging in their colourful tights and parents pushing sleeping babies in prams. I think I counted 16 dogs, their snouts enthusiastically leading their owners forward.

We walked along the creek sometimes on a concrete path, other times on a grassy track under a eucalyptus grove, past back fences with graffiti, past the Russian orthodox golden domed church and veered around Brunswick Velodrome sports arena. I was delighted to hear down on the oval banked bicycle track, a youngster peddling as fast as his little legs could manage accompanied by a slightly older boy peddling alongside him, shouting out encouraging words, “You can do it”, you can do it, keep going”. While walking meditation is not a race, nor concerned with goals, those encouraging words felt so true and inspiring for our practice.

Zen students sat on the grass by the creek or under the shade of a grove of Casuarina to have lunch, which was just near Joe’s organic market garden. The 2-acre allotment had been farmed continuously by Chinese and Italian gardeners for 150 years. In 1945, on that small patch Joe and his wife, Jean, raised seven children and saw the city grow around them. One by one the neighbouring market gardens and dairies that fed the first European settlers turned into houses until finally Joe’s hectare of vegetables was the last market garden in inner-Melbourne. After 60 years of managing the market garden in 2003 Joe Garita handed his Coburg farm over to support CERES Fair Food enterprise. Luckily this pit stop had one composting toilet in the corner of the fresh vibrant rows of broad beans, chard, lettuce, chicory and baby carrot tops. A long line of zen folk queued up patiently to visit the composting toilet, the only one along the trail. Thank you Joe. It is so inspiring in Melbourne to see people all over the city reclaiming and regenerating little vacant plots of land and nature strips for communal veggie gardens. The community commons is having a revival.

We know from experience that people can have a regenerative effect on land, water, plants birds and animals. CERES is an outstanding model for building a healthy ecosystem, resilient communities, regenerative food systems, partnering with indigenous community and local wellbeing economies. If we build resilient communities, regenerate the land, we help people feel a sense of belonging and connection and bounce back from the stressors of modern life. Together our efforts of renewal, replenishment and regeneration have the power to heal ourselves of alienation and suffering as well as address the climate and ecological crisis.

Aladdin offered us this poem as a snap shot of the encounters along our walk.

*Walking Merri creek,
boys shout encouraging words -
Nirvana just passed
Under She-oaks shadows dance.
Chao-Chau’s dog unleashed-
Basho’s frog jumps in,
croaking, just love it, love it.*

I sat by the river and nibbled away out my salad sandwich. I was mesmerised by the creek’s continual flow, its gurgling lyrical sounds and the light dancing across the shimmering surface. If you put your finger in a still pool of water and take it out, you can never put it back in the same place. Every single moment is unrepeatable. With deep listening, we enter the way and find a true intimacy and belonging with the river of our own true nature. I am reminded of Dongshan Liangjie’s realisation as he was crossing a stream, “he saw his reflection in the water and had a deep realization. Later he composed a verse to express it:

*Don't seek after other places or the self will recede far away.
Now I walk alone, yet everywhere I meet it.
It's no other than myself, yet "I" am not it.
You must see it like this to merge with "suchness."*

When Dongshan Liangjie was ready to continue on, Master Yuanzhou said, "Make a thorough study of the Way of Awakening and broadly benefit the world." Liangjie said, "I have no question about studying the Way of Awakening, but what is it to broadly benefit the world?" Yuanzhou said, "Not to disregard a single being."

How we broadly benefit the world right now in the midst of a pandemic is an ongoing living multi-faceted koan. Especially when there are challenges, conflicts and tensions at home or in our community. As in the image of the Ox-herding pictures portrays, we enter the market place of daily lives with open hands and hearts. Our inner work is to compassionately soften our defensiveness in order for the spirit of generosity to keep circulating the gift of our inter-connectedness. Not to disregard a single being, is the way of inclusiveness.

Brother David Steindal-Rast Abbot of Benedictine Monastery at Big Sur California offers us some beautiful teachings on keeping our heart and mind open. After twelve years of monastic training and studies in philosophy and theology, Brother David was sent by his abbot to participate in Buddhist-Christian dialogue. His Zen teachers were Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, Soen Nakagawa Roshi, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi and Robert Aitken Roshi. He co-founded the Centre for Spiritual Studies in 1968. Together with Thomas Merton, Brother David helped launch a renewal of religious life. From 1970 on, he became a leading figure in the House of Prayer movement, which affected some 200,000 members of religious orders in the United States and Canada. In dialogue with Aitken Roshi they produced and co-authored the book, "The Ground We Share: Buddhist and Christian Practice." In his teachings on 'Grateful Living' Brother David said, "It is not happiness that makes us grateful but gratefulness that makes us happy." Sitting and listening with a grateful heart is an act of restoration and renewal.

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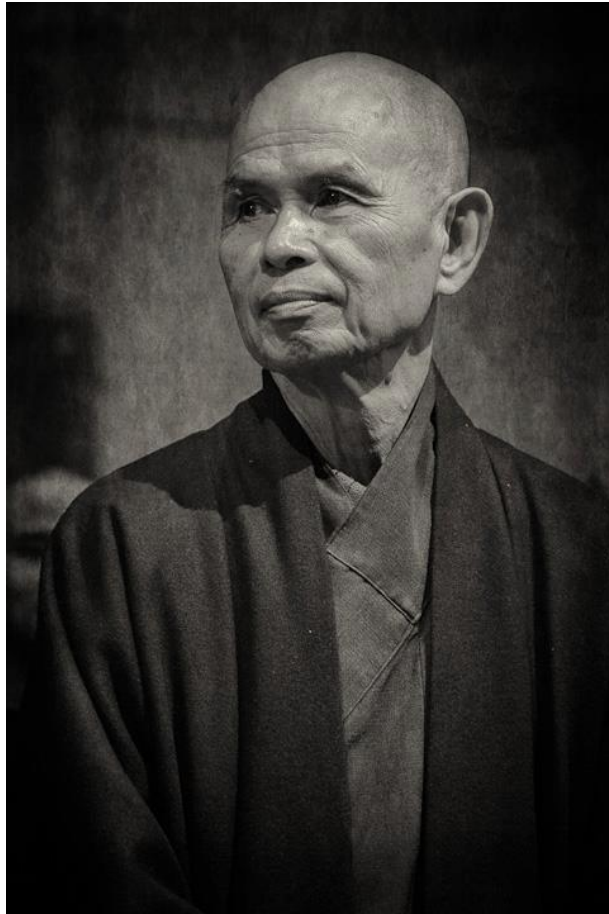
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“Happiness is impermanent, but it can be renewed.

You are also impermanent and also renewable, like your breath, like your steps. You are not something permanent experiencing something impermanent.

You are something impermanent experiencing something impermanent.”

Thich Nhat Hanh



We pay our respects to our great teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and Zen master, who died on Saturday January 22nd at the Tue Hieu Temple in Hue, Vietnam. His commitment to deep ecology, community action, compassion and non-violence reshaped the way we see the world and live our lives. Banished from Vietnam in 1966 for political activism, Thich Nhat Hanh lived in exile for nearly forty years, working tirelessly to renew Buddhist practice and teach us how to transform suffering, develop compassion and focus on happiness. Thay gave us the term Engaged Buddhism; he was its living example. He was also a prolific author, poet and calligrapher. He used his art to touch our hearts, to awaken us, delivering his message with the gentlest touch and boundless humility.

Phillip Long, SZC member, sums our sorrow at Thay's passing:

There is an ocean of bright clouds; there is an ocean of solemn clouds.

A great ocean of sadness.

How lucky we are to have witnessed Thay's mission to the world in both his writing and in his courageous social and political work.

At the conclusion of Kerry Stewart's program on his life, produced for ABC Radio National, we hear a resounding final gong and Thich Nhat Hanh intone this prayer:

May the sound of this bell penetrate deep into the cosmos. Even in the darkest spots living beings are able to hear it clearly, so that all suffering in them ceases and understanding comes to their hearts and they transcend the path of sorrow and death.

Thich Nhat Hanh - fully embodying the Buddha's Way

Gillian Coote

When Aitken Roshi invited Thich Nhat Hanh and Sister Phuong to lead a retreat at Koko An in Hawai'i, I was among Roshi's students discovering Thay and Sister Phuong, and their mindfulness practice. His Dharma talks were deeply moving. He and Sister Phuong's presence, their stories and Phuong's song for the boat people opened our hearts: their compassionate and tireless work for their community, their gentleness and their strength, were inspiring.

A year or so later, and the Vietnamese community here longed for Thay to visit and teach. As it could be politically difficult for them to sponsor his visit and, probably at Roshi's suggestion, the invitation was issued by the fledgling Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Interhelp was also involved.

Feeling strongly this visit must be documented, I managed to secure funding for a film from SBS, and began meeting with Mai Than Truong, one of Thay's students, collaborating on a schedule for the visit - a Day of Mindfulness and talk in Brisbane for the Vietnamese community, a retreat at Bodhi Farm, several Days of Mindfulness in Sydney for the Vietnamese community, a retreat at Wat Buddha Dhamma, a public talk at the Quaker Hall, five days at Burradoo, a talk in Canberra and a final Day of Mindfulness - with several informal engagements visits along the way. This material became "The Awakening Bell", screening on SBS in November, 1988.

That same year, Tony and I documented Thay and Sister Phuong's pilgrimage to India - 'In the Footsteps of the Buddha' - with Shantum Seth. Thay's recently published book, 'Old Path White Clouds', was the source of Dharma talks given in the locations where The Buddha had visited and spoken. When we sat in Kusinaga, where the Buddha died, Thay spoke of birth and death.

In November 2014 Thay suffered a brain haemorrhage but recovered sufficiently to continue until just a few weeks ago, on January 22. His students have gathered all round the world to honour him, to mourn him, to remember his words and actions, to recommit to their practice.

In his book, *At Home in the World*, published in 2016, Nhat Hanh addressed the idea of his death, writing:

"Even when the cloud is not there, it continues as snow or rain. It is impossible for the cloud to die. It can become rain or ice, but it cannot become nothing. The cloud does not need to have a soul in order to continue. There's no beginning and no end. I will never die. There will be a dissolution of this body, but that does not mean my death. I will continue, always."

And here is one of his beautiful poems.

Oneness

The moment I die,
I will try to come back to you
as quickly as possible.
I promise it will not take long.
Isn't it true
I am already with you,
as I die each moment?
I come back to you
in every moment.
Just look,
feel my presence.
If you want to cry,
please cry.
And know that I will cry with you.
The tears you shed
will heal us both.
Your tears are mine.
The earth I tread this morning
transcends history.
Spring and winter are both present in the moment.
The young leaf and the dead leaf are really one.
My feet touch deathlessness,
and my feet are yours.
Walk with me now.
Let us enter the dimension of oneness
and see the cherry tree blossom in Winter.
Why should we talk about death?
I don't need to die
to be back with you.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Renewal through place: lutruwita

Jillian Ball

What is it about place that that can stir your heartstrings and trigger a deep sense of longing like the haunting tones of Gurramul?

As I step from the plane onto the tarmac of terra lutruwita (Tasmania), I bend down to touch the earth feeling its energy and I pay my respects to the Indigenous Palawa people, custodians of this land for over 40,000 years. I notice a nod from a local attendant who shares this spirit of connection, of belonging.

This deep visceral pull to be held and nurtured by lutruwita stretches back as far as I can remember. Its strength has often intrigued myself and others. Why this place? Was it that my great-great grand granny, Mary Burnside, was born here in 1836 on a ship as it entered the Tamar River? Or my earliest memories of being on board the Princess of Tasmania, the lady of Bass Strait? Or the excitement and trepidation of remote camping holidays with my family? Or heady motorcycle trips in my late teens? Or joining the environmental warriors in the early 80s to save the Franklin River from being dammed? Or was it the compassion I witnessed while working with vulnerable people in an antiquated mental asylum upstream from Hobart on the Derwent River? It is all and none of these. For it is simply that here I first embodied the restorative power of nature.

My annual pilgrimages have been times of renewal and replenishment. Feeling truly invigorated and alive in this sanctuary away from the maddening city crowds. A place where I am never lost. It is where I come home.

'To be alive in this beautiful, self-organising universe – to participate in the dance of life with senses to perceive it, lungs that breathe it, organs that draw nourishment from it – is a wonder beyond words' - Joanna Macy

In 1828, eight years before Granny Burnside was born, there was a massacre at Cape Grim on the far north-west coast, where 30 Aboriginal men from the Pennemukeer mob were shot and thrown off the cliffs. Accounts suggest they were trying to protect their women from sexual assault by the white pastoralists. Last year, the names of these Aboriginal men were honoured by the people of the Peerapper or Pirapa language. Slowly, the truths of our past are being told and so healing can begin.

It is to the wild north-west, a coastline of untamed, pristine beauty, a place of dark history, that we ventured to during our recent trip. Extremes are everywhere. Accounts of betrayal and attempted genocide sit alongside their tenancy and resilience. The ancestors were amongst the oldest Tasmanian Aborigines and stories are told of their intricate knowledge of this wild and seemingly impenetrable land. The generosity and willingness of the present Pirapi people to educate others and allow regulated access to traditional sites and practices is uplifting.

We wander around the ancient Aboriginal rock markings on the shores of laraturunawa (Sundown Point) where the wild westerlies of the Roaring Forties rip through. Dwellings unique to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, rest in-between giant hills of glimmering middens, mounds of abalone, periwinkles and oyster shells. Tools, mother

stones and ancient relics are plentiful, and we can feel the presence of the old people gathering around these meeting places singing, dancing, and feasting.

The circular rock markings at the site where the river meets the ocean are unique to the Indigenous people of lutruwita. We trace our fingers around the circles sitting where the old artists sat. Here we sit, as one.

I am Takayna
the wild winds from Argentina
the blood orange sunsets
the endangered swift parrot
the rare marrawah skipper butterfly
the rikawa (bull kelp) woven water carriers
the medicinal kanikung (pig face)
the yula (muttonbird) nesting holes
the growl of the purinna (Tasmanian devil)
and the alert payathanima (pademelon)
as she tenderly grooms her joey
sleeping blissfully in her pouch.

‘The mind can go in a thousand directions, but on this beautiful path I walk in peace. With each step, the wind blows. With each step, a flower blooms’ - Thich Nhat Hanh

I wish to acknowledge and pay my respects to the Elders of the Pirapi people, past and present, who have always owned and cherished these lands where we walked, sat and listened to Country.



Again

Sally Hopkins

Again, and again, and again,
this day, this night, this moment,
and again this breath, again.

Our neighbour's plum tree
flowers in Winter, or
else in Summer. It's leaves
fall unseasonably.
Always a surprise.

I expected to die, it was the season.
Instead I was a newborn,
utterly helpless. Now
like a toddler I learn to walk.
Next step? Who knows?
Who ever knows?
The circling stars, the sun, the moon -
it could all blow up.
Welcome what comes
each moment, each breath -
again. and again. and again.



Full moon through the trees, Gorricks Run

Janet Selby

The Making of Cicada's Song

Ameli Tanchitsa

My reverence for Summer rests in familiar places.
Ancient rocks surrender to afternoon's radiant sun,
brushed by porous shadows so light to touch. Like blowing a kiss.
Seabreeze ushers its way into the house. I wait for them.

Birthplace marked on the ground,
like a string in an instrument,
like an instrument in an orchestra.
Cicadas assemble an audience.

When they arrive, the most lavish party,
ceaseless repertoire of life frenzies in slow motion.
From sunrise to sunset butcher birds and kookaburras
earn their way counting juicy morsels.

Movement is written on sheets and piled on the grass.
The book opens to reveal a fragrance of patience,
calling each with tender notes,
their wings unfold rhythmically. Now low. Now high.

Mind at rest.
Body relaxed.
Song, familiar, ebbs deep and flows wide.
In the timeless room I hear what cicadas are saying.

Their presence reveals it's offering.
My weight, pinned down by the sky, becomes their gift.
Listening to the story of living and dying,
I write it with gratitude.

Eased,
the song fills an entire landscape.
It stretches from my mother to my father,
as far as I can see.

Countless eyes turn golden light into sound,
humming my name with short flight.
Barefoot, under the recording,
I am determined never to forget.

Word for word I draw the lines with my skin,
stepping further inwards until the heart unfurls.
I watch it, etched in the warm air, leaving nothing
but the thinnest, almost invisible image.

With clear voice I hand the song over to my daughters
and invite the day when they will remember to
come home
where cicada's song will be waiting for summers to come.

Refreshments

Maggie Gluek

Pondering this theme of renewal, perhaps too ponderously, I give up and plonk myself down on a zafu. Ponderings fall away. Then the thought arises “Why, this is it! Zazen is exactly the practice of renewal.” Yes. Simply coming back fresh, again and again, in no sequence but now. Relinquishing old mind states and stale thoughts that bind. Letting them be naturally subsumed. Then there’s space for news of the universe to appear. Cicadas sing it. The body sits it. *The unique breeze of reality—do you see?*¹

Dissolution/ renewal is a constant in any case, impermanence a fact to wake up to with some awe. It seems no accident that breath awareness is a cornerstone of Buddhist contemplation practices. Breathing in, breathing out-- life and death hinge at the interstices, integral to one another. Every day billions of cells in the body are replaced. You and I are constantly being reconfigured. And after we die, the stuff of our existence continues to transform, burst into new forms, new life. *Continuously creation runs her loom and shuttle.*²

I am restored by spending time in the natural world. In those quiet communities where humans are much the rarer species, if present at all, peace is conferred. Mental anguish and physical tension release, senses awaken. It’s like coming home to family where you can let down and be the truest, widest version of yourself. No words are needed. The Mahasangha is family.

In the nearby native forest the endless cycle of transformation, withering and flowering, is reassuringly on display. *It’s a gift to be alive right now and one day I am going to die.* Sydney red gums (*Angophora costata*)-- those lofty, large, curvaceous, reigning goddesses—are undergoing their summer makeover, shedding large strips of old bark which fall in a skirt at their base, making way for an underlayer of smooth new skin. *Remember to let go.*

A favorite makeover story is the one about Te-shan, a celebrated master of the Way.³ He started out as a dedicated scholar, an expert on the Diamond Sutra. While travelling south to contest the Chan heresy, pushing his cart full of manuscripts and exegeses, he stopped by the roadside where a seemingly insignificant tea lady was offering tea and cakes. Taking note of his books and playing with the word denoting her refreshments, she put this to him: *The Diamond Sutra says ‘Past mind cannot be grasped, present mind cannot be grasped, future mind cannot be grasped. ‘Which mind would your Reverence like to refresh?’* He could not respond. None of his accumulated knowledge served him. The roadside bodhisattva stopped him in his well-trodden narrative tracks and set him on course to discover the true nature of the always refreshed mind.

May reversals prove opportunities for you and me. May you and I remain open to being turned around. Where Te-shan had once thought and read and written *about* sunyata/emptiness as presented in the Diamond Sutra, he went on to teach emptiness as his very being. It is the most refreshing way to live. Let’s be inspired by him and no less by the nameless woman who emerges from the misty clouds to ply her trade. Enjoy your cup of tea!

¹ Book of Serenity, Case One, Wansong's verse.

The Case:

*One day the World Honored One ascended from the seat. Manjusri struck the gavel and said,
"Clearly observe the Dharma of the King of the Dharma; the Dharma of the King of the Dharma
is thus." The World Honored One then got down from the seat.*

The verse:

*The unique breeze of reality—do you see?
Continuously creation runs her loom and shuttle,
Weaving the ancient brocade, incorporating the forms of spring,
But nothing can be down about Manjusri's leaking.*

² Ibid. These lines, quoted out of context, apply in this context and in any case are beautiful in themselves.

³ See commentaries on Case 28 of the Wu-men Kuan

Great Master Omicron

Diana Levy

Great Master Omicron

teaches us
the interdependence of all things
linking the smallest aerosol to
the semi-trailer, AdBlue in the tank,
hauling a load of groceries -
links exhausted nurses to
cherries rotting on the ground -
links offal dumped beyond the abattoir
(no Tongan workers this year) to
the *ping* of the mobile phone check-in -
and a banished tennis star to
the mask discarded in the carpark -

Great Master Omicron asks:
where have you come from?
and you reply, flat-footed,
from the pharmacy where there were no RAT tests

and the Master asks:
are you one with me?
and you reply, flat-footed,
No, separate
separate
I hope.

Great Master Omicron,
successor to Master Delta in the Covid lineage,
coughs.

Summer Time Renewal

Brendon Stewart

The day is ending and our life is one day shorter.

Let us look carefully at what we have done.

Let us practice diligently, putting our whole heart into the path of meditation.

Let us live deeply each moment and in freedom, so the time doesn't slip away meaninglessly. Thich Nhat Hanh

Curiosity, Generosity, Kindness.

My Facebook feed each morning always seems to have a selection of telling nudges as to how I might go on with my day to day. I put this down to 'virtue signaling' and often enough I'm quick with my judgments. Do I need another worthy sentiment from the bottomless well that is Facebook Sharing?

And then somehow a message gets through, I'm caught in a timely way; ah yes, all things pass quickly away, life and death are grave matters, another birthday passes, a new born child looks into my eyes and squirms with the delight of being alive and then, and then... Let us live deeply each moment and in freedom, so the time doesn't slip away meaninglessly.

The gift of life doesn't come as an Amazon delivery: waiting at the front door hoping the next Australia Post van will have your Life packaged, sealed and secure. Inside will be something like an Ikea booklet with a universal Allen Key; instructions and tools for setting up this gift. It's cliché to offer the homily that life is to be celebrated every moment, so often we just don't notice that so much has already past or at least I don't. There is something in the way each day can slip seamlessly into the next, and I missed the evening star or the morning chorus.

Our busy selves can easily stop us disappearing into everything we look at, into the street scape, into a glass of water into the car waiting at the traffic lights. Catching the feeling or smell of a random action there in the everyday lets time move on with meaning. Remembering the world in every moment is an act of love coming together with curiosity, generosity and kindness.

Maybe the poets amongst us can teach how to notice the way life just keeps on slipping by. Slipping by beautifully if we catch its delicacy.

*Among the grasses,
A flower blooms white,
Its name unknown*

-Shiki

And

*Thunder rolling
For the best act of spring -
Bright red Waratahs*

-Diana levy

It is important to be aware that our time here is fleeting, from conception to death is but a moment; a glorious beguiling moment no doubt but with all too short a lease.

You only dance of this earth for a short while, Cat Stevens reminds us.

It's been a rainy, wet and soggy summer, are we marking this in the way we were so caught by the hot, dry summers of seasons past? The floods this year have left vast regions of the countryside devastated, many animals and people have died as the waters rushed on; can it be only the image of hell that holds such archetypal power to conjure our response to change. It's flooding rains that have prohibited us getting to and from Kodoji, fire only hypothetically.

Last evening, sitting with a few others on zoom the rain fell, 50mm in just a few hours; that's a lot of rain! And of course, sitting and watching the magnificent theatrics of a heavy rain fall leaves Mu and breath counting somewhere in the vast background. Right outside the window we have a Bodhi tree, *Ficus religiosa*, the sacred fig. In the early weeks of summer, the leaves begin to brown and dry out, falling away sometime around the solstice. Then, last evening, in the rain there was the tree teeming with leaves not quite fully green, just a delightful shade of flimsy baby pink green. It had renewed its being in the way of its nature. Renewal is a surprise and at the same time a reminder that things are never static. Renewal comes to us always in the ordinariness of time passing.

Brooms are my favourite tool when it comes to renewal. I get more done with a broom than a spanner. In an instance a room is ready to 'go' again.



Broom, Brendon Stewart

so yellow
the sun is outshone -
mystery flowers

a little bird,
briefly in the Covid queue
on the car's bonnet

Diana Levy



Portrait of Uncle Max Dulummun Harrison

Janet Selby

Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison, Yuin Elder... Renewal

Caroline Josephs

Early in December 2021 Uncle Max Harrison, Dulumunmun, Yuin man from the south coast of NSW, died, aged 85.

Uncle Max has been an inspiration to thousands of people, both Indigenous and whitefella...mentoring, teaching, telling stories, doing ceremony, inspiring a new way of being in Country...with deep stories, a cheeky gleeful humour, a wonderful sense of forgiving, a facility for warmth, honesty, and great respect. His was a legacy of renewing culture, always, for everyone who was fortunate to be with his teachings.

Taking people walking Country he would imbed all in the Land, as part of it...not separate, introducing so many people to a different paradigm of Being. In relationship with all of Nature.

As a child Uncle Max's family were on the run from officials much of the time, to escape the children being stolen away. They lived between Victoria and New South Wales. Later he lived on Wallaga Lake settlement of Indigenous people before partnering Marelle Burnum Burnum, 24 years ago.

Uncle Max leaves generations of family behind him. (He always said that he wanted to outlive his mother who lived to be 105.)

For those of you who have accompanied us on a trip up Gulaga Mountain in Yuin country (out of Tilba Tilba) you won't forget the profound experiences there with Uncle Max. I don't. I was 'renewed' each time I did the trip, among the wondrous granite stones holding the stories.

If you are moved to read more of his journey and his teachings, you can find his book done with wonderful stories and with photographs by Peter McConchie.

My People's Dreaming, An Aboriginal Elder Speaks on life, land, spirit and forgiveness, Finch Publishing, 2009.

I first met Uncle Max in 1988.

My daughter was about to embark on a year living in Japan with a family and go to school there. She was 16 years old. We were staying with some friends on the south coast. I was contemplating how to give her a "quintessential Australian" experience. I called the then-Aboriginal Centre on the south coast. The guide was to be Uncle Max – with a young Indigenous man he was mentoring. The four of us went up Gulaga with Uncle Max driving his truck. (He had permission to go almost to the top on a road closed to others). He ushered us through the stories of the wondrous stones there. He even gave Abi a dreaming 'totem'.

Together we both experienced his funeral on zoom as relatives and special friends each told their stories of life experiences with Uncle Max.

Abi wrote to me after,

Hi Mum

How did you go this morning at Uncle Max's funeral?

I have to say it was hands down the most profoundly moving experience I think I've ever had the privilege to be a part of. What a great man and what an astoundingly loving, respectful, courageous and humble community he was a part of and built.

*Thank you for passing on the details. It's actually made me re-evaluate life, the universe and everything.
And go for a walk in our local bush – feels like the most appropriate thing to do.*

Uncle Max and myself collaborated on many, many walks...sometimes including my facilitating participants' artwork along the way (as in Braidwood Two Fires Festival)...walking along the river and doing a folding book of impressions, as well as listening to Uncle Max's stories...

Sometimes weaving my own storytelling from my *Yolngu* experiences in NE Arnhem Land with his,

Early morning Bondi with the amazing rock engravings,
Centennial Park at the original Sydney water source, among the angophoras (the 'granny trees' he called them)

Bundeena with the impressive arrangement of rock engravings...

Inspiring, breath-taking heart-warming Dawn ceremonies on south coast beaches,

Stories of the whale at Kuringai, overlooking the sea,

His stories layering the day at my Art exhibitions,

Many trips up Gulaga...walking for two hours up the mountain, being prepared for ceremony, in silence with the stones, the stories.

He always said, 'You have to give it away, to keep it' meaning the knowledge.

We always worked together effortlessly, seamlessly.

I am also recalling the many young First Nations men who had been cut off from their traditional culture, language, and Country...and who he was able to allow lost teachings to seep into their spirits again.

Whale – 'Guruwal' – will be the title of One of Uncle Max's new books, to be launched this year. The other book is titled, 'Rivers of Kinship'. I don't yet have details.

(I have gifted painting of the whale to Marelle and Uncle Max's family).

Uncle Max touched my life and those of friends and family so deeply. The loss is insurmountable.

However, his stories reside in me, he is with me, renewing my relationship with Country each day as I swim with the fishes, or walk in bush, or watch birds in the grand angophora at back of my home...

No separation.

Caroline Josephs

January 2022.

Link to funeral service:

<https://youtu.be/t4OKDgyFY4o>

(perhaps go about 5 minutes into video to get to service after music)



Whale Dreaming
Caroline Josephs

ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is *a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia’s nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

Renewal

Helen Sanderson

In breath, out breath, in breath, out breath.
Lungs fill, lungs empty, oxygen to blood.
Heart beats, heart pumps. Each breath, breath of life, till death do us part.
Each breath a renewal.

Sun rises, sun warms, plants grow, hearts lift.
Each day a blessing.

Morning walk, left foot, right foot, pressing down on this path. I spy with my little eye, raindrops on violets, dandelions waving. Dog pulls, this way, this way, She smells with her fantastic nose, this, this, examining, examining,
Each moment new, each sight, scent, sound.

Birdsong in the airwaves, a symphony, a racket. Lorikeets whistle and chatter, magpies make melody, baby kookaburras practise hoarse laughter and the channel billed cuckoo shrieks alarm across the skies while the sea eagle clucks to her mate.

Day ends,
Sun sets, earth rests,
Night, time for refreshment, for silence, and sleep.

Dark time, secret time, the moon hides under rain clouds.
Behind house on dark rock wall, geckos cling, still, pale, strange. Centipedes travel vertically, a thick black line, and a land snail slides elegantly silently., tentacles waving.

In the dark bathroom, a huge huntsman wakes, and searches out prey. Moths fly up. Skinks hide. This is spider heaven.

Up in the forest, possums feed and mate, and descend to the house to make whoopee on the verandah, wallabies bound and munch and owls fly, silently hunting for dinner. An echidna trundles along and a bandicoot digs and calls.

The night is alive.

Day and night,
Night and day,
Move and rest,
Rest and move,
In breath,
Out breath,
Out breath,
In breath....
Breathe...Renew.

Essence

Rachel Stone

I am the essence of everything in the universe,
but especially, I am wood

I am a tiny pink cherry blossom,
sprouting from an almost dead tree...
old wood, delicate pink.

I am the unfurling of the blossom,
rather than the blossom itself

I am the dew on the morning bud

I am the essence of Rachieness
Whatever that is!

I am nothing
and I am everything,
and beyond that:
just a wiggly, gently buzzing electrical wavelength

I am the whirl in the centre of the pool
and I am the round earth cradling the whirlpool

I am air –
a gentle breeze,
a thundering storm,
a precipitation upon the edge of time

I am all this and I am nothing
and there is light
and lightness of being
and there is nothing, simply *nothing*, to worry about.

– Rachel Stone

(p.s. If, perchance, this poem is true and I *am* the essence of the universe, you most certainly are too. Which, by extension, I suppose, means that I am you, and you are me too. And if you add that all up and multiply it by the speed of light and subtract fear, doubt and self-loathing, then *we* – glorious, communal *we* – together we are the centre of the universe, my dear friends. Either that or we are a puff of air at the centre of a young child's dandelion wish. Either way, it's pretty lovely really.)

The Sayings and Doings of Little Heart

Sean Loughman

Case

Little Heart sleeps.

Verse

*Little Heart sleeps
A dreamless dream.
Don't ask now,
"What is Buddha?"
Softly, she snores.*



The Wet

Jill Steverson

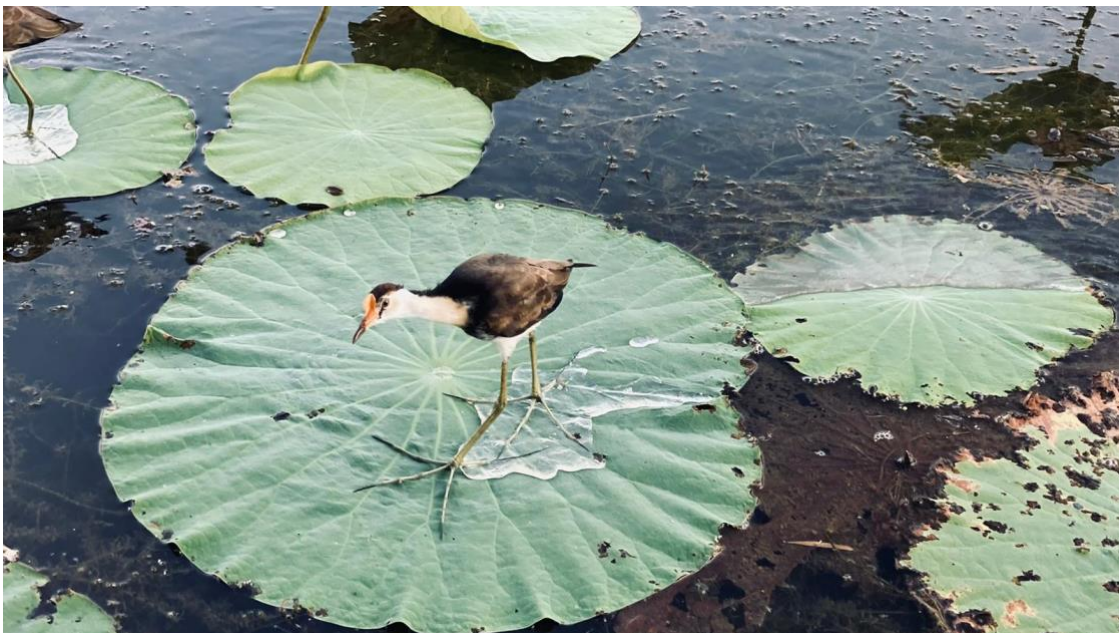
The remaining thunder is rolling around Darwin after the storm, with hours of wonderful steady rain. Our garden palm trees are blowing about madly with the wind at dawn. These few wet days are the transformation of Cyclone Tiffany as she crosses over the coast, sheds her cloak of destruction and decides to become kind and mild, just a category one. We hope at last The Wet is arriving as it should.

As I flew in from Sydney after Christmas, I could see how the country has rapidly transformed. Eyeball tickling green where it had been endless brown. Renewal also percolates into me this morning from the weather. An overnight reprieve from the oppressive humidity and heat. Happiness, relief and even a long-sleeved shirt as I sat on the balcony, with my friends the tiny, tiny ants, who pack a tropical punch. Settling to the deep refreshing no separation, energy, damp, energy, wind, cool, rain, wet.

The country is drinking up water again. The animals and birds have food to breed, the jacana's with their huge feet will have sacred lilies growing again so they can walk, nest and lay their eggs on these beautiful round floating leaves. The Wet is such a natural treasure; I can imagine how whole countries are devastated when their monsoons or rains fail.

With the blessing of the Wet today I vow to renew my practice and be patient and kind through the days of heat.

***Sky of black clouds
Deafening greeting
WET***



On New Year's Eve, A Prayer

Brigid Lowry

May I make way for the new, greeting every moment as a fresh beginning.

May I be truly content with the abundance of life. May I let things be as they are, say *Yes Please* to everything and all of it, write *Heart's Ease* in cloud letters in the wide blue sky. May I trust in the wide magic of everyday existence, imagine positive outcomes instead of bothering everything to death.

May I encourage myself at all times.

May I remember to live creatively, luxuriating in the simple, the quiet and the miraculously ordinary.

May I connect. May I help others when I have authentic energy for it and rest when I don't. May I remember that I am a part of something much larger than myself, and act accordingly?

May the politicians forgo their own greed for power and money for the sake of all beings, for the sake of the broken world.

Can there please be a section in the newspaper called Poetry instead of one called Property.

I would also like some green velvet slippers with roses on.

Namaste. Thankyou. Amen.

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