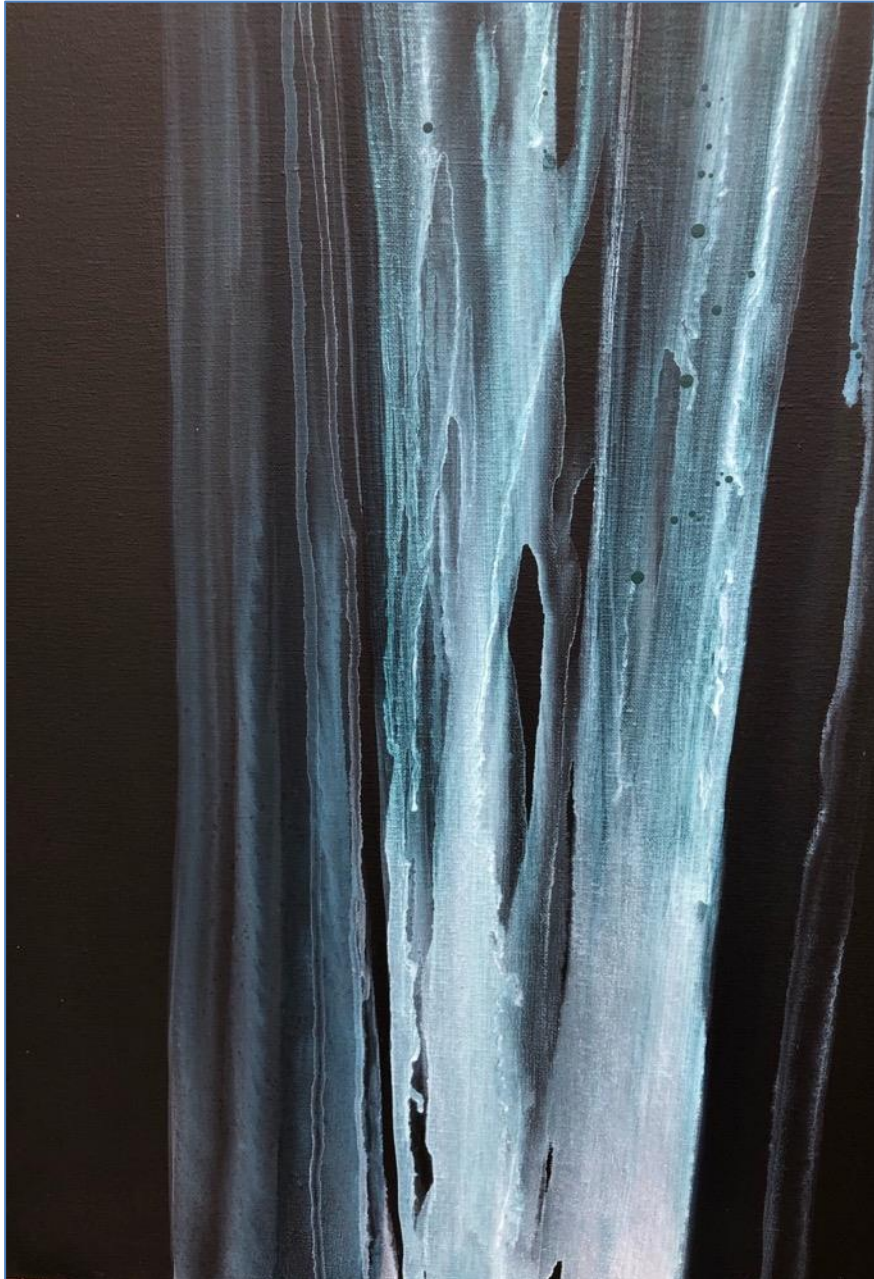


Mind Moon Circle

Journal of the Sydney Zen Centre



Mountains and Rivers

Summer 2023

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The next issue of Mind Moon Circle Autumn 2023 is to be announced.



Upper MacDonald Valley, painting by Janet Selby

Mountains and Waters (Rivers) Sutra

The *Mountains and Waters Sutra* is one of 93 essays of the 13th century Zen Master Eihei Dogen founder of the Soto school of Zen. The essays were collected in a comprehensive work *The Shobogenzo* with 'Shobogenzo' meaning 'Treasury of the True Dharma Eye'.

Zen Master Dogen presented the Mountains and Waters sutra to the assembly at Kannondor Kosho Horin Monastery on the hour of the Rat (midnight) the eighteenth day of the tenth month 1240, the first year of the Ninji Era.

Dogen's Mountains and Waters sutra expresses the reality of the enlightened mind in the natural poetic imagery of his time. It has remained a classical text and a great treasure of Dharma teachings to this day.

There are many translations, a popular one is by Kazuaki Tanahashi. The first line of the sutra reads 'Mountains and waters are the expression of old buddhas'. Tanahashi notes that mountains and waters right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way and each abiding in its phenomenal expression realizes completeness. Because mountains and waters have been active since before the Empty Eon, they are alive at this moment.

Peter Bursky gave an excellent teisho on the Mountain and Rivers sutra at Winter sesshin 2022.

It is available on the SZC website:

szc.org.au/mountains-and-waters/

References

terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/TanahashiKazuaki.html

www.normanfischer.org/books-zen/mountains-and-rivers

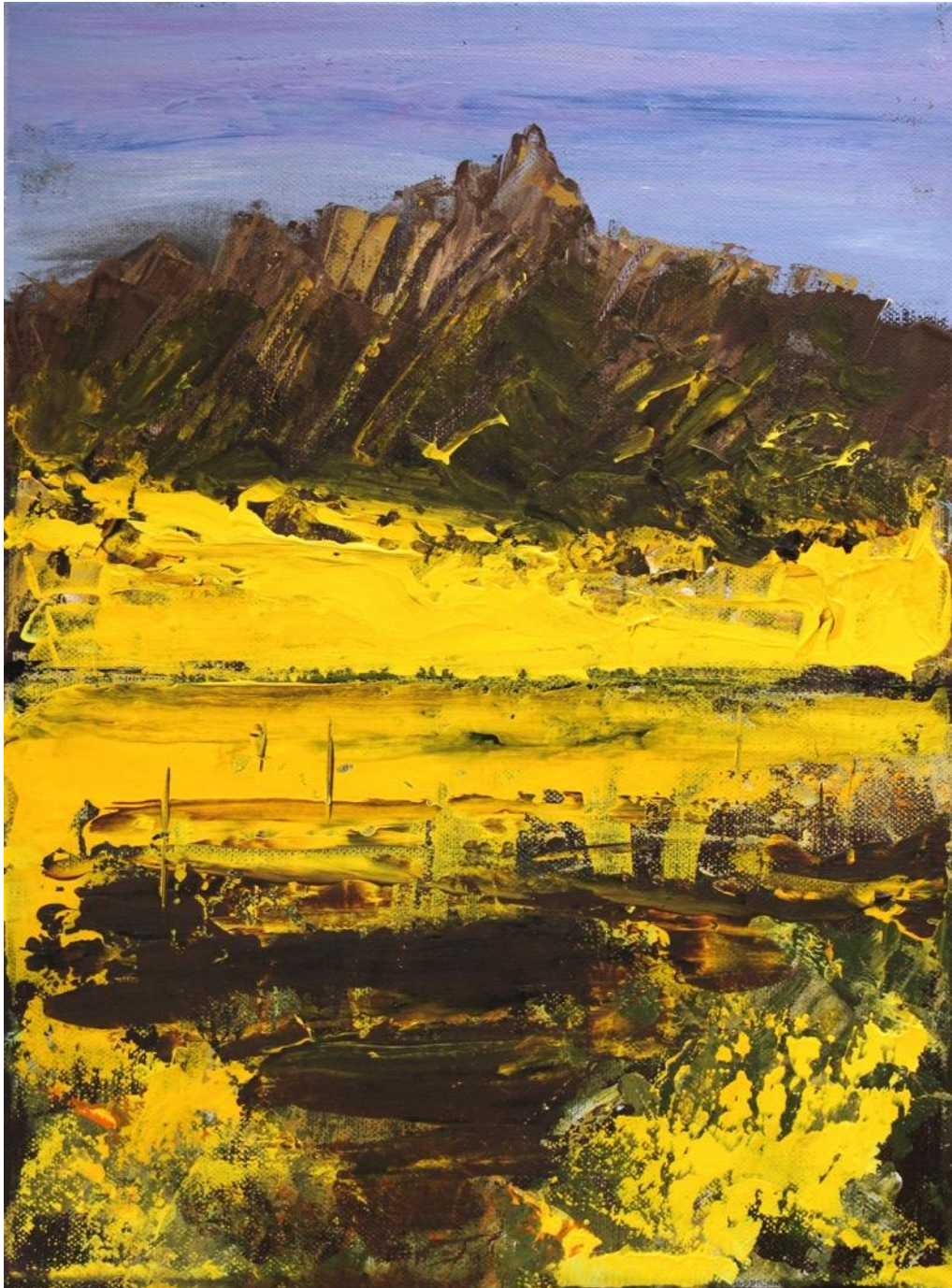


Pieman River, Takayna, Tasmania. Photo by Jillian Ball

Wenzi said, ‘The path of water is such that when it rises to the sky, it becomes raindrops.
When it falls to the ground it becomes rivers.’

The path of water is not noticed by water but is realized by water.
It is not unnoticed by water but is realized by water.

Mountains and Rivers Sutra, Zen Master Eihei Dogen
Translation Kuzuaki Tahahashi



Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park, Tasmania. Painting by Jillian Ball

An ancient Buddha said, 'Mountains are mountains, waters are waters.'
These words do not mean mountains are mountains,
they mean mountains are mountains.

Mountains and Rivers Sutra, Zen Master Eihei Dogen
Translation Kuzuaki Tahahashi

Green Mountains' Walking

Jillian Ball

‘Green mountains are neither sentient nor insentient. You are neither sentient nor insentient. ...
At this moment, you cannot doubt the green mountains' walking’.

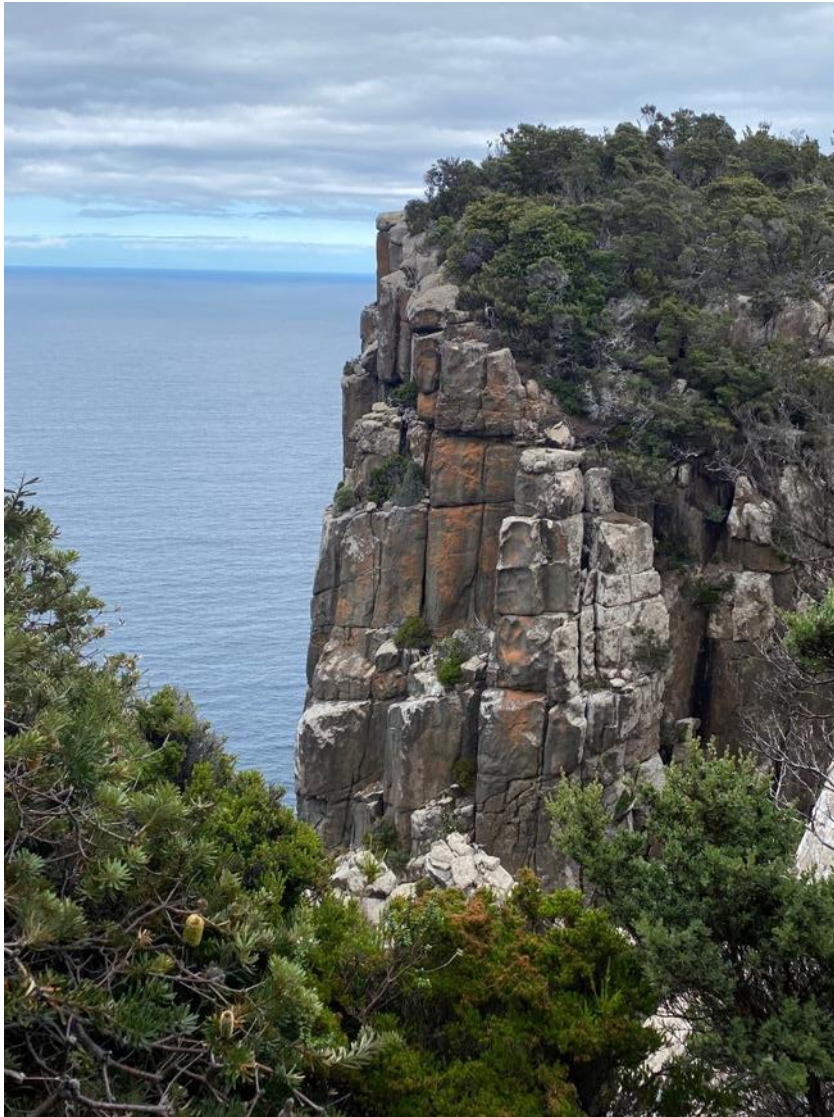
Mountains and Rivers Sutra
Zen Master Eihei Dogen
Translation Kuzuaki Tahahashi

Recently, I had the opportunity to explore the 3 Capes Track, a spectacular four day, 48km walk along the dolerite cliffs of the Tasman Peninsular, Tasmania. I spent weeks training, hauling my 9kg pack up local hills and down. One day, a friend asked why I didn't consider staying somewhere comfortable and buying a postcard of the scenery!

Not long into the walk this suddenly seemed like a good idea. My rhythm was not right, and my mind was buzzing. My joints were creaking, my back aching and my head was pounding from caffeine withdrawal.

Then the koan offered to me by my well-meaning friend started its inquiry. ‘What was my intention in taking on this challenge? Why was I walking? Who was walking?’ Slowly, I surrendered to all that appeared. No-dualism, no discrimination.... all equally exquisite and encompassing. The aliveness of the timeless present came forth. My walking started doing itself.

Walking through
the harbour
of rainforest
dolerite cliffs
with tiger snakes
devil scats
and ravens
singing
the way,
I awaken to
green mountains'
walking.



3 Capes Trek, Tasmania. Photo by Jillian Ball

Mountains and Rivers Without End

Gillian Coote

For those of you recently arrived in our sangha, Yamada roshi was Robert Aitken's teacher and thus we include him - Ko'un Zenshin (Cultivator of Clouds) - in our first sutra service dedication, following *his* teacher, Haku'un Ryoko (White Cloud), who is Yasutani roshi, following *his* teacher, Daiu'un Sogaku (Great Cloud) who is Harada Roshi, founder of the Sanbo Kyoden line, and the Diamond Sangha.

Zen - The Authentic Gate by Yamada roshi was published in 1980 as Zen no Shomon, in Japanese and has only recently been translated into English by Paul Shepherd, Joan Rieck, Henry Shukman and Migaku Sato, (publ. Wisdom Publications, 2015.) I was keen to read this book and began with David Loy's Foreword, where I learnt of Yamada's realisation experience with Yasutani roshi. I then moved on to the Preface, written by Yamada's son, and now Abbot, Ryouen-ken Masamichi Yamada.

He writes: "I happened to be with Ko'un roshi myself at the actual moment of his deep awakening. I was a ten-year old boy at the time and was suddenly woken up by the great laughing voice of my father coming from the room next door. Frightened by his loud and continuous laughter, I opened the door and saw my mother trying in vain to cover his mouth with her hands to stop the sound. I was shocked and scared, and wondered if he had gone insane. But that was the occasion of his coming to full enlightenment, and I myself would go on to be nourished by the wisdom flowing from it during twenty-five years of Zen practice under his guidance, eventually succeeding to his Dharma."

As Yamada roshi had experienced realisation with his teacher, Yasutani roshi, I turned to my ancient copy of The Three Pillars of Zen containing Yasutani roshi's instructions, commentaries and dokusan notes, translated by Philip Kapleau (Anchor Books, 1980) and one of the few books on Rinzai Zen available when I began sitting. Aitken roshi felt the realisation experiences in this book could perhaps create absurd expectations in new students. (The go-to book for Soto students was Shunryu Suzuki's Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind (Weatherhill, 1970). So, here is Yamada's story, the first in *The Experiences* (pps.215-219): Mr. K.Y., a Japanese executive, age 47, November 27, 1953:

"The day after I called on you, I was riding home on the train with my wife. I was reading a book on Zen by Sono-o, who, you may recall, was a master of Soto Zen living in Sendai during the Genroku period (1688-1703). As the train was nearing Ofune Station I ran across this line (from Dogen's Shobogenzo): "I came to realise clearly that Mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars."

I had read this before, but this time it impressed itself upon me so vividly that I was startled. I said to myself, "After seven or eight years of zazen I have finally perceived the essence of this statement," and couldn't suppress the tears that began to well up. Somewhat ashamed to find myself crying among the crowd, I averted my face and dabbed at my eyes with my handkerchief. Meanwhile the train had arrived at Kamakura station and my wife, and I got

off. On the way home I said to her: "In my present exhilarated frame of mind I could rise to the greatest heights." Laughingly she replied, "Then where would I be?" All the while I kept repeating that quotation.

It so happened that that day, my younger brother and his wife were staying at my home, and I told them about my visit to your monastery and about that American who had come to Japan again only to attain enlightenment. In short, I told them all the stories you had told me, and it was after eleven thirty before I went to bed.

At midnight I abruptly awakened. At first my mind was foggy, then suddenly that quotation flashed into my consciousness: "I came to realise clearly that Mind is no other than mountains, rivers, and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars." And I repeated it. Then all at once I was struck as though by lightning, and the next instant heaven and earth crumbled and disappeared. Instantaneously, like surging waves, a tremendous delight welled up in me, a veritable hurricane of delight, as I laughed wildly and loudly. "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! There's no reasoning here, no reasoning at all! Ha, ha, ha!" The empty sky split in two, then opened its enormous mouth and began to laugh uproariously: "Ha, ha, ha!" Later one of the members of my family told me that my laughter had sounded inhuman.

.....That morning I went to see Yasutani roshi and tried to describe my experience of the sudden disintegration of heaven and earth. "I am overjoyed, I am overjoyed!" I kept repeating, striking my thigh with vigour. Tears came which I couldn't stop. I tried to relate the experience of that night, but my mouth trembled and words wouldn't form themselves. In the end I just put my face in his lap. Patting me on the back he said: "Well, well, it is rare indeed to experience to such a wonderful degree. It is termed 'Attainment of the emptiness of Mind.' You are to be congratulated!"

.... I am writingbecause Yasutani roshi urged me to. The ancients said the enlightened mind is comparable to a fish swimming. That's exactly how it is - there's no stagnation. I feel no hindrance. Everything flows smoothly, freely. Everything goes naturally. This limitless freedom is beyond all expression. What a wonderful world! Dogen, the great teacher of Buddhism, said: "Zen is the wide, all-encompassing gate of compassion." I am grateful, so grateful."



So Many Steps! 3 Capes Trek, Tasmania. Drawing by Janet Selby

Wollemi

Sally Hopkins

From these curiously-shaped dark mountains
with kurrajong , black cypress pine,
old tattered gums-
from yellowed cliffs and lava beds,
recorders of past dramas-
from small springs seeping down black rocks
for wallabies to share
with 'roos and scarlet parrots,
where wedgetails float above
the wind-eroded rocks
that tumble down the gullies-
I learn we who speak a tongue
forged in a soft-green land
come ill-equipped.
The echoes in our mind
are foreign to this place.
The wild reality beyond
all our words.

The men who carved words
for these mountains
now are wordless in an age
that looks not to the earth
but to machines
to give the more and more
of comfort. Mind seems lost,
half understanding
some fundamental tie
is broken.

Ancient laws,
Ancient country
speak in silence

only heard
in wordless listening.

-

Benjang Kerreebee Cudgegong Morundilla
Coolcalwin Wollemi Coricudgery Wingarra
Then came Mt Misery and Breakfast Creek,
Windmill Hill and Dairy Mt.
as white men toiled.
Cox had his crown, Graham and Lee,
Bruce, Ross and Hawkins left their mark.

But the land rejects all labels,
sings its own silent song.
Only in the remnants of the ancient words
do we catch a faint far rumble
from the great untamed All-Giver.
Narrango, Marambo,
Touwouwon, Cooroobooba

Mountains and Waters, Holiday Sutra

Subhana Barzaghi

Mari and I are staying at Helen's sweet fibro cottage that overlooks the glistening calm waters of Hardy's Bay. It's a delightful humble abode and time to unwind, relax, retreat, and have a holiday. Our leisurely daily schedule is: sit, walk for a few hours, swim in pristine bays and return back home out of the sun around 10.30am. Our visits to the wilderness are punctuated by writing, reading and doing nothing the rest of the day.



Nature bathing, connection to country and mindful walking in the bush is healing. Each day we explored the exquisite natural wonders of Bouddi National Park. I cannot believe that I have not known about this place that is just on the doorstep of Sydney. It's a treasure trove of wild natural beauty, bush trails through angophora gum forests and coastal cliff walks that weave around wide sandy beaches strewn with driftwood.

A gentle light shower and a cloudy morning greet us on New Year's Day. We follow the trail along the cliff edge that hugs the rugged coastline of the Bouddi National Park that bravely faces the Pacific Ocean. As we head north on the trail, the marine conservation park is on my right and the wind-swept gnarled, angophora tress reach down steep slopes to the rocky cliff trail on my left. I felt the tiredness and stress from last year drain out of my body the more I walked and emptied my mind with each step. We ended the morning walk with a welcome cold swim at Putty beach. I immediately fell in love with the calm clear waters of Putty beach that is protected by the headland. Simple the best ocean swimming beach. What a refreshing way to begin the year.

On the second day we headed out along the ridge line to Daleys Point. As I walked, the congested conversation threads in my head dropped away and the tangled salmon pink angophora boughs started to form the canopy of my mind. I gazed up in awe of those giant mother trees of the forest. The trail led us to an Aboriginal sacred site on the headland that had as many as 28 engravings on a very large rock plateau overlooking Cockle Bay and the Brisbane Waters below. It is the most significant aboriginal site I have ever seen. The power and presence of this site was immediately felt as we mindfully wandered around the rock carvings. The signage indicates there are many food sources depicted here; fish, whales, dugon, kangaroo, wallaby and other unknown mammals. There was evidence of rock pools nearby that were used for sharpening tools and spears.

I wondered what it must have been like for the Darkinjung people to camp high on the cliff centuries ago. What happened here? While there are custodians of this sacred site still living in the area today who pass on the knowledge, there are no written stories, or letters written in

rational white fellas colonial English. There's was an oral embodied tradition, their cultural stories memorialised, carved in stone. Sacred sites are, sitting down places, a call to prayer, an act of deep listening to the land. As my feet touch the surface of the rock face, I try to intuitively tap into a more collective, unconscious, mystic story that might emerge from the rocks themselves. Black feet walked, sat, carved, sang and danced on these rocks. I imagine this was an ancient dreaming site for ceremony. Five whale carvings dominate the site. I could envision hearing those indigenous ancestors' ghost songs and visualise dances passing on the knowledge of the best places for seasonal fishing and hunting. Both awe and grief, sit side by side as I reflect how much has been lost, vanquished, the massacres, places desecrated and broken. What have we done to the country that was entrusted to us? It never ceases to amaze me how they lived totally off the land, how their intimate relationship and knowledge of country helped them to survive upwards of 60,000 years.

We can learn an immense amount from the wisdom of the elders of indigenous cultures. Their earth-based wisdom has a different relationship to the environment and the elements of the cosmos than the biological, rational views of western science. They tend to view the totality of nature and its countless elements through the lens of human kinship. The diverse physical forces are believed to be alive, imbued with kindred 'human' qualities, a capacity for consciousness and have inherent social worth. Aboriginal elders address the natural world as Grandfather sun, sister moon, old man gum tree... this is our family. We belong to the land and the land is us. This is not just a romantic simplistic, way of viewing life and nature by referring to natural things in a familial way. Aboriginal spirituality has for thousands of years recognised their interconnected kinship with all of life.

Some years ago, a small group of people spent a day in the Southern Royal National Park with aboriginal elder Uncle Max Dulumunmun (sadly who died recently). He addressed our little group by stamping his foot on the earth and said, "This is our mother". Throughout the day, each step echoed; 'This is our Mother'. We are invited to look at this earth with new and ancient eyes. Zen master Dogen uttered in a similar vein, 'The earth is our actual body, our great body'. A wisdom to embody.

On the scenic drive along the ridge overlooking Bulimah Spur we discovered a plaque dedicated to Marie Byles at the lookout named after her. Marie Byles in the early 1900's was not only a committed conservationist, bushwalker, explorer, solicitor, and author but over a 5-year period with a bush walking club campaigned ardently to protect Bouddi National Park. This 1935 win was and is considered a momentous achievement for nature conservationists. What an inspiring woman, decades ahead of her time. Another deep bow of thanks to her foresight, advocacy and protection of the natural environment.

As I walk this ancient land, listen to the wind in the trees and wake up at first light, I am reminded of the opening lines in Dogen's Mountains and Waters' Scripture; **"The mountains and waters of the immediate present are the manifestation of the way of the ancient Buddhas.... Because they are the self before the emergence of signs, they are the penetrating liberation of immediate actuality."** When I fall into the immediate present, the intimacy with the mountains and waters is very much alive. It is a gateway to a mind at peace.

Joy is the compass for my intentions this year. It is an invitation to notice what nourishes real joy. It is easy to find pleasure in walking along the bush trails, the moment-to-moment experience of walking. Dogen instructs that joyful mind welcomes each moment just as it is. We practice walking meditation not in order to arrive, but just to walk on this precious green planet is a privilege and a joy. However, it is easy to switch into automatic pilot when walking and think about the endless things that one is going to do that day. I am guilty of having list mind and focusing on the destination, launching myself forward to get to wherever it is that I am going, much to the consternation of my walking companion. I remind myself that the purpose of this

practice is to reclaim walking as a joyous present moment activity. Shake off all those worries and anxieties, not think of the future, not worry about the past, just enjoy walking for the pure simple, sacred act of walking.

On the 3rd of January, Mari and I descended a steep path that wove its way around giant boulders down the coastal slopes of Bouddi National Park to Maitland Bay beach. We arrive at a secluded white ribbon of curved beach, a liminal space where the forest meets the great vast blue ocean. We swam in the protected calm waters of the cove near the headland. Invigorated, we planned to sit on the beach but were assailed by an army of March flies. March flies are in paradise too. While it is said that zazen is the dharma gate of ease and joy, those biting, pesky flies won the day and we gave up sitting and took up swimming instead: another dharma gate of ease and joy.

With legs dangling over the jetty at Hardy's Bay, I sit and enjoy the final rays of light. A sea turtle, surprisingly bobs its head up, right in front of me, surfacing twice in a matter of minutes. It reminded me of the ancient Buddhist story of the turtle that surfaces once every aeon and finds the only board in the sea. This ancient story is a reminder of how rare and wonderful it is to have this precious human life. An invocation to not waste our time and to endeavor to carry on our Bodhisattva work. Two wood ducks fly south as the evening sun sets and the fading light shimmers on the water. I long for nothing, just soak in the peace of the evening. Truly is anything missing now?

Walking practice has long been a part of spiritual pilgrimages, where we are humbled and strengthened. I've had a number of wonderful experiences walking Yatras in National Parks, here and overseas and leading Mountains and Rivers Sesshins. In March, 2011, a small group from MZG undertook a 6-day sesshin, walking the Great Ocean track. The national heritage listed track passes through Great Otway National Park and meanders along the spectacular, rugged coastline of the great wild Southern Ocean.

We began our walk at Shelly beach and six days later, ended with our last campsite at Johanna Beach. It was indeed an inner and outer journey. The landscape's wild and intricate beauty mirrored our inner states and vice/versa until inner and outer became one. Each step of the way; the joyous laughter, waiting for our fellow companions along the path, arriving at camp exhausted, each thing confirmed that the mountains and waters of the immediate present are truly the ancient way of all Buddhas.

It was very literally an all-weather practice as we encountered all manner of temperatures and weather conditions. Being in the elements, protecting oneself and contemplating the elements; earth, water, fire and air played a big part of our daily experience. We walked through; sand, mud, gentle rain, climbed hilly ascents dripping with sweat and got caught in a torrential thunderstorm. We could see a dark brooding mass swelling offshore, then it swept over the headland of Cape Ottway and bucketed down as it hit land. We were all drenched. On the lay over day at Aire River, twelve of us huddled into Gai's tent in the evening while gale force winds swirled and blew around us. In spite of the battering from the elements, inside the canvas tent we created a warm, friendly cosy sharing. It was inspiring to see a number of students the next morning, sitting outside on tarps in the pre-dawn light. Zazen in the rain and freezing biting winds was not for the faint hearted. One had to be ready to embrace and meet whatever the day presented and work with the conditions at hand: a practice of embracing the suchness of things.

After packing up our tents and the morning trail meeting, we headed out from camp along the trail in single file, walking in silence. There was enough space between each person to give a sense of individual practice yet still hold the thread of togetherness. Finding the sweet spot between aloneness and togetherness, between intimacy and solitude.

Dogen Zenji's Mountains and Waters Sutra was read each day before breakfast. This essay presents a dense intricate, highly symbolic study of the interpenetration of phenomenal existence and emptiness. The text is rich in metaphors. Mountains are symbolic of phenomena or existence and 'waters' are symbolic for the numinous or emptiness. I invited

students to contemplate any of the lines from the Sutra and take them up as a koan. One of the much-loved favourite lines was, "The green mountains are forever walking".

The Green Mountains are forever walking; a stone woman bears a child by night. Mountains lack none of the qualities proper to them. Therefore, they always abide in ease and always walk. That quality of walking should be investigated in detail. Because the walking of Mountain's must be like human walking, don't doubt the walking of mountains, just because it does not look the same as the walking of human beings. If one doubts the walking of the mountains, one doesn't even yet know one's own walking.¹

Dogen invites us to further examine our walking and realise that there is no separation between oneself and the green mountains. Mountains seem so solid and permanent; they exist, but not as something fixed or static. If we study the mountains, we realise they are impermanent and continually shifting, changing with the seasons; wet, dry, cold, etc., so too our own walking. The walker is not a solid, fixed, separate entity. All manner of stories and feelings and moods weave through one's head as you walk. When we are truly intimate with 'just walking' the walker and walked upon become one. The subject/ object division disappears and there is just walking, everything is walking. Everywhere that one's eye is cast, every sound of the forest, enters into the walking. The path rises up to meet you, then you don't doubt the walking of the green mountains. Green mountains come forth as our essential nature removing the preoccupations of our small ego driven self-story. What a blessing, what a relief.

As we walked over headlands and down to the beach, through the lush valleys or under the canopy of the heath, each of us recognised that the path would not be straight, that it did embrace physical and emotional difficulties. The welcome and the unwelcome appeared. One does not know what is around the next bend. Each moment we are greeted by uncertainty, the pleasant, unpleasant, painful, agreeable, disagreeable, loneliness, joy or sorrow, life is like that. Our practice is to find equanimity and steadiness with whatever arises. At the end of the trail, my heart was full of gratitude for walking together in country, that forged resilience, a bonding experience of warm friendships along the great way.

The rain has stopped,
the clouds have drifted away,
and the weather is clear again.
If your heart is pure,
then all things in your world are pure.
Abandon this fleeting world, abandon yourself,
then the moon and flowers,
will guide you along the Way.

By Ryokan Taigu

1. Shobogenzo – Zen Essays by Dogen, Translated by Thomas Cleary, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu. Page 89.

Bear is Now Asleep

William Verity

The following is an excerpt from Bear is Now Asleep, a memoir by William Verity about the year after his daughter died.

It was not the first time I had sat on a flat roof smoking, gazing vacantly at the universe from my vantage point on a lonely planet stranded in immensity. Almost two decades previously, I had slept at night for a whole summer on top of a mountain in Ladakh in the Indian Himalayas, entertained by shooting stars that surprised me in my peripheral vision. Before I went to sleep on the roof of the world, I would gaze at the universe looking down on me, reminding me that I was less than a grain of sand and my troubles were too small, even for ridicule.

It was there, in mountain country, that I had my first vision of God.

It came as I hitched a lift in the back of a truck from the market town of Leh back to the village where I was teaching for a summer in a Christian missionary school. Children had chased after us down the narrow lane that wound its way along the valley floor, linking one settlement with the next, dotted with the occasional monastery, looking down from the imperious heights.

They flowed out of the back like streamers, singing and waving their hands in their excitement at seeing a white face among the bags stacked on the truck. Some recognised me from the school and shouted: “Julay! Julay!” Meaning “hello” and “hooray” in a single joyful greeting.

I shouted “Julay!” back to them and returned their waves until the truck pulled up at the outskirts of the village of Shey, where I was sharing my two-storey, flat-roofed, mud-brick house with a couple of English teachers and a Buddhist monk. As I jumped down from the truck with my small bag of vegetable and grapes, I left the children – energy spent – to wander back home.

It was when I started to make my way along the footpath through the fields of barley to my distant house that the vision hit me.

It lasted a few brief minutes, but from the inside it lifted me out of time. It was a feeling of ecstatic joy, such as I had never before imagined, and a certainty that I was not separate from the world I saw around me – the mountains, the icy river, the children, the blades of grass, the flies, the ants, the yaks – but a part of it.

For a single instant that lasted for eternity and transformed a lifetime, I was both myself looking out and a part of something that was greater than me, greater than everything and smaller than nothing.

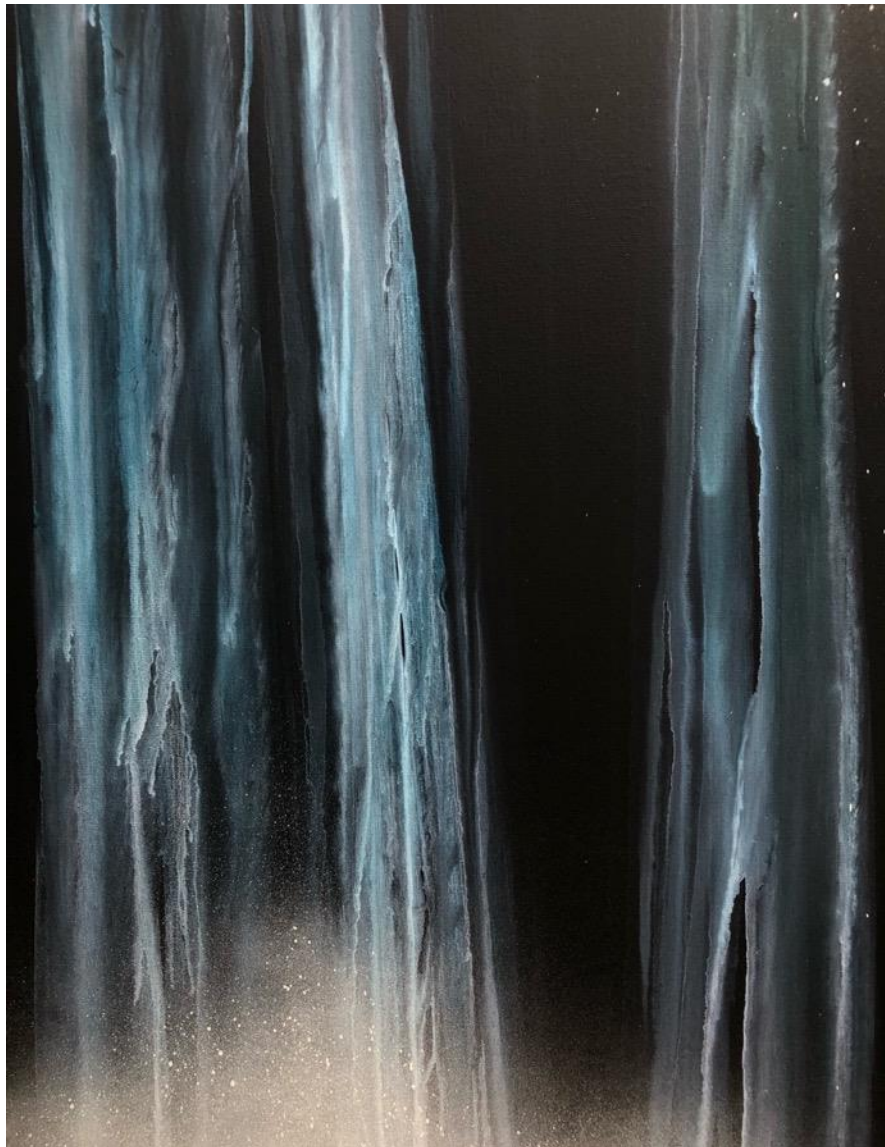
It was as if the clouds had parted on a grey day to reveal for a brief moment that there was a sky that lay behind the grey and that it was blue. And then, as suddenly as it had arrived, it left. The clouds of my mind came back together to form the usual low, grey blanket and everything returned to its usual state. Except now I knew – beyond any doubt – and how it can be beyond doubt I cannot explain that there was much more than the mundane to our lives.

There was blue sky beyond and I knew, because I had seen it, and it was this sky that I gazed at from my flat roof that night, fascinated by its scale and now by its meaning. When, later, I found

myself as a telephone counsellor trying to gain a foothold of trust with despairing people, tipping over into suicide, I could draw on this bottomless well of Himalayan joy. As they searched for a reason for life over death, they could ask me if I believed in God, and I could answer without any doubt – and without any connection to a religious institution – with an emphatic ‘yes’.

Perhaps this ‘yes’ – this Western version of a joyful ‘Julay’ shouted by a barefoot, dark-skinned child dressed in dirty, cast-off clothing chasing a truck down a mountain road – perhaps this vision of love gave a single, anonymous, desperate telephone caller – maybe more than one – fresh hope and renewed purpose to see life out to its natural end.

I hope it did.



This Dewdrop World, painting by Glenys Jackson

Mountains and Rivers (Waters)

Caroline Josephs

On my wall, collecting cobwebs (It has been there quite a long time) is Dogen's
"To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be awakened by the ten thousand things."

Also by Dogen,

"Mountains and waters are the expression of old buddhas."

So begins *Sansuikyo* or the 'Mountains and Waters Sutra'--

its poetry, its insights, from Eihei Dogen, (1200-1253), founder of the Soto school of Zen. "Old buddhas" was a mystery to me.

And so, I set out to explore the theme 'mountains and rivers',
leading me to this work on the sutra:

The Mountains and Waters Sutra: A Practitioner's Guide to Dogen's 'Sansuikyo', Commentary by Shohaku Okumura, (Wisdom Publications, U.S., 2018).

Perhaps you would care to join me in my explorations of mountains and waters – through word meanderings, shapes, through ink on paper?

Since I am an ocean (and sometime mountains) person, I wanted to see if waters would also translate to 'ocean' as well. (I swim in ocean each day of the year).

Okumura reminds us also that mountains and oceans, waters, rivers are 'not only beautiful, but can sometimes be violent and merciless, so we need to take care of that painful ugly part'.

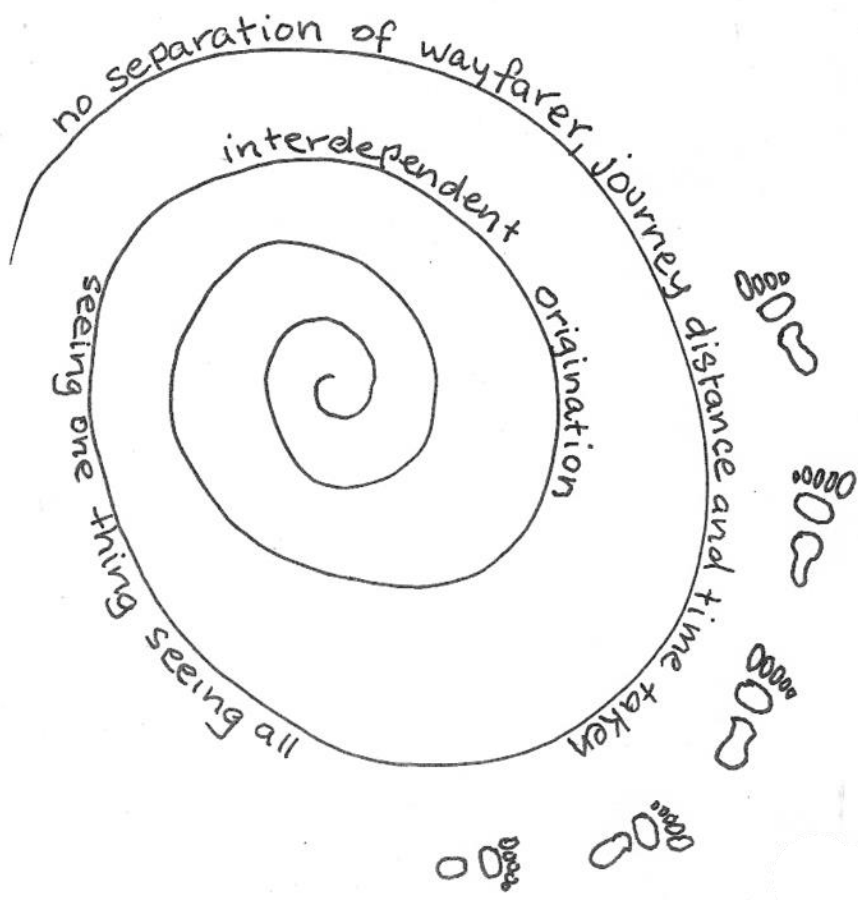
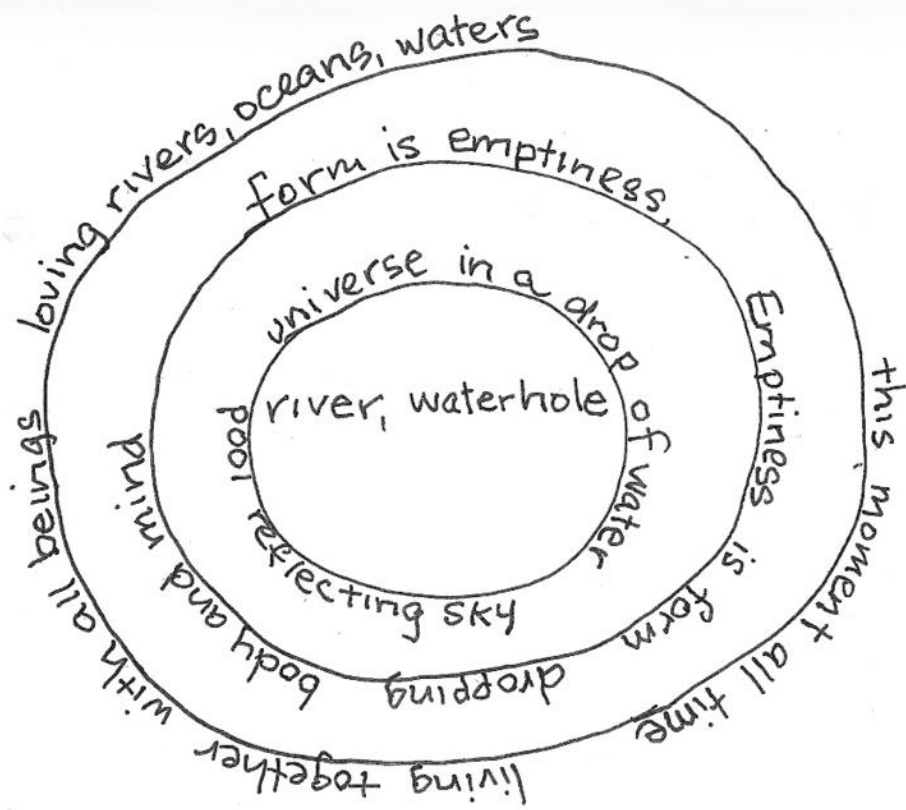
Also, 'no matter how hard we practice, no matter how much good we do, still our practice is incomplete'.

So...out of silence, zazen....*listening*...

"within and mountains the great unchanging
waters a pore of skin changing ocean is stored."

mountains shifting moment by moment
summit snowy, summit rocky
dark mountain light mountain
wind in mountain grassy slope
slippery mountain sides
mountains changing, walking

rippling shimmering water flowing
river body changing moving
sleeking surging waves wetness cooling
seething streaming wavelets being





Jurassic Dolomite, Southern Ocean, Tasman Island, painting by Janet Selby

So here we are, Kerry and I...

Brendon Stewart

So here we are, Kerry and I at the end of another extraordinarily exciting Shinkansen ride staying at Hotel Kikkawa in a very small room that reeks of tobacco smoke in downtown Hiroshima. Next morning early, we set off and walk towards the Peace Park and on our way, we come upon the Hiroshima Catholic Cathedral. It's not exactly gothic but rather a quiet, restrained brick and stone affair built sometime in the 1950s. It is the first real presence of Christianity we have come across on our travels through Japan so there is a certain curiosity as to how this congregation works. As we walked around the building looking for the open door, a rather spritely elderly women confronted us with a big smile and welcomed us to come in and join them for holy communion which was just about to start.

Some surprise.

Mass in Hiroshima cathedral's crypt
gentle and simple.
Moving in a happy way,
the priest
smiling all the time as
his women assistants kept getting
the ritual tangled with their laughter.
Hymns in Japanese
the sacramental gifts; so sweet.

Painted high on the ceiling a Phoenix bird in full flight and below large abstract stain glass windows bathing the church in coloured light. After mass the priest told us that as a young priest, he'd been a missionary in Papua New Guinea.

Another circling.

We took the tram the short distance from the Cathedral to the Peace Park just across the river from Hiroshima castle. In the castle grounds on August 6, 1945, at approximately 8.30 am (Japan time) ten school girls, recently summoned to help with the war effort, emerged from their work bunker. They were possibly the first to witness the immediate aftermath of what we now call a nuclear holocaust.

The ten survived.

An incident

The city of Hiroshima is there on the banks of the steadily flowing Motoyasu River, spanned by many bridges located throughout the city. Photographs taken, soon after the explosion, show all the bridges in reasonably good repair. I made my way down to the river's edge, just below the peace dome and retrieved a smooth stone from along the low tide ebb. It was deliciously round and smooth, shaped a little like a heart and it felt easy in my hand.

I had mixed feelings about taking a souvenir from Hiroshima, nonetheless I chose to. I went to a nearby toilet block where I intended to wash the stone clean of the river mud so I could put it in my pocket as a touch stone. After washing it I shook the stone in my hand causing water to splash off and just as I did it flew out of my grasp and hit, very hard, the corner of the porcelain wash bowl breaking a piece clean off. The stone and the piece of porcelain fell loudly to the toilet floor and bounced in among the feet and school bags of a group of schoolboys who were standing there staring at me, and my antics.

Even before this strange act of vandalism the boys were curious about me, is it so that foreign men in toilets always seem to attract the attention of schoolboys – anything odd in that? But now I was scrambling about on the floor trying to recover both my stone and the broken piece of the bowl. In Japanese homes and hotels, you are expected to wear a special and different pair of indoor slippers, Uwabaki - into the toilet, after which you leave them at the door. So, crawling around on my hands and knees on a toilet floor scavenging for the culprit stone and the damaged ceramic in amongst the boy's feet, must have confirmed plenty of stereotypical ideas about westerners.

‘Shit-shit-shit’ I cried pitifully.

With the stone back in my pocket and the piece of porcelain set on the shelf above the sink I quickly left the scene with the glare of the boys’ accusation on my back. Who should I tell of this accident? There was no one obvious, no caretaker or gardener or official of any sort nearby. How could I admit my error and relieve in some small way my weird guilt?

I carried the stone for the rest of the afternoon as Kerry and I made our way alongside the river on a general sightseeing excursion. Superstition got the better of me eventually. What else could explain the feeling: this stone and me were in a risky relationship. We walked on and visited the contemporary art museum, another monumental architectural extravagance celebrating late 20th century art with plenty of worthy works trying to make some sense of August 6, 1945.

Crossing the river once more on our way back to the hotel I turned to face the water took out the stone and threw it way out into the deep middle. It left my hand with something of my body warmth to fall into the stream of Hiroshima again.



There is a Path Beyond Hiroshima, painting by Brendon Stewart

Rivers and Rivers

Diana Levy

Yesterday I paddled up the Colo River in my plastic kayak. We were hoping to behold the signs of the 2022 flood, but everything is transient and only the frequency of dead gum trees, a half-submerged launch, the faint mud mark of creepers hanging from trees and the faint line of swished *Arundo donax*ⁱ along the bank gave a clue. The colonising settlers gave the name “the Second Branch” to the Colo. This name means “koala”. The “First Branch” was the Macdonald River, *Gunanday*ⁱⁱ. A warrior called “Branch Jack” waged war on settlers and with his band killed at two places near the Colo mouth with Dyarubbin (Hawkesbury River) in 1805. The retaliation that followed was led by Andrew Thompson, until recently considered a saint of settlement in the Hawkesbury. He has a muddied reputation these days - but I digress.

I was thinking about all this history as I paddled up the Colo with my buddies. Near the mouth with its rich alluvial soil, pumps chugged away, sucking up water for orchards or pasture. The conflict for these places would have been intense, places where *murnong* (yams) might be cultivated by the women. The place where we disembark from the Webb’s Creek ferry on our way to Kodoji has a name: *Terramorang* or *Dharramurrang*:

The “Dyarubbin” website says this: “Poss. gloss: muddy ground [dhaura ‘ground, earth’ (Gu, G), murrang ‘mud’ (W)]. Name of the west side of Webbs Creek. As at Woolloomoorang, ‘mud’ highlights the rich alluvials of the small floodplain here, soils in which many food plants grew.”ⁱⁱⁱ

A few days prior, I had been to an iteration of the exhibition “*Dyarubbin*”, at the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery at Windsor. There was displayed a *nawi*, a bark canoe. A video showed the process by which it was made by young people, at Brewongle Environmental Education Centre near the river. What was fascinating to me was the invocation by the elder and tutor, an uncle, to the trees and spirits. He took the students through a spiritual process. The white dots on the forehead “opened their eyes”, including the third eye. The tree was consulted about their need for its bark. Only then did they begin.

There are many descriptions from the First Fleet officers of the women in their *nawi*. The craft is simple and shallow, but the skill required to paddle them was anything but. The women could paddle them beyond Sydney Heads and through surf, in their quest for fish. They might have an infant or two with them, and a small fire in the boat to cook their catch. There is a long description by Watkin Tench^{iv} of the Darug on Dyarubbin in 1791 assisting the exploratory party of *berewalg* (Eora word for British) across the river in *nawi*. Yesterday, we passed three young blokes in plastic fishing kayaks - one had caught three bass, and his mates nothing. They joked that he had taken all their luck.

At an exhibition in the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre (Katoomba) called “*Water: presence and absence*”, a video showed a dance by Jo Clancy and the Wagana dancers. They were barefoot on country, near what we call Dunn’s Swamp or *Ganguddy*. Jo had gone through a spiritual process which was roughly described on the wall notes, to find this dance. And it recalled a dance I saw performed in the courtyard of Old Government House recently, by Jannawi Dance Clan, “*Garrigarang Badu*”. This dance was about women fishing from their *nawi* - Old Government House sits above the Parramatta River.

Which brings me to eels. Darug artist Leanne Tobin has told me that “*Burramatta*” means “place of the eels”, but it has the deeper meaning of “where saltwater meets fresh water”. Her piece “The Running of the Eels” featured at both the Katoomba and Windsor exhibitions. The eels are made of glass and feature transparent juveniles (called ‘glass eels’) running one way upstream, and the mature eels running the other way, out to sea for a long journey to the spawning grounds. This connects to stories of the creation of rivers. At the Katoomba exhibition there was a marvellous exposition of the *Gurangatch - Mirragan* songline, by Gundungurra elder, Aunty Sharyn Halls and archaeologist Mike Jackson. *Mirragan*’s chase of *Gurangatch* created the Wollondilly and Coxs river systems and it is a publicly known story. Much of Sydney’s water comes from these rivers which are held back by Warragamba dam. At the Windsor exhibition, Leanne Mulgo Watson (and other Darug knowledge holders) had made a cartoon-style video, partly about the river creator *Gurangatty*. In a kids’ room at the gallery, there was a plaster replica of the engraving of *Gurangatty*, an eel-like creature engraved high above Dyarubbin (near the old Sackville Reserve where many Darug people were “protected”). Kids could make rubbings of *Gurangatty*.

No drop of water in a river is a river. When you step into a river, a moment later is it the same river? I think of the things that happened to bring the colony to wealth and into sovereign modernity. They seem to have happened in the past - numbers make a line, 1788, 1791, 1805, 1946 (winding up of the Sackville Aboriginal Reserve). Circles feature again and again in the art that I saw. I can understand history as circles - cycles. Those events, which were long buried under the mud of ambition are with us now, finding their voice.

*uprooted she-oaks
a line of root balls
damming the river*

Nepean river

i. tentative i/d - common name bamboo reed, an invasive exotic weed

ii. for explanation of the meaning of this, see Grace Karskens and Darug knowledge holders: online “[Dyarubbin: mapping Aboriginal Stories, Culture and History of the Hawkesbury River, NSW](#)”

Map:

<https://portal.spatial.nsw.gov.au/portal/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=82ae77e1d24140e48a1bc06f70f74269>

iii. *ibid.*

iv. Tench, Watkin, “1788: Comprising A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay and A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson” various editions and online.



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