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Poems

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Poems

Abstract
THE LONG-TERM CARPARK, COUNTRY, AND WESTERN, IN ANTICIPATION, RUMI TO SHAHMS, STONE POEM, AFTER RUMI,
MAX LOMAS

THE LONG-TERM CARPARK

sends metal feelers to the sun;
spread emptily over acres,
cars squat nose to nose
pugnaciously, a regiment
of baked cicada husks,
their contents flown.

We pupae stretch and crawl
and hum from shell to shell
to shell, each swarm a drift
desperate to swim, to run,
to fly so far, so fast
and free at last of aid,
of all protections, in that
one shrill transfiguration,
that brief burst of glory
as the season ends.

Feb 04.
COUNTRY, AND WESTERN

I'm driving again — it's
Christmas; my pilgrimage to parents
tracks the skyline across plains
that shimmer promise of arrival.

Tractors built like semis
plow up dust clouds storeys high,
gray sheep and black cattle graze the stubble
from sorghum paddocks the size of dry suburbs.

Further out, the saltbush stretches clear
on every side. I remember you said.
'Flat is not my favourite'. Well,
you'd really hate it here.

But you'd love the flight of eagles
and the rolling line of cloud.
the wind that whips the world clean,
a line of emus stalking the fence-line.

It's a landscape where the mind goes
when it's sloughed off daily care
from city life; the routine of farm labour
seems a ritual meditation.

They say open skies mean freedom,
plains make you your own man;
but the space around me speaks
your absence; come here with me when you can.

December 2004
IN ANTICIPATION

After all our traded readings,
all the Rumi and the Yeats,
the songs and sighs and silences
of tape, phone, email, cards,
the novels of our different lives,
what reading will I bring to you
when we meet? An ode
to the sunlight you have pinned
to my kitchen window? hymn
to the companions of your new solitude?
the epic ballad of our journeying
towards each other? a plain
couplet of my empty hands?

When we touch again
it will be gently, each
fearing the enchantment
of our tales will at that instant fade;
when we meet again
I shall need to hold you
to feel you flesh and bone
more real than any story,
as miraculous as any song.

2005
RUMI TO SHAHMS

When the hill behind my house turns
to sea of grass, the waves afoam
with paspalum seed. I shed
my daily clothes and don a robe,
some rubber boots, a hat. commence
a meditation. Step by step I tread, a
petrol-powered monk. whipping
the world into shape. I am

Death with mechanical scythe
enacting the demise of self. of all
proverbial grass cut down. I am
Michael with the sword of judgement.
the simple terrorist reducing all
to calm uniformity of green. and
then I am the figure in the garden
tending the wilderness.

I do not know
what prayer is, but I have learned to
pay attention to the moves from shade
and broadleaf. dandelion. dock to
an attempt at lawn by the stump
of a clothesline (a man did this: it’s
a hundred yards uphill from laundry)
the dense clumps of kikuyu in the runnels.
old bricks left for drainage, the rock
that holds the hillside down, dry
flame tree leaves that crackle and
the constant attack of lantana.

As Saint Francis may have said
(and if he didn’t, then the Buddha probably did).
the buena and the mala are all yerba,
all grass is weed. all weeds are grass.
it just depends on how you cultivate,
how you mow. and so I walk. attending
to the whine of the shortened cord, the
pulse of cutting in and out at thickets
so the spindle does not bind. the exact
kiss of right length and swing and texture. all
becoming one mindless flow to the
engine's 'ohhmm' until the walk
is at its end and everything is
washed clean by wind and silence.

My Tess, it is you brings me to these fancies;
How is it that this hillside once
was just an inconvenience, and now
is haunted by two horses, a ghost
of scuppernong, and your beloved soul?

2005
STONE POEM

To everything there is a season

Right now, it is crisp spring; the sky
bright amethyst cut and polished by wind.
A tinfoil confetti of pigeons wheels and glitters
in sunlight, gardens
are incandescent with azaleas.
We saunter on gray sand, feet etched
by wavelets crystal-tipped
rock sculptures embrace
our stunned gaiety.

A time to cast away stones

The man beside me
is older, has worries
about his weight,
the stones that mark his past.
But his laugh today
reflects the sun, is light itself.
I wonder if it’s us, or if
that mossless shine is
just from careless rolling.

A time to gather stones together

I can see why she picks up stones:
they weight her bag so
she doesn’t fly straight up,
like some kid on an aircastle
delightedly angelic, and
fuelled on pure enthusiasm.
‘Don’t collect what you can’t carry’,
she says, wise as ever;
and I wonder what small cairns
of memory line her windowsill.

And a time for every purpose under heaven

So perhaps it’s stones that balance us,
sediment our feelings, solidify fires
of molten sex to warm joy that shines
or just sits comfortable in the hand.
Stones sign the rocks to be avoided, boundaries to be observed, with stones we can build paths or hearth, fell giants, track home through forest, drown or keep an even keel. Beach stones are clean of guilts and expectations; jostled together, or singly beached and still, they are just content to be washed by waves and light and time.

You can learn a lot from stones: they tell the ways we tread this earth.

June 2005
AFTER RUMI

I took my misery for a walk beneath the stars,
and sitting on the silvered grass,
heard a myriad insects ringing out
creation’s symphony.

What word
shall I sing now, Shams?
What theme is stringing me
a new movement?

April 2006