

*From the Editor*

EarthSong

AS A SMALL girl I remember the pride I felt in knowing that Australia had one of the seven wonders of the natural world – our Great Barrier Reef was unique in its beauty and vitality and it was ‘ours’! As I watched the 4 Corners program recently, I found myself brimming with anger and helplessness over the blatant and intentional destruction of this living system for the short term benefit of the political and economic purposes of the coal magnates.

I give my small monthly donation to those fighting for the Reef’s wellbeing, but it feels like a cancerous lethal tumour is growing too large for healing. Tears came to my eyes as I watched Charlie Veron, veteran marine scientist and dedicated lover of the Reef, announce with a constricted voice: ‘No one will ever see the coral reefs of the world like I have. Because even if they have the opportunity, they’re not there anymore like they were for me, and boy, how sad can that get! I just wish this happened some other time but not in my lifetime. . . . I would rather be dead before this time.’

As his cry lingered in my heart later that night, a memory came to me of walking with a 3 year old along a tree lined street in autumn and his playful delight in the fluttering, colourful leaves wafting up and down, falling on his head and crunching beneath his feet, and his little arms thrown up to the blue sky in joy.

From a totally selfish position it is clear that we cannot be human without Earth’s living systems – our senses are attuned to them – we are

part of them and they are part of us. To continue on our exploitative and destructive path is to bring about our own demise because Earth’s Cry is our cry. But we are called to more than selfish advantage – the consciousness of the human arises from our earliest ancestors – we are related through time and space and it is to the voiceless that we must give voice. To experience the cry of Earth’s biotic community and to respond to it is indeed the Great Work of our time. As Christopher Fry¹ writes:

Thank God our time is now when wrong
Comes up to face us everywhere,
Never to leave us till we take
The longest stride of soul [we] ever took.

Affairs are now soul size
The enterprise is exploration into God.

The articles in this edition call for a soulful response; they are avenues for evoking an inner experience of kinship and communal belonging and calling on the energies of *anima mundi*.

As the expectant eyes of the endangered pigmy possum call to us from the front cover, Jan Morgan traces her journey into a place of deep listening to Earth’s cry – an awakening as she describes it, resonating with Fry’s sentiments:

But where are you making for?
It takes a thousand years to wake,
but will you wake
For pity’s sake.

In Satao’s Cry, Freya Matthews wonders about this ‘exploration into God’ and offers some hope that religions may have agency in establishing new moral codes that honour all of life. She presents a graphic example of cruelty evoked by a mindset that experiences abhorrent dislocation from the Earth community and calls for new insights into the ‘story that

may have fallen under the tyranny of the text’.

We can be very hard of hearing when cluttered with the affairs of the daily round but as Barry Lopez points out in Noelene Kelly’s article, it is only when we put ourselves in the space of the wild that alternative sensitivities and insights arise. Whilst the truly wild is not accessible to many, several articles illustrate that an intention to hear the voice of the other can generate a deep identification with the ‘other’. The bush stone curlew knew of Sasha Shtargot’s presence, Lisa listened deeply to the call of the Baron River in far north Australia and was moved to action, Doug Ralph thought that the Box Ironbark forest ‘needed a political voice’ and gave it one, Ros Nataprawira knows that the local park gives life and must be protected. Geoff Lacey responds to a desire to tell the story of the precious wetlands on the Yarra River and the Tasmanian couples are learning to live on the edge.

But sometimes we need few words and we must let images communicate. The artistry of Ilke White and Libby Byrne show how powerful this can be and the poets too give voice to Earth’s Cry.

So as you enjoy these pages ‘will you wake for pity’s sake?’ ■

Endnote

¹ Sleep of Prisoners <http://www.gratefulness.org/poetry>



Why does the soul not fly
when it hears the call?

Why does a fish, gasping on land,
but near water,
not move back into the sea?

What keeps us from joining the dance
as dust particles do?

Jelaluddin Rumi¹

SPLITTING THE SACK

Jan Morgan

FEATURE

LIKE many thousands of people across the world I am drawn to the poems of the thirteenth century mystic/prophet Jelaluddin Rumi. To hear a call and not fly, to be a fish gasping at the edge of the sea and not move, to see the incredible delicacy of dancing particles and remain an onlooker – this I know well. The truth of his words and images speaks through the centuries into our own time. The divided self. Something or someone seems to be calling. I seem unable to respond. Mystics know this state of being, know about the tension between the false self and the true, know that to let go the

The theme for this edition of EarthSong was partly inspired by Jan Morgan's recently published book Earth's Cry. The Editorial Committee invited Jan to share her own journey into the depth of experience, insight and wisdom leading to the publication of such a work. How do we listen deeply to the cry of Earth – what risks and challenges are met? How are we caught into the pain? Are we implicit in it? Can it create us anew? This is a brief account of Jan's story.

false self is to risk death. Rumi pours out his poetry trying to persuade us to take this risk, to open our eyes, to lure us to fly, to come home, to dance, to become 'a true human being'.

I knew I was not living as a true human being. Indeed, what it means to be truly human in our historical moment is perhaps *the* question for us. Yes, I had changed my light globes, my eating and energy use patterns. Yet, I felt paralysed, unable

to respond, heavy with a weight that I simply could not understand. I thought I loved Earth, her astonishing beauty, colour, fragrance, her exquisite harmony and complexity. And I did. I also experienced myself as someone asleep. Something was not right ... and something was calling, but I was almost deaf, or are the sounds faint, inexplicably muffled?

I have written about it like this in the book *Earth's Cry*.² The voice is a part of my self, dissociated in complex ways from other parts.