

Poems

Stuart Cooke

Lurujarri
a poem by foot
from *Opera* (2016)

(*first*)

it begins as
stumbling into that point of distant tinder

*

distance slides into darkness

we drag our winters

over a thick
scrub

of palpitating nerves

and moths

[star/light whispers calcite
and silicate

evening's fat as ant]

[thunder along a cable's salt]

(it bulges into blister:
the structure of sweat

someone's geology trapped in the gunk beneath a nail
--

(second)

then

a dim day

we walked so far we missed the **dance**

across the flood plains
the creation site / the broad banks
beside a river's hidden **crocodile**

rays squeezing out
like **the neg** ative
hairs from a pale leg

cirrus breath and murky country
and rhythm slippery
as mud

we kept following, the horde of us
the whole horde of us kept following
it was a dance [a fire (a **cave**)]

by the time we arrived it was *the story of it*

we set up for rest

edges grumbling with storm
-----)

a swim's fresh glove }
an evening's wet rattle }
bugs whirling around in the beam }
from my head }

(third)

later on, well after lunch
it's hard to sit down: floor's
^^

a hardened reef spotted with succulents
||
in the east the soupy storm

storm barrels towards the sea, squashing me
into the scrub, the storm's
a grey-navy mind{mediating{infinite{

that group, I saw them between
bleeding land
blue brain
between the bleeding land and the blue brain
their spires heading north...

||
leaving without me
painting their lives into the shore:
cusp of tyre... without mine...
that moving
fibre through
dusk's crusted
grime

and the coral flutes OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
|pushing songs from the reef—
of day clearing and shining soprano
////////////////////

refrains of tinge
and green
smear

I am the softest and the youngest time
slowly melting older on a pock-marked clump
O O O O O O

(fourth)

beach
 of a hermit the
 breast crab scuttle
 the to steal
 scaling their wood!

dig a pit / start a fire
 smoke ourselves out to
 the country went flat
in ocean knifed horizon

by

back south

dyubardyubbagun ignites the clouds sprung crystalline

|
the odd drop

(pressure's seething plume)

*thock

*that

*thock

hermit crabs insist on the pit

tumble into it

U

the young

ones grab them up

{chuck them in a basket crackling

{and clinking with the rest: smash

/the shells, catch bream

octopus, dive/

with a knife/

stab a turtle

strip the curve from its back

and cook up good tucker, crisp

and smokey...~

READING THE COUNTRY: 30 YEARS ON

our sore toes hug powdery *pindan*
our tail's a road furry with scrub and palm / swim and warm
we chuckle your naked coals, snatch
and scratching at cliff, skeleton, relic scatter or dune-ish
skeletal dunes scattered
angry cork spirits sleeping / we'll sleep here
and call to noon
and be gone by noon

(*fifth*)

this time
arrived in a cesspit: low beneath dunes
weeping smoke and stinking with still heat

sat and
waiting a while: flies drop on my face
like a rain of dried, crumbled shit
stick it out
sun stalked by cloud / catch the breeze
up top

swim and breeze and sear
foot cut on coral
my blood's billowing like worn silk
blood's like lace
kisses fish crap, clam puss
or a bottle contaminated by its own chemical

smoke's silent
flies munch on my wound
we walked to reach this, to move on
from this / our vines embering
and going dirt / jelly sweet
human giving, patter and mauve
red rock skewers fossil
and ocean

(seventh)

frigates flocking to fresh bilara
 |
 rain clamped down to force our fester
 |
 stringent as fish gut
 |
 apathetic and muck
 |
 O — I want
 |
 frigates flocking to fresh bilara
 |
 O
 |
 I make bilara with my sweaty footprints
 but knock a hole in me
 and I become billabul
 I rip gills from dead bodies
 |
 O
 |
 I want
 |
 |
 |
 |
 movement
 but all the roads speak RIVER
 a spiky branch gouges out my scalp: *this*
country is sick of me
 |
 O
 |
 carving more claps — and digging sticks
 |
 fire sticks
 |
 spears

I—I—I—I—I—I—I—I—I—I—I—I—I

cumulonimbus punch

the cliffs|

|shhh...

|shhhhh...

|hurl and sodden!

|shhhhhhh...

|hurl and

|soak and

|soak

and the dunes shift their bulk south

our images swim north

spurting and dugong against road

(*eighth*)

<u>feet on a clean floor too soon</u>	The rain's persistence	X
	drove us back	
	the line shredded by torrents	O
	barely tied to its last thought	
		O
	and now, fading country	
	and now, juicy fillets and capsules of linen	O
	can we sing back a coast that ends in the sign	O
	of the first and the always line	
	(O
	of the wind's unrelenting hakea	
	of survival as an obdurate succulent	O
	: mine is a skin without flesh	O
	my footsteps grow anxious	
	I walk the globe without a sign of I	O

(*ninth*)

I washed the dirt from my chest

:

pindan rust in moon dish

(•)

they called I
wandered to the sunset

O

-

-

-

-

the sun dragged the o
cean down with it

I walked across cimmerician sea beds

[feet] stomach damp, soaring way

I walked an instant

X

\
O

but their stars pulled at me

their floating stars

L

E

D

or: some kind of coda

we populated the country together

we left together

we together are a lantern huddled

before the throat

|

we broke up a chunk of elegy

and ate it in rolls and photographs

we are an eddy and we

(tenth)

I have the eyes and the nose of the houses
cars drive over me / push me deeper into the earth

- a slip of bay slithers over the mangroves
- a sky riddled with roots and with hope
- a tracing of the many through the one

further on down to low tide's magnet
those kite flooding after prey
I stop and kneel and ask myself
I cuddle up beside the chest of a boab

you hauled the evening up
over your bodies like a blanket
left strands of rope and empty tins on the shore
your symbols scurried in their shells
across my dream's cooling bank

what I can't see is what I must never see
the rest is light searching for campgrounds

a sail on the trail's pink dust

) dancing

) dancing

the poems are waterholes or they are the thinnest creeks
skin-thin, moist bead and nervous wire

and
they are
or

we gathered by the embers and waited
for the stories
for the history of O
while it slumped and *spat* and cooked up the night

but you are coal and its capacity for ember
you are you or O

the angle invented by a king brown
lush and poison between granules

- I awoke inside the boab
- it was full of sea-weedy fumes
- we packed up and moved on without me

Extracts from *George Dyungayan's Bulu Line: A West Kimberley Song Cycle*, featuring George Dyungayan, Paddy Roe, Ray Keogh & Stuart Cooke

Verse 11

milydyidawurruy

dyalbirrimbirrai

ɲarany ɲarany yinydyarrgana

milydyidawurruy

[*milydyidawurru*: 'rainstorm from the south']

dyalbirrimbirrai

['storm building up']

ɲarany ɲarany

[*ɲarany*: a waterhole in Garadyarri country,

northwest of La Grange]

yiny-dyarrga-na

['it stood over, it waited, it hung over']

Roe: dyalbirrimbirrai cloud all heap up
 ɲarany ɲarany yinydyarrgana it's raining in
 Njarany

Keogh: According to Roe, Verse 11 describes how it
 rained at Njarany, a waterhole near Dampier
 Downs Station. Dyungayan could tell it was
 raining, says Roe, because he could see the
 clouds building up to the south of the Roebuck
 Plains.

Roe: rain from this way¹
 milydyidawurru we call im rain
 anytime cloud come we call im milydyidawurru
 [*rhythmicises words*] milydyidawurruy

dyalbirrimbirrai
ah he making up you know dyalbirrimbirri
rain they bin see im from long way too

Keogh: Dyungayan stated that the verse refers only to the clouds, and not to any rainfall. However, on another occasion he seemed to contradict this interpretation.

Dyungayan: wila I look im all the rain²

Keogh: Verse 11 accompanies a dance, but neither Roe nor Dyungayan could remember the lirrga.

Cooke: it's a rainstorm from the south
all that rain
the storm's building up
clouds heaping up
hanging over Njarany
raining in that country
rainstorm in the south
over the waterhole
in Garadyarri country

all that rain
storm growing
standing over Njarany
waiting there

in the south
the storm's building
the clouds are growing
the storm's hanging
over Njarany
it's raining on the waterhole

in the south
the storm's building up...

Verse 12

bandirr yarrabanydyina

burarri yiṅanydyina

dyalal yindinayana

bandirr yarra-ba-ny-dyina
[body designs] ['we see him']

burarr-i yi-ṅa-ny-dyina
[dim] ['he's there']

dyalal yin-di-na-yana
[ø] ['he did']

Roe: bandirr yarrabanydyina we seen bandirr
 burarri can't see proper long way
 dyalal yindinayana he come out from dark

Keogh: According to Roe, a group of rai were painted up with body designs in preparation for corroboree. They used the white ochre from Verse 3 (galydyi). In his dream, Dyungayan saw them emerge from the dark, but they didn't come close so he couldn't see them clearly.

 Verse 12 is the lirrga for Verse 13.

Roe: that one something bin come out bandirr
 bandirr bilongu corroboree you know bandirr
 dyalal yindina he come out from dark you know
 other side
 he come out in open
 burarr yiṅanydyina means oh
 burarr he stop long way can't see im proper you
 know burarr
 he just come out and he can only just see im that
 bandirr
 rai bin come out dancing in dream

Verse 13

dadyiwurrurruy

dyunbarambara

ganal yimbanydyinayana

dadyi-wurrurruy

[Ø] ['large group of people']

dyunbarambara

[*dyunbara*: dust cloud]

ganal yim-ba-ny-dyina-yana

[Ø] [*yimbanydyina*: 'he sees him']

Roe: ganal yimbanydyinayana he come to nothing³

Keogh & Roe: R - he come out now this fella

[rhythmicises words] dadyiwurrurruy

dyunbarambara

dyunbarambara means he bring dust you

know

with his foot

he come to nothing

but he bin dust coming out dyunbarambara

ganal yimbanydyina and he come to nothing

when he's high up wind blow im away you

know

you can't see any more dust

K - so what's that dadyiwurrurruy wurrurruy?

R - dadyiwurrurruy that's them people coming

out the⁴

for dance they're dancing dadyiwurrurruy

wurrurru yinjan like big mob coming

dadyi nothing to make that corroboree

Keogh: According to Roe, in this verse the rai from Verse 12 come out in full view and begin to

dance. As they stamp the ground, clouds of dust rise up from their feet. The wind blows the dust away, however, so it comes to nothing.

Butcher Joe & Dyungayan:

D - this one nurlu I bin get im long time ago
when I was a young young fella
B - that old man name Bulu
that from Wanydyal
an he sing for sing an dance
that one now dadyiwurrurru
he make dust
one time we come from Beagle Bay run to
thatplace there⁵
somebody dancing there
we look he dancing
marlu ginya murda he gone⁶
D - well that one now

Keogh: According to Butcher Joe, however, it isn't the rai who appear, but Bulu *himself*: Bulu is dancing.

Butcher Joe links the verse to a historical event in which a group of people were travelling from Beagle Bay. They saw a lot of dust caused by somebody dancing. The dancer was Bulu, but when they looked closer he had gone.

Dyungayan confirmed Butcher Joe's explanation.

