Song of my Heart, Call of the Land
A Woman’s Medicine Walk

Initiation

Standing
in the land of the southwest
on the edge of the wild,
and the mysterious moor,
the woman pauses in springtime
gathers her cloak
and crosses the threshold
from dawn into day

beauty, poignant love and shimmering bird song
fill her,

she
wanders
down
the steep track,
light
dances.

A choice emerges
where the path meets the road
and she remembers
how earlier
she felt called
to the valley
and the heights,
and felt such deep longing
for a slower transition
from dawn into day.

The woman
turns right
onto
the road
choosing
to go
down
to
the
river
valley.

*Awakening*

Along the road side
snowdrops glitter
daffodils shine their deep yellow
to her awakened soul
her attention suddenly caught
by a sign on a roadside tree
'danger of death'
a falling man
struck by lighting,
or translucent energy...
the words on the sign
glow in her mind
light against red darkness.

Coming to a stone bridge
her gaze is caught by a field -
beckoning grass and earth
spacious and empty.
She gazes until filled
but does not enter.

*Earth and Water*

Water tumbles in the river below
urgent and rapid
She stands on the bridge
her being enraptured
by the pools
of calm
and
turbulence

filled with the spirit
of earth and water
she walks on
following
a left hand path
down from the stone bridge
to the river bank.

She walks upstream
journeying back to source.
A woodpecker chatters
in the trees.

The riverside path
carries people, dogs and bicycles
she is glad others are around
challenged too
ordinariness and magic dance together.

She is
cold
at this hour
of the morning,
the sun
not yet
high.

Restings and Findings

She is surrounded by fast moving silence
rippling ebbs and flows
the quiet chatter of people
snuffling dogs
travellers on the winding path.

She sits on a mossy bank
where the river flows gently.
Filling with the spirit of water
upstream and down.

Attentively
she looks at the shingle
and river stones in front of her feet
a stone shape beckons
triangular
earth-rust browns
the ‘mountain of the world spirit’
calling her attention.
She chooses it.

A second earth-river stone,
woman-face on one side
mountain range on the other
mysterious in other ways
reveals itself.
Tenderly she picks up her new companions.

She honours the place
and walks on.
Mossy lichens
catch her attention
along the path
she places some as offerings in the trunks of trees.

Her mind wanders
slips into ordinariness
she thinks of home and work
irritated with herself
just walking now,
just walking.

The woman chooses a shady tree,
holly and something other
to rest by and lean against
close to the water's edge.
Dogs come by,
some inquisitive
some simply doing their thing
no humans see her.

The water calms and nourishes her.

She leaves the tree of rest
meanders on,
catching
glimpses
of
fellow
walkers.

*The shape shifting tree*

Another tree beckons
it throws faces
her imagination and the tree's spirit
caught in a wild dance of shifting shapes.
She is entranced fascinated by the powers of imagination and life.

She gazes and gazes walking a wild dream...

Slowly she parts from the tree bows and strolls on.

*The meadow*

Ahead, an open meadow of wild garlic and daffodils she walks along one side to the back of the meadow turns and enters - on her right now the river on her left the river-valley path, the meadow belongs to the woman and she to the meadow...

She walks further in lays down some matting on the rich earth floor drinks water eats fruit and energy bars and rests her body and soul deep in the land. Warmth fills her being as the sun climbs and she surrenders earthwards.

Further off,
strangers briefly pass
on their private journeys.

The woman feels utterly at ease
in the meadow of flowers.
She lies there
dozing, half sleeping
perhaps for an hour or more...
profoundly nourished
held safe
in an embrace
of deep contentment;
as the flowers seed, grow, and wither,
as the river flows
as life turns.

Returning to bright consciousness
she reflects
perhaps on how often she covers her joy
with frustration, anger and restlessness.
A deeper acceptance emerges
in the place
of boundaried beauty
while
the birds call
and
the river streams.

Walking

Leaving the meadow of rest
the woman wanders onward
her attention caught
by the swooping flight
of unknown birds
in the southwestern skies
she walks steadily on
tracing the river-water upstream
human companions
appear and disappear on her path.

Slowly she comes
to the end
of the riverside path,
a road appears,
she does not want to cross it
she
is drawn
to climb the path
   up
   and
   away
   from
   the river
   to
   the
   heights.

*The climb*

The new path is steep,
too much for another woman
who passes her as she climbs.
The woman's heart leaps
at finding the heights
as well as the depths
on this her sacred journey.

She climbs
through yellow gorse,
shrubs and scattered trees
new vistas appear
curvaceous hills
soaring sky
swooping flights of hovering birds
she watches
as they circle and plunge earthwards
such fierce beauty.

Others appear as she climbs the path -
families, small groups, far enough away
to maintain her solitude.

*The silver birch grove*

As she walks up to a level rise
feeling deep silences
she sees a silver birch grove
off to the right -
it beckons
with a wild
fierce beauty
rough and mysterious
vastly different to the river-valley below.

She hesitates
and goes forward
drawn in.

Later she reflects
she wished she had asked more clearly
for permission
to enter.

In the centre of the grove
she sits between three or four trees
earth tussocks, gorse and smaller thorn trees
on the hillside
surround her
wide open views
a wild, impersonal energy
imbuing the place
as she lies down and rests.

_The encounter_

As she sleeps
she hears
heavy footfalls
startled she sits up
remembering “warnings...”
as the ‘gentry’
spring to mind
she turns and sees
two wild Dartmoor horses
curious, snuffling near by
one more adventurous than the other.
The woman and the horses meet eye to eye,
she speaks to them
they watch and look and move off,
cantering away.

The woman lies back
wishing the horses had stayed longer
she sees a fellow companion from her weekend
moving off down the hill.

She rests again
in the silver birch grove,
and hears music
floating up from the valley below
she does not follow it
and cannot see where it is coming from.

The
woman
is
unsure
if she
imagines
the music
or truly hears
the strange
melodic notes.

She decides
to leave her rucksack
in the clearing
and wanders further
up the hillside,
she sings out
to the surrounding hills
a 'native american' voice
chanting
unknown words
arises from her
as she hails
the power and majesty
of the world she sees and participates in.

Cantering hooves are heard
her horse companions return
coming close, right up to her.

She is thrilled, open and welcoming
the more adventurous one
snuffles her arms and legs
curious, playful, wild, shy
she
stays still
greeting
them
both
talking
gently stroking and scratching the bolder one's head.
He (or maybe it was a she...) rolls back his lips and shows the woman his teeth, holding his muzzle up towards her.

She stays still, gazing at him as his companion stands alongside her mind flashes with the sense of a 'child' showing how fierce it can be.

Or is he smiling...

The woman and the horses listen to each other and talk then the wild ones go and the encounter is over.

The woman is bewitched by her experience, she walks back down to the grove filled beyond measure.

The return

It is time now as the sun begins to fall down the sky to return a slow walk back down the hillside along the river-valley to the lodge and place of rest and human companionship.

The woman feels like returning more slowly while time beckons and the river streams on.

She is filled with a sense
of gravitas
a deep embodiment.

As she walks,
retracing
her path
the woman
honours and closes
each section
of her return.
Her walk
is steadfast
ordinary,
a return to home.

The arrival

Crossing the stone bridge
she is seen by her companions,
the drum and flute is played
welcoming her return
out of forest back to village.

The woman recrosses the threshold
as day begins to edge towards dusk.
She sits with her companions,
as each returns
filled with a sweet energy
familiar-unfamiliar...

The sharing

The next morning
a beautiful sharing with a young man
an affirmation
of two
contrasting adventures
in listening and talking
poignant insights
emerge
of new
songs of the heart
and the deep call
of the land……

Emma Lucinda Coats
March–April 2009