

Indonesian imagery, and reminiscences from over 35 years earlier. In the last line of the poem, written just after the Aceh tsunami, I reflected upon the power of nature.

Another poem, 'Travel Warning', deals with some of my experiences, both real and surreal, of being in Indonesia in September/October 2004, when travel warnings had been issued by the Australian Government. The short poem, 'No Warning', written in January 2005, with the backdrop of the incomprehensible scale of events in Aceh, is a reflection on those events. These poems have become part of a whole series of reflective poems written and published in January/February 2005, by Indonesian poets themselves, following the catastrophic tsunami and earthquakes in Sumatra. Here are a few lines of my poem, 'No Warning':

No Warning

tak ada peringatan,
sekarang laut merah,
menelan semua,
tertinggal saja kemuraman
dan ikatan kemanusiaan kita.

there was no warning,
now the sea itself is red,
as it swallows all,
and what is left is the dim gloom
and the ties that bind our common humanity.

This leads me to my final point—namely that, as creative spirits, what we can express through writing in not just English, but also in Indonesian perhaps, are the values, experiences, hopes and fears of Australians who are united by the bonds of common humanity with Indonesians, and the other peoples of this one world. Despite seemingly different cultural roots and experiences, we are strengthened, revealing ourselves as a people willing to learn about, and creatively contribute to, the wellbeing not just of our own country, but of our region.

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Meninggalkan Beirut

Suatu hari, sesuatu hari musim panas,
wanita itu mengunci pintu rumah dan keluar.
Tuhan, Tuhan, harga neraka adalah terlalu mahal
untuk dia, wanita sendiri, membayar.

Perak kehidupannya sudah hilang—
dan dari saat ini juga dia harus pergi,
meninggalkan almarhum kekasihnya
menjaga rumah kediaman mereka sejak sekarang.

Kursi dimana almarhumnya biasa duduk,
pakaian favorit, dan potret ayahnya:
hanya ini wanita itu dilihat—dan debu
diatas lantai tempat suka bersembahyang.

Peledakan gemuruh granat dan bom masih berbunyi,
walaupun semua senjata api sudah didiamkan:
gelas dan cangkir gemerengcing, ngobrol
dengan gelisah seperti kalau bahaya berlangsung

Dan pada saat asap pertempuran sudah lenyap,
koper mengisi kehidupan mereka bersama sudah beres,
pada hari itu, pada hari musim panas itu,
ketika wanita istri menutup pintu dan keluar.

Leaving Beirut

One day, one summer's day, she locked the door, and walked away.
Lord, Lord, the price of hell, it's too high for her alone, to pay.

The silver of her life had gone—and now she, too, must go,
leaving him, her beloved, to watch over their dwelling from this day.

The chair where he sat, his favourite clothes, the portrait of father's
were all that she saw—and the dust on the floor where she once used to pray.

The roar of the shells does not cease when the guns, the guns, they have died;
glasses still tinkle and chatter as if in harm's way.

And when the smoke of the battle had cleared, the suitcases of their lives stood ready,
that day, that summer's day, when she closed the door, and walked away.

'Meninggalkan Beirut' was published in *Pikiran Rakyat*, Bandung's largest circulation mass media/internet newspaper. The original English version of the poem appeared 1991–94, in Sydney Arabic-language newspapers and magazines *Al-Bairak*, *Joussour*, *Al-Mimbar*, and in the following poetry anthologies/books: *On the Shores of a Night* (1994) by Layla Saklawi (Sydney); *Whispers from the Faraway South—Translations of Selected Australian Poetry*, ed. Raghid Nahhas, 1999, (Damascus); *Sunlines—An Anthology of Poetry to Celebrate Australia's Harmony in Diversity* (2002), ed. Anne Fairbairn (Sydney).

Lembah Elqui, Chili (2011) – by Ian Campbell

Lereng-lereng lembah melandai,
ke buminya;
garis-garis vertikal bergabung,
ke buminya.
suatu kuburan dikelilingi batu-batu,
sungai berbuih,
alirannya.

Gabriela Mistral pernah
mengajar di rumah sekolah
bekasnya;
bangku-bangku berdebu tetap;
sekolah sepi,
ketenangannya.

Lewat jendela saya melihat
daun-daun anggur,
tersinar cerah,
meluap-luap gula
putihnya.
di tengah batu-batu,
tersebar,
di bawah logam berat
matahari merahnya.

Lembah-lembah terjauh,
kepuisiannya;
kesunyian biru,
kepuisiannya,
batu menjelma ke dalam kata;
sorga dihancurkan,
kekosongan,
di bawahnya.

Dikuburkan
kepuisiannya;
batu-batu mendalam
menguning
di bawah pencelupan
sekarat matahari,
merahnya.

Valle de Elqui (2008)

cuesta empinada,
tumba rodeada por rocas.
rápido y blanco el río,
escritorio y pupitres antiguos
escuela Mistral.
uvas destinadas para *pisco*,
brillantes de azúcar
a través de las montañas,
metales pesados del sol,
patrimonio de todos,
sin excepción.
poesía de los valles lejanos
silencio azul,
piedras de palabras,
polvo de cielo,
poesía enterrada,
en rocas duras,
amarillentas por
el fuego rojo del sol.

Elqui valley (2009)

Valley slopes angle down,
all verticals converge,
tomb surrounded by stone,
white river runs.
here Gabriela taught,
her old school house and
pupils' dusty desks,
now for ever stilled.
through the windows
outside *pisco* grapes dazzle,
brim full of sugar amid
scattered rocks,
beneath the heavy metal of the sun.
poetry of the far valleys,
of the blue silence,
stone becomes word,
heavens pulverized
by the void below.
poetry is interred,
deep stone
yellows
under the dying red of the sun.