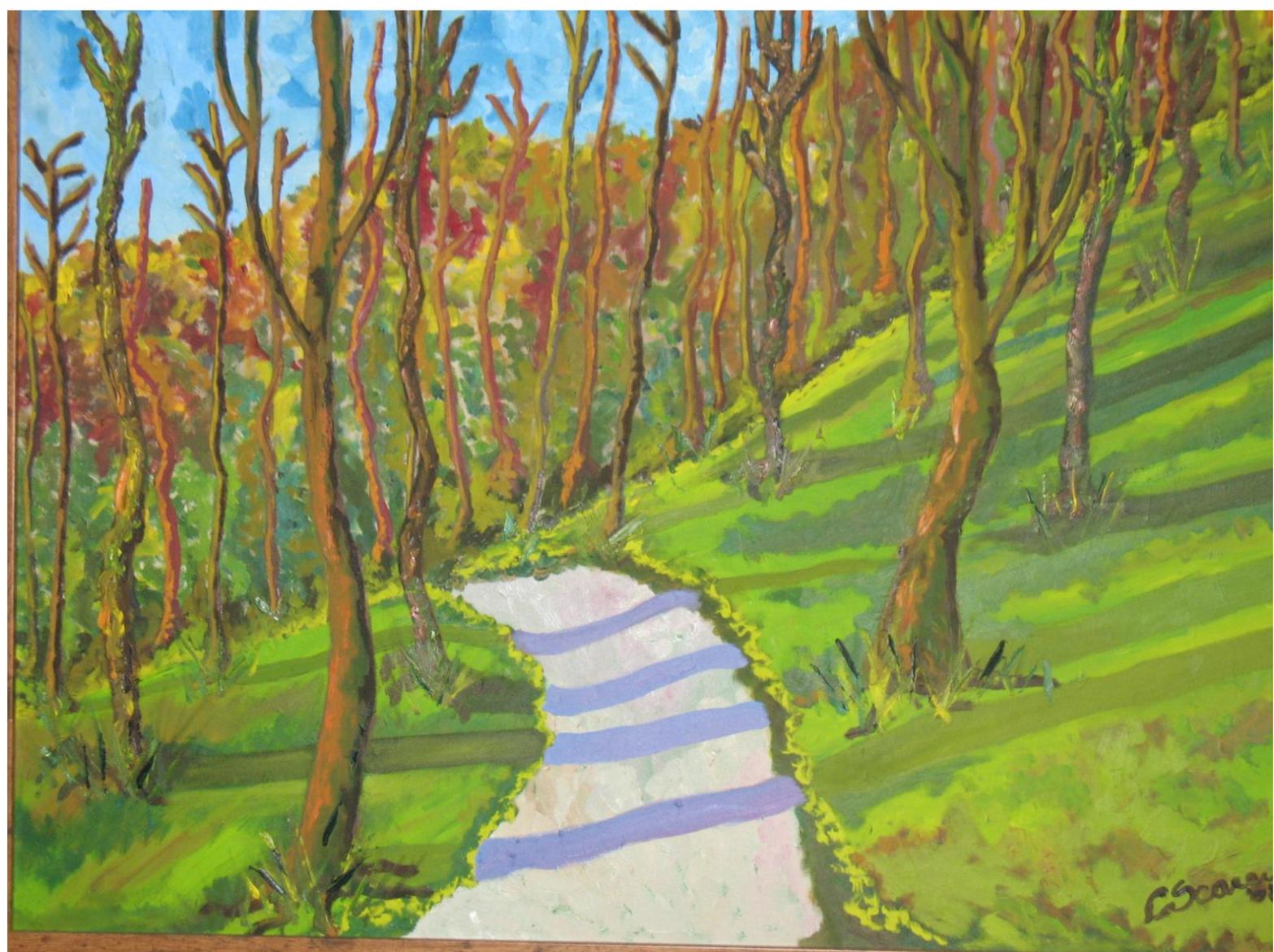


A WINDING ROAD

Carla Scarano D'Antonio



Chiaroscuro

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Cover painting: *A walk in the wood* by Carla Scarano D'Antonio

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For my parents

Leaving Home

In my still teenage room
my table full of fiction books,
the afternoon light shines
on the painted glass window
and the portrait of the Ancient Mariner on the wall.

Dogs fight in the park across the road
my sister plays Annie's song
the white marble floor is chipped.
By then I have my suitcase packed
ready to take the evening train to Paris and to London.

I open the door on the narrow corridor
waves of ragù from the kitchen,
my mother's hug. It's time to go.

In Italy

In Italy we have espresso
five or six times a day,

In Italy men look at all
the women passing by,

In Italy only tourists
go sightseeing in summer,

In Italy we have pasta
twice a day,

In Italy you can't avoid
your large family,

But you can sit under a starry sky
letting time flow, sated.

Snow in the morning

White rooftops and white lawn,
the street in the front covered with snow
cars immovable, doors closed.

No sounds. People
still sleeping like hibernating badgers.
We start the day in the still air.

Up in the mountains, away
from traffic and rows, cut off
in the muffled realm of snow.

As white as peace
as tall as a fortress
the snow protected my balance.

Skipping rope

A long heavy rope
my grandmother gave me
to play with my cousins in the street,
two of us held the ends
the others skipped and chanted in turns,
one, two, three, four,
up and down
wash and rub
clean and fold,
bees fussing around the wisteria.

Widening my circle

A mirage in a scalding desert
my grandmother materializes.
She sits on a straw chair
sewing for her seven children.

Dried up to the essential
stooping to her work,
her hands knotty and misshapen
like olive tree branches.

“How could you endure all that?” I asked.
“I had no choice, I was trapped.”
She stares at me with hopeful eyes,
“Let your life flourish, don’t deny.”

The dunes hush
change their shapes,
the track on the sand
shows me the way.

Common decency

Two wings
spread valves
with black contours,

strokes of glittering
manganese blue and vermillion
in the middle.

The body is pinned down
on a pearl grey panel.
Her shape exposed,

her colours still bright.
Look and enjoy her beauty:
she can't fly away.

A swallow

In the thick
windless atmosphere
of the sweating dusk,

it twirls and swirls, dives
brushes the ground and takes off again,
chasing an invisible prey,

vanishes in a grey bulge
under an overhang of a roof.
I linger breathless.

Again it swoops and flutters
winging, bustling about
my restless life.

Relationship

Hands curl and twist
join in prayer
strike,
caress,
squeeze.

Firm and soft fingers
interweave with yours,

the ring-finger
with its strip of gold
bends,
heaves,
keeps.

Gran Sasso d'Italia

A saw cuts the lethargic atmosphere
with its jagged edge,
harsh, the highest peak scratches
the sore space.

Shabby old villages below
are stuck at the foot of the mountain.

I drive inside the tunnel
impressed and oppressed
by its bulky size.

A pin prick of light in the distance,
the way out.

Appennini

Scrub covers
the squat mountains
with rocky bare tops.
The populated valley
is like a pool
where streams converge
and stagnate.

Meeting my grandmother

Sunny and cold
the ground is frozen,
chickens wander in the yard
brown hills rolling
rabbits munching in cages,
the bell of the church strikes midday.

She stands on the threshold
her short white hair is combed,
rough hands are joined.

Along the scratched façade of the farm
a crate of onions, carrots and potatoes,
two buckets of water,
logs,
and a line tied to a pole on the opposite side
with washed clothes,
hanging.

Postcard from Greece

I cut out the turquoise enamel sea,
solid, sticky like glued Plasticine,
and leave the white village clinging
to the rocky coast
without prospect.

Rustic whitewashed facades,
stairs and steep alleys
connecting the houses to one another
like a labyrinth by Escher,
no beginning and no ending.

Lives interweave like ivy clenching a trunk,
no chance of solitude.
The Mediterranean sea lies afar:
a venturesome dream men once plied
now a crystal-clear pool to bathe.

Motherhood in Adelaide

I planned a spontaneous delivery
instead the baby is breech.
I can't avoid a Caesarean.

I wake up blurry,
aches everywhere, the cut burning;
in my belly,
air and water bubbling,
the drip infiltrates in my left wrist.
I can't eat, drink or move.

Like a koala I rest on my branch
for nineteen hours or more.
I crawl on the eucalyptus
looking for a comfortable bend,
my little one in my pouch feeding at my breast,
his unfinished head:
turned up pink nose, small mouth,
soft reddish hair, swollen eye-lids.
We curl up in a bundle,
a lone protuberance
on the tree,
my thick grey fur protecting his growth.

She spins around

(for my daughter)

the spike of the cathedral cuts the blue sky
clean pure walls build my house
let's wait and pray
I can fly in the fresh air

clean pure walls build my house
a child running from one side to the other
I can fly in the fresh air
your words give me a reason to live

a child running from one side to the other
her screams pierce my ear
your words give me a reason to live
calm her down

her screams pierce my ear
she's banging her head on the wall
calm her down
let your mind relax

she's banging her head on the wall
hold her tight, she'll stop
let your mind relax
each day has its troubles

hold her tight, she'll stop
raise up and walk on
each day has its troubles
her small hand rests in mine

raise up and walk on
comfortable shoes are suggested
her small hand rests in mine
it will soften the hard climb

comfortable shoes are suggested
she is so moody

it will soften the hard climb
never mind about others

she is so moody
you will find a way for her
never mind about others
they will finally understand

you will find a way for her
our days are so thin
they will finally understand
in the boundless Universe

our days are so thin
let's wait and pray for Him
in the boundless Universe
the spire of the cathedral dives into the blue sky

A seashell

Rosy complexion
orange hues chipped at the edges
crouching like a hamster caring for her young.

Hollow and polished inside
dark brown cavity.
It has forgotten the sound of the sea
and the smell of salt.

The Atlantic shore near Cape Canaveral
welcoming our thirst of sun.
I picked up the shells popping out of the wet sand like sprouts
to celebrate my first visit to the ocean.

The children jiggling and cheering
in the mallow waves.

Eventually the black cloak of a storm
invaded the sky and chased us away.
I ran to the car holding my precious booty.

DAHLIA CACTUS

Deviating from the usual path
All at once we find the flowers
Healing, their
Long spiky petals mature but
Iron stems break the smooth pad,
Aimless we wander.

Survive and forget, you can
End your days in peace,
Muzzle on the mouth
Inspires a secret song inside.

Carnation the carnal hue reveals though
Aside a knot of loneliness throbs
Carmine is the chosen colour,
Time will cure the stings and
Unexpected new buds will blossom
Surprise shines in the bosom.

Flying

On the face of it
irregular interlocking shapes
of golden ochre
and emerald green, burnt sienna
and sapphire
melt into one another at boundaries,
a perfect jigsaw
composed in a portion
of land of England.

A sunny day in Lancaster

The sun stretches in the compact sky,
houses in a row like ladies in crinoline,
daffodils prevail
and heather alternates with primroses.

Sandstone bricks
build up a solid house;
gently rough bricks
with purple, grey and silver sparkles.
Thick walls protect the inside,
firm and strong as a stout man.
Its windows high,
its door closed.

Along the canal, spring bursts out,
blue and red boats are snoozing,
grass is poking disrespectfully
and a man is fishing:
he casts his line far away
and waits,
plenty of time,
plenty of hope.

The dark stones of the lane
lead me home,
irresistible route.

Chimney stacks

On the top of the roof in a row
terracotta chimneys show:
some round, some notched,
pointed or convex,
slited or riddled,
intact and plain,
proud of their utility
simple in their humility.

Electricity

Copper wires irradiate
from the hub
like rays of a bicycle wheel.

They draw a straight line
reaching each house, no exception,
close at the opposite like a ring,

linked to the centre
that unifies them all,
a giving kernel.

Dawn at five

The opalescent light
filters the rolling shutters,

the clock tower tolls
the hour with confidence.

The town is still sleepy,
no danger behind shrubs.

The exciting light of the sun
doesn't meet the rooftops yet.

Ancient ochre stones
blink at their past,

Salmon pink petals swirl and fall,
exhausted, on the cobbled street.

Gale in Morecambe

The rain drips,
the wind slits.

Endless, the brown silver sea,
waves foam and soar deep.

The grey lane washed clean
draws a line that marks clear:

the row of houses here,
the ocean brags there.

Order and shape
on a regular scape,

against nature's bawl
invading the shore.

Similarly a regulated scheme and a wild force,
in my soul face,

they balance their might
like flowage in a dike.

A trip to Kendal

Twisted branches
stretch in the air,
Gothic stones rest
on the riverwalk,
quiet lanes unravel,
worn walls stay
forever
up on hill still proud,
its ancient pieces warn
deeply rooted in the earth guts.

Seagulls call for redemption
fly to town
for a different point of view.
Forgiven
the ducks paddle in the protected stream
under strict rules.

The castle stands,
silver under cerulean vault:
storms, misfortunes,
battles outlasted
brave and confident, though mangled.

Skirt

She plodded on the hill to reach the bus stop
together with her elderly friends,
dazzling pavement and dry square stones
of the castle of Angers, slumbering giant.
She wore leather sandals
her white ankles striped with blue veins,
shimmering silk skirt waving in the breeze
lavender, golden, blue and pink patterns
told an ancient love story
among gardens, pagodas and gentle streams,
the lovers hidden in the pleats
trembling with passion.
A lavender cotton top
and a string of seed pearls.

The Baptist Church

The steeple points to heavens
like an exclamation mark
as though its people shout
we are here in trouble
but holding-on,
show us your protection.
On Sunday they wear bright clothes
on sturdy limbs used to hard work.
The building spreads across the land
like a caressing hand.

At the beach

The backwash draws the pebbles,
the pebbles rattle following the backwash
like crows singing to the rising sun
or cats sharpening their claws on stones.

The mild breeze soothes,
washes every crack.
Plump palm trees at the border of the beach
are fat ladies idling,
their thin gowns streaming,
their generous flesh compressed by the dress.

People stretch under the sun,
lazy and indifferent. They stroll,
watching the children play,
dancing merengues.
Sand mixes with grass
no dew, no tears.

Mary Queen of the Universe
(a church in Florida)

The shrine soars
to testify a relentless faith
in the Almighty.
The vegetation overgrows
at the borders of the roads,
our plates are overflowing.
On the news they speak about fires,
hurricanes, floods and bankrupts.
In the distance the echo of
bomb attacks and massive revenues,
in spite of all God will save us.

Rain in the countryside

Rain drops,
thuds on the dry land,
soaked up
by the thirsty roots.

The ground dampens
quenching its drought,
muffling the drip drop.

Musky
grey stones breathe,
the golden broom
opens its buds and drinks.

Soft as sponge
the earth revives.

Frozen

field, crystals of frost,
the bushes stand out at the edge of the road,

maroon, ochre, leaden,
the tips iced in the dry air,

branches stretch in the white sky
like scratches of colour,

prickling my eyes
gripping to their roots.

Leave them, leave them
as they are
their wild hopes.

Crow

The old crow perching on a pole scans his horizon
with his beady black eyes.

A hare leaps
among red clovers,
careless, free.
Down on the ground, a worm slithers,
eating earth.
A fly buzzes around a snapdragon,
without purpose.

The crow stays
and meditates
on past fierce struggles, long hunts,
on craving gone
and self-control.

He half closes his eyes
and lets
the grass grow.

Old skin

Spots of suntan,
like an archipelago,
changing according to the rays,
in a sea of fading cells,
to prove I am maturing
like a staunch coconut.

Good Morning

A pale stripe of light in the horizon
behind the house and the bare tree
under a bulk of dark grey clouds.
The light strengthens its golden hue
working its way into the thick vapours,
above it the blue sky emerges:
it has always been there.

Wind blows
the golden radiance soars
till it breaks the clouds,
golden and grey flocks wandering
like bitter intentions evaporating.

Liverpool

A tail of cars penetrates slowly in the centre
leading me into the worn-out suburbs
letting me savour the cheap shops, some with dislodged signs,
people in bright clothes hurry,
they cross the street and crowd the pavement.
Dented brick walls are painted red
like old ladies with a past in new attire.

Approaching the centre, roads open into avenues,
the Docks surprise me at the end:
the Royal Liver and George's Dock buildings shining in the late spring sun,
the estuary waters reflect my joy,
the sea air excites me.

Here the Mersey meets the ocean linking earth to water,
The clear-cut plans of business, trades and transports
and the murky infinity of the river,
it baptizes my soul once more.
A place to drown your dreams or let them sail.



Carla Scarano D'Antonio lives and works in Lancaster. Visit her websites: www.carlascaranod.co.uk

<http://www.litfest.org/flax-authors/carla-scarano-dantonio/>

and her blog: *Carla Scarano, an Italian in Lancashire*
www.greatbritishlife.co.uk/community/blogs/

From a teenage bedroom in Italy, to motherhood in a frequently grey Lancaster, taking in Australia and Greece on route, these poems track the author's journey to maturity. The emotional range of the poems reflects the geographic scope, as Carla Scarano contemplates place, love and family and nature with precision, insight and honesty.

Helen Clare

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