

*tree*

*vale Ruby Langford*

**Anne Brewster**

**Copyright © Anne Brewster 2012. This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged**

Looking out into a skeleton tree, from several floors up. The tree is a house and you are looking into the room that is the branches of the tree, the space shaped by the curving limbs, their fingers, lifted and spread. The tree is hospitable, opening out a bower where the gaze lingers. It is shared by birds – cockatoos, lorikeets, crows, red wattle birds and magpies. Your wandering thoughts settle here, in these spaces which are human, in a language of curves and being held. A network of bare twigs like alveoli, the tree is breathless, suspended in the dusk as the sky dims.

The empty tree receives whatever comes its way. It disperses itself without rancour, grief or design. Its bark is peeled off in strips by the cockatoos who scatter them over the footpath. The tree lets go of itself as the world takes it, as the days and weeks pass. The tree is not beautiful or ugly. It is as familiar as your own skin and breath. You live in the midst of the tree just as you live in the midst of your own flesh. Your thoughts hang within the branches, moving slightly in the sea breeze. You're happy to leave them resting there without prying. Your thoughts drift; incurious you let them go. They weave through the void spaces and into the blue sky beyond. Here nothing is to be had by thinking. There are only the pathways of feeling, seeing, moving: the intertwining of things with the world. The way we brush against each other as we pass.

I am air and the matter within it, no longer in the grip of sadness, pleasure or hope. The day sinks behind the roofs, street lamps glow within their haloes, houses nurse the warm lights within, and twinkling planes make their way across the sky. All these things pass through the leafless tree. They are held there and they recede. The tree catches and releases. I have no desire to struggle, to try to understand. These things will pass me by; I am already far away. I will let you go too, with so much unsaid. Memory is always the memory of something unfinished. I have a fragment of you inside me, a gift taking me into itself, into the tree which opens at my window.

**Anne Brewster** teaches at the University of New South Wales. Her books include *Literary Formations: Postcoloniality, Nationalism, Globalism* (1996), *Aboriginal Women's Autobiography* (1995), *Towards a Semiotic of Post-colonial Discourse*:

*The Journal of the European Association of Studies on Australia*, Vol.3. No.1 2012,  
ISSN 2013-6897 under the auspices of Coolabah Observatori: Centre d'Estudis  
Australians, Australian Studies Centre, Universitat de Barcelona

*University Writing in Singapore and Malaysia 1949-1964* (1988) and *Notes on Catherine Lim's Little Ironies: Stories of Singapore*, with Kirpal Singh (1987). She co-edited, with Angeline O'Neill and Rosemary van den Berg, an anthology of Australian Indigenous Writing, *Those Who Remain Will Always Remember* (2000).