

Language and Landscape: Mark Tredinnick

By Uma Anyar

The mind links coincidences to make coherence. An example of this phenomenon happened recently. A few nights ago, I watched the movie- **Up In The Air** and remembered the essay, *The Westward Moving House* by J.B. Jackson, which I had often assigned my photography students to read, before we embarked on the landscape segment of the term. It is an astute and seminal essay, that explores the 300 year history of our progress away from land, from dirt, from soil and finally from Earth, itself. In a way it predicts the sort of character George Clooney portrays, a man with no terra firma under him. It is worth reading even if you don't see the film, because it poses the questions, how much of what I am is constructed by where I am? ” Or “ what's place got to do with it? ” The synchronicity phenomena deepened when Sarah Tooth handed me *The Blue Plateau: A Landscape Memoir* by Mark Tredinnick, “ You'll like this.”

She was right. I do, but not because it references photographic landscapes issues. I admire the beauty of the writing; this is not a snappy page-turner of a book. It is a book that asks you to underline sections because you want to share the idea with others. **Blue Plateau** is **written**, by a writer, who at heart is a poet and a keen and precise observer who enables you perceive the natural world in his unique way.

This is an example.

“ I am made of pieces and of the spaces between them where other pieces use to be. I am a landscape of loss. Most of me is the memory of where else, and who else, and with whom, I have been and no longer am. And so it is with the Plateau; she too, is a landscape of loss. We are not- not I nor this place - ever whole; we are never of a piece. Who we are is how what's left of us falls back toward some kind of coherence much older than we are.”

And here is another way to consider *loss* or change in landscape, a hundred pages later in the book.

“ A landscape, like a work of art, is what remains of a larger work. And even what remains is already on its way out; it's on its way to becoming somewhere else.”

Mark Tredinnick's memoir is about his experiences of a certain slice of sacred geography in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, Australia. He weaves in the history, the fires, people who belong and those that don't into a meditation on a landscape "made of loss."

The Road South, a series of eclogues, a CD produced by River Road press, is a pleasure to listen to, as Mark's voice is steady yet intimate. The rhythm and cadence of the poems meander through the landscape of ideas, emotions and scenery both real and mythical.

Nature, landscape, poetry may be the pegs some would hang this multi-award winning writer's work upon, as he has also published, **The Land's Wild Music** and **A Place on Earth**, but it would be an incomplete picture, for Tredinnick not only writes beautifully, he wants others to do so as well. He has published **The Little Green Grammar Book** and **The Little Red Writing Book** and offers writing workshops from his Cowshed, at his home in the Highlands southwest of Sidney, as well as other festivals and retreats around the world. Just Google Mark Tredinnick's website and check out the dates and sample writings.

To the question, what is writing for? Mark replies:

"What makes writing worth writing –and reading–is what the story or the poem achieves beyond the tale it tells; its music, its wisdom, its form, the way it makes the ordinary world strangely beautiful."

We need this in a world where facts attack us on a daily basis and information overload stultifies our senses. We need contemplative art more than we know.

"So what is art? "I ask. And on page 150 of **The Little Red Writing Book** I find an answer.

"Creative writing makes art out of the stuff of life, it makes it out of the words we speak, and it's for whatever art is for. How a piece of writing becomes a work of art- a plain but unforgettable thing- has everything to do with the integrity and humanity of its voice and the elegance of the work's composition."

Since, I believe that making art is the most beautiful thing about the human beings, I am planning on attending any talk, reading, or

workshop, Mark Tredinnick might offer at the 2010 Ubud Writers and Readers Festival next October.