

Marilyn Peck

The Murray: A Tribute

When reading a poem by Ian Mudie who wrote
*The Murray's single flow points no swift moral for
meandering hearts*, in his *Glory of the Sun*
we caught a glimpse that day into another's memory bank.
Ian Mayelston Mudie, born in nineteen eleven
had the right idea of the spirit of his place,
his Alcheringa. His ashes were scattered some place
on the Murray River in nineteen seventy seven.
We remembered the Murray at Mannum.
The hired houseboat, eight friends—four couples
late in life; who journeyed from all over interstate
by airplane, car and caravan, to reignite the yarns
of youth. Friends forever or so it seems.
To eat, sleep, drink, laugh and scoop up memories,
seeing past wrinkles, crinkles around eyes, to be together
one more time. But not the last time together.
We knew that it could never be exactly repeated
with just these days of soft arrivals.
The willows, greening the Murray's banks,
where anchors and ropes would secure our floating house,
perhaps where *Sturt's oars dip in Murray's tide*.

The thrums, croaks and clicks of night-time, bedtime,
in a two-storied pleasure palace, lulled to sleep,
serenaded by natural musicians. Wine settled
in our individual en-suite cabins two up, two down,
with a spa bath in the middle upper deck where
the ladies would soak while the men would laugh,
accepting this boon, and tell their straight-faced tales
of glory without threats of contradiction.
You don't look a day too old, you are ... just right,
(in delight) *Oh my! You devil you ...*
Came the time to leave and go our separate ways
into days of reflection, we knew we could safely bank
memorable memories, satisfactions, our last transactions.

This year, God willing, from Queensland,
there will be more water flowing down to Mannum.
And the green willows will watch the rushing flow,
the slow seeping of greening, spreading across
arid dry country, returning to memories, acknowledgement
of lives well lived. *The Murray's single flow ...*

Marilyn Peck