

Anne KENNEDY  
Two poems

From *The Darling North*

HELLO KITTY, GOODBYE PICCADILLY

Imagine you'd come to Hawai`iki early.  
Imagine you were in Heaven.  
Imagine you were in Paradise  
and being earthly.  
that instead of leaning into it  
and casting it aside like small-talk  
and kept it in a suitcase. Then you could  
open it there  
You say to yourself  
but you didn't.  
and your hands hum.  
shirts accumulating on a lawn  
rough,  
sea-going you wore  
waves,  
and kelp rotted  
of new pine pews

I don't have Hawai`iki.  
I don't have Heaven.  
but at first you don't recognise paradise,  
or smell it or touch it,  
because you miss earth too much,  
You miss the cold wind and you wish  
reading it with your mouth  
on all those occasions of cold wind  
you had gathered it up  
carry it with you to the new place  
and remember what cold wind feels like.  
if only I had done that  
cold wind would come rushing back  
In Paradise it is so hot your teeth  
loosen and creak in your gums  
You notice dainty sandals, gold dresses  
red birds.  
You remember a coat, olive green,  
near the sea. The beach wall was scooped out by  
in your nostrils.  
You wore your coat to Mass where the squeak

rang out into the still air above the people  
 like modern bells  
 and you cricked your neck to engage with  
 the baleful mosaic stare of the Jesus.  
 There was a department store  
 where the air sprang with grey wool.  
 That was where you wore the coat  
 but can't recall the exact nature  
 of how you needed it.  
 Imagine you'd come to Hawai'i early.  
 I don't have Hawai'i.  
 Imagine you were in Heaven.  
 I don't have Heaven.  
 Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and one day in Paradise  
 when you haven't been there long  
 you look up and find streetlights swimming  
 and people talking at an aquarium  
 and the jellyfish are purple  
 and pulse like a heart.  
 After a day of hard light  
 dusk falls suddenly  
 as if the dark were heavy  
 and the stream that flows close to your apartment  
 becomes wetter and  
 shinier  
 in the moonlight.  
 You can't help recalling  
 that you once climbed aboard a bus  
 perfunctorily, like pecking  
 an old relative  
 but you threw it away.  
 You watch the news  
 on and off  
 and the accent of the newsreader bounces  
 in loping kilohertz  
 but over time dies down  
 until you lose it somewhere inside your ear.  
 You hear  
 your own accent,  
 which used to be beyond hearing, a dog's whistle.  
 Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and in that Paradise you notice  
 that the sea is cloudy with sunblock  
 and rushes up the beach tinkling with the gold rings  
 of newlyweds,  
 and the metal detectors of the homeless  
 are made very happy.  
 The hills thrust up sharply,



and others say there should be an excise  
 of Paradise  
 tax so the children can go back to school on  
 Fridays  
 although they don't really need school.  
 In Paradise you don't need anything.  
 You read in the paper that depressed kids  
 are turning up at the Help  
 Program  
 with the red-haired gene they need help with  
 in Paradise.  
 For instance the word 'bong'  
 echoes through the university shuttle service,  
 and the campus is full of stray cats.  
 There's a certain peacefulness.  
 Off-ramps with banks of tires,  
 escape routes for runaway trucks.  
 You clean the bathroom mirror in Paradise  
 and on the shelf below it  
 a pink Post-it says 'Dialects of Seeing'  
 in the round writing of your opposite.  
 You don't clean it up.  
 You know this is like a dream, this found thing,  
 so ho-hum – no human  
 endeavour. You didn't make this up. You couldn't  
 make this stuff up, but you tell it anyway.  
 Bong bong.  
 Imagine you'd come to Hawai`iki early.  
 I don't have Hawai`iki.  
 Imagine you were in Heaven.  
 I don't have Heaven.  
 Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and on arrival  
 you remember what you had been told about Paradise  
 at the little old cold school:  
 In Paradise you will sit for a long time  
 looking at everything as if for the first time  
 and you will understand.  
 You realise you that you like  
 the sing-song of  
 Pidgin,  
 an exhibition of empty rooms with carved wooden  
 weeds growing out of the skirting boards,  
 a variety of friendliness.  
 Kim chee, mandoo, spicy ahu maki, manapoua buns,  
 handbags.  
 (In Paradise you don't need money.  
 A handbag is pure  
 luxury.)  
 You think you see a sign saying Occidental Rugs

but you're mistaken: your eyesight  
 which you thought would be fixed  
 in Paradise.

It is dazzling and you are dazzled. The sea.  
 You walk about. You drive about  
 learning the avenues of Paradise.

In the Chinese cemetery on the hill  
 the names of the immigrants  
 under the colonies of lichen  
 look out over the bunched handful of city, mini Hong Kong.  
 You wonder in passing  
 about your body, its whereabouts.

Eventually in Paradise you discover a shopping mall.  
 This development is a long time coming  
 because before you came to Paradise  
 you bought meat, Brussel sprouts, rough socks.  
 In the shopping mall goldfish swim in blue ponds  
 and perfume coils out of stores to engulf  
 you  
 and the song composed by the Queen  
 when she was incarcerated in the Palace  
 'Aloha 'Oe'  
 deposits its snippets in the warm air.

You stop at certain shops,  
 and you learn them, and you like them  
 for their sound and smell  
 and their meaning gathers  
 like clouds which when heavy  
 fall on to the carpark, and gather again.

And again you process along the upper level of the mall  
 and warm air bathes your feet  
 and you incline your head towards price tags  
 and you fall in love with a cat-face  
 and stroke a purse in its likeness  
 to have and to hold.

Imagine you were in Paradise  
 and in Paradise a funny expression  
 sometimes pops out of your mouth  
 and your children laugh because  
 nobody says that  
 here. (And here  
 you need to add that for your children  
 this is not Paradise because for them  
 there is only childhood.)

You realise with a jolt that your children's DNA  
 does not contain the expressions your parents used,  
 that you use,  
 and if they took a sample of tissue from your children  
 they would not be able to prove relationship  
 through *work cut out, mind you,*





FLOOD MONOLOGUE

1.

You never discussed the stream  
and no doubt the stream didn't want

your discourse (its own merry way)  
but now that you live by the stream

a mosquito has come up the bank  
and bitten you, and the stream

is in your bloodstream. You buff  
the site of entry like a trophy.

Your chuckling new acquaintance  
takes your cells out to the sea.

2.

It goes all night, you tell your friends  
drinking wine to warm the house  
(already warm), and laugh of course  
like a drain. Later in your roomy

queen you listen to its monologue –  
ascending plane that never reaches

altitude. Your fingers stretch  
from coast to coast to try it out,

this solitude, while water thumps  
through the riverbed.

3.

You're not exactly on your own.  
Teenagers come and go, the screen-door

clacks, Cardinals mob a little temple  
hanging in a tree. A neighbour with a bag

of seeds asks you if you mind  
the birds. There is that film, and the flu,



but no. In the mornings earlyish  
you slide the rippling trees across

(Burnham Wood) and watch  
six parrots lift like anti-gravity.

4.

At sunset a rant about the dishes –  
you’ve worked all day, unlike

some people! The tap runs. The sun,  
tumbling over Waikiki, shoots through

the trees, gilds the stream (unnecessary),  
stuns you in the empty room. Every day

for ten years (you realize, standing there)  
you’ve crossed the bridge etched Mānoa

Stream, 1972, back and forth,  
Except the day the river rose.

5.

Some facts: Mongooses (sic) (introduced)  
pee into the current, plus rats and mice,

The stream is sick. All the streams.  
Mosquitoes -your messenger and those

that bit the teenagers whose young blood  
is festive like the Honolulu marathon –

could carry West Nile virus. Often fatal.  
Probably don’t, are probably winging it

like you, and you will go your whole life  
and only die at the end of it.

6.

The stream doesn’t *look* sick. It takes  
a pretty kink near your apartment.

The trees are lush and spreading  
like a shade house you once walked in  
in a gallery (mixed media). The water  
masks its illness like a European noble  
with the plague – a patina, and ringlets.  
You're pissed about the health issues  
of the stream, and healthcare, because  
it has your blood, you have its H2O.

7.

You think it's peaceful by the stream?  
Ducks rage, waking you at 2am,  
or thereabouts. Mongooses hunt  
the duck eggs, says your son. Ah, you say.  
That night the quacks are noisy, but  
you fret in peace. Sometimes homeless  
people sleep down by the river bank.  
Harmless. One time one guy had a knife.  
They still talk about it and you see him  
ghostly like an app against the trees.

8.

All your things are near the stream,  
beds, plates, lamps – you're camping  
apart from walls and taps and electricity.  
Your laptop angles like a spade,  
and clods of English warm the room  
(already warm). They warm your heart.  
Overall you have much less, because  
of course – divided up. But you're lucky  
or would be if the stream was squeaky  
clean, and talked to you.

9.

The stream had caused a little trouble  
in the past, i.e., the flood. Not it's fault.

900, 000 people pave a lot, they plumb  
a lot. Then rain like weights. From a safe

distance (your old apt) you watched  
your little water course inflate and thunder

down the valley taking cars, chairs, trees.  
You saw a mother and her baby rescued

from a van – a swimming coach, with ropes –  
the van then bumped out to sea.

10.

One apartment in your complex  
took in water in the flood. And mud. It was

this apartment. You've known it all along,  
of course, because you watched.

They fixed it up. Lifted carpets, blasted  
fans for a week. Repainted.

It's pretty good. The odd door  
needs a shoulder still. In certain lights

though, on the wall, a watermark,  
the stream's dappled monogram.

11.

You're talking clichés – water under  
the bridge, love letter from a lawyer,

serious harm, sunk without you.  
The stream has been into your bedroom,

and you in its. Remember reeds, coolness,  
summer afternoons. You loved

the stream. Its stinging waters send  
a last message in lemon juice:

If I'm fucked, you're coming with me.  
sincerely, the stream.

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