

# Both of Me

*Free verse in English and Kaurna*

*The meanings of individual Kaurna words are made clear by the context*

*Three Kaurna sentences:*

- *Wanti niina? = Where are you going? – Interrogative, second person, singular*
- *Ngai wardli-ana = I am going home – Indicative, first person, singular*
- *Ngadli wardli-ana = Both of us are going home – Indicative, first person, dual – the Kaurna language has a grammatically fully integrated dual number, with plural meaning more than two*

## *Prologue*

*I was born at Henley Beach on the shores of Gulf St Vincent. I grew up in Fulham in the western suburbs of Adelaide. The River Torrens used to form a wetland here, before an outlet to the sea was constructed by the European colonists.*

*I was born on the foreshore of Wonggayerlo (Western Sea) on the edge of Witongga (the 'Reed Beds'). I grew up in Witongga, in the land of the Kaurna people. Karrawirra Pari (Red Gum Forest River) used to form a wetland here, before an outlet to Wonggayerlo (Western Sea) was constructed by the European invaders.*

*I am not a Kaurna man, but I am a Witongga man.*

Dusk.

I wander to the banks of Karrawirra Pari,

And I recline beneath an ancient karra.

I close my eyes and focus on the noises of the pari,

And on the scents of the red gum eucalypts.

After a time, I hear a voice say, "Wanti niina?"

"Ngadli Wonggayerlo-ana, wardli-ana," I reply.

Surely you mean, "Ngai wardli-ana."

"No. There are two of me."

A light sea breeze springs up,

And the leaves of the red gum acknowledge my claim.

I continue, "My yitpi, my soul, belongs to the kauwe,

The water of my totem, the dolphin, the yampu.

The pelicans of the wetland, the yaltu-yaltu,

Will usher my body down the river to the sea,

Where I shall join the yampu-yampu and be free."

Silence.

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