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Simon Harsent

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Issue #6

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by Simon Harsent —

The Non Christmas Tree, Christmas, Tree Issue.

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Happy Holidays, peace and love to all.



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Happy Holidays, peace and love to all.



As a child, I vaguely recall my mother's attempt to transplant our withered Christmas tree into the backyard. The holiday season had passed, the decorations were gone, and the once-lush tree, now stripped of its needles, found itself relocated from the living room to the garden in a hopeful bid for revival.

I can't confirm whether this was a one-time experiment or a yearly ritual. Memories tend to blur over time, and sometimes, it's best not to let facts interfere with a good story. Regrettably, the tree didn't survive and, in its sad skeletal state, became an impromptu goalpost with a jumper serving as the opposing side.

I always admired my mother's attempt to save the tree. For as far back as I can recall, her passion for the environment and its inhabitants has been a constant presence. She has an endearing habit of conversing with house spiders before carefully relocating them to the great outdoors. But let's get back to the point.

The point is that, like many others, we used to purchase an uprooted tree every December, placing it in our living room as part of our festive tradition. It's peculiar given that we're a family of atheists, but I suppose it was all about preserving tradition and doing something special for the children.

And because of that, the scent of pine needles and a bowl of satsumas, (the latter down to the way my Nan mispronounced them, always a source of amusement for us kids) are for me synonymous with Christmas.

I've often found it strange that thousands of trees are harvested each year, only to spend a few forlorn weeks shedding needles in people's homes before being discarded with the trash. In recent years, my wife and I have switched to using a faux Christmas tree, adorned with ornaments crafted by my sister, featuring ceramic stars, discs, and unicorns bearing weary words.

Modern Christmas trees are believed to have originated in Germany, initially used in a medieval play about Adam and Eve called the Paradise Tree. This fir tree, decorated with apples, symbolized the Garden of Eden. Over the years, the Christmas tree evolved from this and merged with another popular decoration, the Christmas Pyramid, resulting in the festive icon we know today. Its popularity in the UK was bolstered by Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's German-born husband, in the 19th century.

Tree worship has been a recurring theme across various cultures and religions. The Tree of Life, and its variations like the Tree of Immortality, have been revered by ancient Egyptians, Chinese, Christians, Hebrews, and Muslims. Tree worship was also prevalent among pagan Europeans, Scandinavians decorated their homes at new year with evergreens to scare away the Devil.

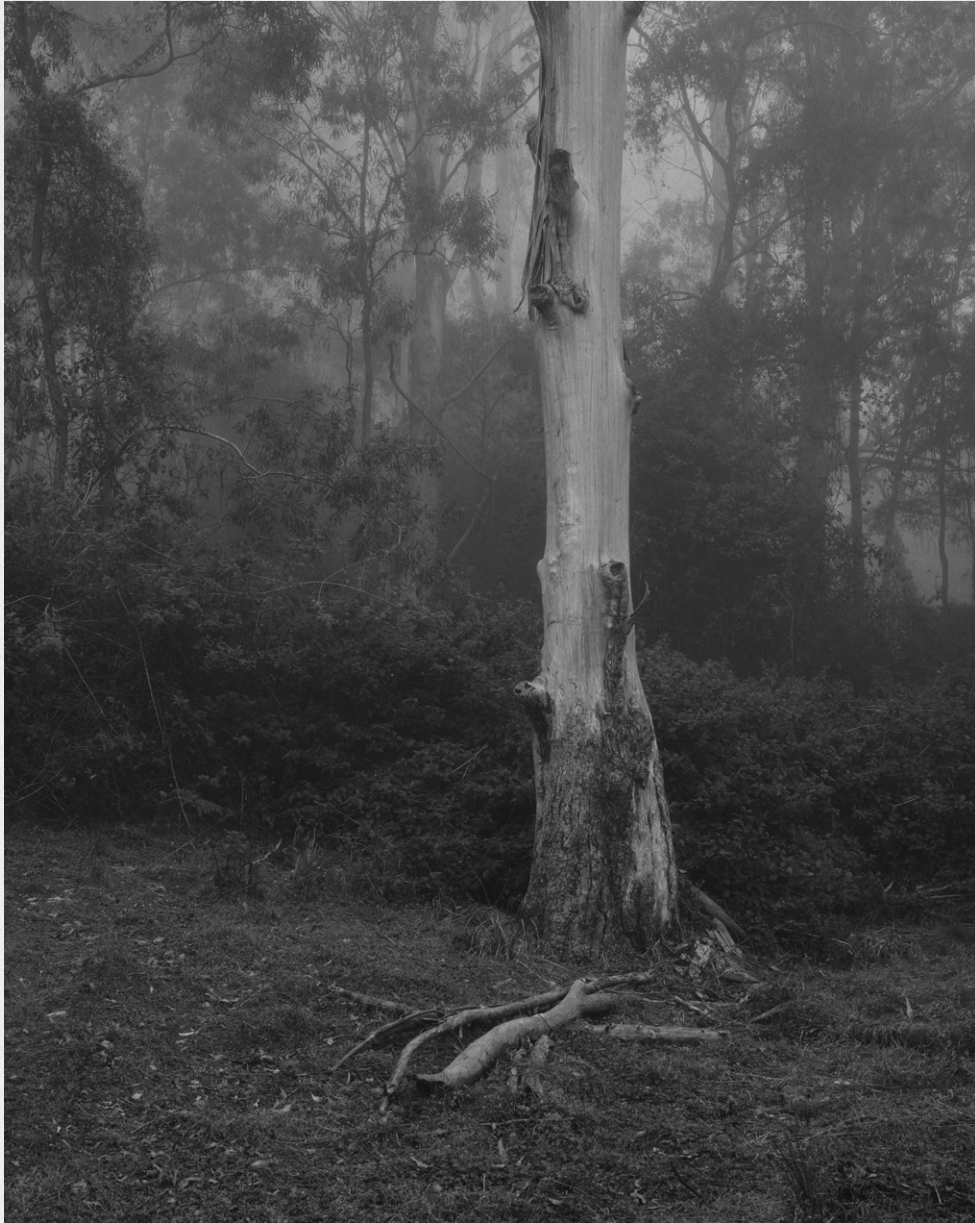
I won't be cutting down a tree this year to watch it shed its needles. And I won't be offering up a picture series of discarded Christmas trees, although I do have quite a few of those images on my phone. Trees are better appreciated in their natural environment, in all their glory firmly rooted to the earth, where, if you are lucky, you might even discover two trees perfectly spaced apart for an impromptu set of goalposts.















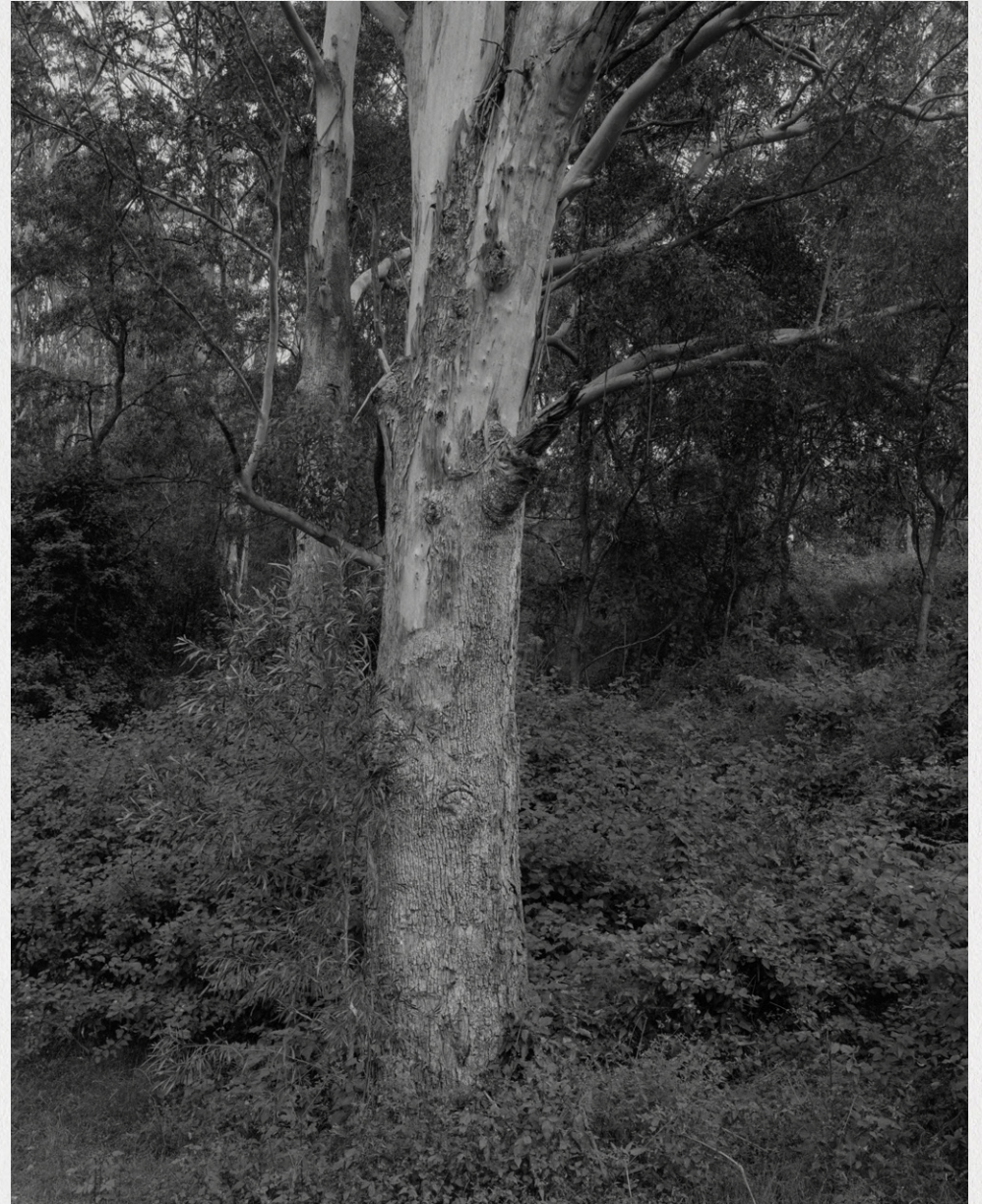














Tales from the Riverbank. _ Paul Weller.

True it's a dream mixed with nostalgia
But it's the dream that I'll always hang on to
That I always run to
Won't you join me by the riverbank
Come on join me by the riverbank









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