

BRENDA SAUNDERS

Looking for Bulin Bulin

She comes at me side on
eyes off the coins
on the café table
Got any change? she asks
searching my face
for answers

— Who are you and
where do you come from?

Says she knows my name
people from my Country
Never knew the words
for 'sit-down places'
— language forbidden
on Native Reserves

She's heard of *buhln buhln*
the sacred Bora rings
put to use as race-tracks
cricket grounds or fairs
Holding pens for cattle
circling the yard

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Looking through her
I see past the “Darlo” traffic
Take to roads that criss-cross
our lost spaces. Stories
buried under paddocks
drying to dust

We talk of Windradyne
frontier wars, the tribe
against men on horses
Spears falling to musket
fire on grasslands
cleared by squatters

They come by cart or rail
Replace the ‘carved trees’
Ancestor’s Spirit-markers
piled up for winter burning
Sacred stones buried
somewhere.

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I’ve searched on early maps
Find only *new* names for
ancient places. Land Titles
staked out. Station holdings
Towns with strange rhythms
Sounds from another world

My fingers trace a line
along meandering creeks
Point to families moved off
waterholes. Hunting at night
between wooded hills
Caring for Country

Bulin Bulin: ancestor's birthplace