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Bordeaux and Deep, Dark Blue

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When I started these blogs I thought I would be writing about Culture with a capital C, getting out and about in the world of galleries and museums, riding my hobby horses and sharing my artistic enthusiasms. But the last few weeks have seen me, hermit-like, holed up in my French studio, in the deepest countryside, seeing lots of crazy weather out of the windows, conversing with cows, sheep and birds rather than people, struggling mightily with some new paintings, and digging in the garden. Communing with Nature with a capital N. Trying not to read the news.

Painting and gardening are not so different from one another as activities. They are hostages to fortune. You paint because you believe (hubristically perhaps) that you can fix a thought in time forever. You plant a tiny tree because you believe (equally hubristically) that with the right conditions it will grow big and tall. I look at paintings I did here 27 years ago and I think, yes, I remember thinking that thought. I remember what I was listening to on the radio when I painted that painting. It's a crystallised moment. I am looking at a 40 foot Christmas tree out of the window now and thinking, yes, that was from our first Christmas here. These are optimistic thoughts. Time stays still and bends here and it folds upon itself and it curves and twists. When you don't read the news.

Painting, planting, and pruning are all good ways to avoid thinking about the elections next weekend here in France and very soon in England. I am a committed European even though I was born in America, and having a life here in France and a life in England is a huge privilege that I never take for granted. I am as proud as a small schoolchild of the circle of gold stars that grace my Bordeaux coloured passport and grieve for the time that they will dissolve in a blur of xenophobic, retrogressive, deep dark blue.